

CBSL TO SUPPORT COVID-19 AFFECTED BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS

'EXTRAORDINARY REGULATORY MEASURES' TO FACILITATE BANKS

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) will introduce several extraordinary regulatory measures to provide flexibility to Licensed Commercial Banks and Licensed Specialised Banks to provide some relief to businesses and individuals affected by the COVID-19 crisis. In deciding these measures, the Monetary Board took note of the overall resilience of the banking sector especially due to the already built-up capital buffers, the current and future liquidity levels, potential upsurge in the rising trend in non-performing loans due to the inability of majority of borrowers to service their loans as usual and extraordinary disruptions to the functioning of the economy.

Accordingly, the Monetary Board has decided to introduce the following extraordinary measures to provide further space for banks to assist COVID-19 affected busi-

nesses and individuals on an urgent basis, the Central Bank said in a press release yesterday.

The Central Bank has requested banks to avail of these relaxations in the best interest of supporting their customers and the economy at large, the benefits of which would, in return, accrue to the banking sector to remain resilient.

The measures include:

(a) Allow Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) and non D-SIBs to draw-down their Capital Conservation Buffers by 100 bps and 50 bps, respectively, to facilitate smooth credit flows to the economy and COVID-19 affected borrowers to sustain their businesses in the immediate future.

(b) Withdraw the requirement to classify all credit facilities extended to a borrower as non-performing when the

aggregate amount of all outstanding non-performing loans granted to such borrower exceed 30% of total credit facilities.

(c) Allow banks to recover loans in Rupees, as the last resort, in circumstances where recovery of loans in foreign currency is remote, subject to banks ensuring certain conditions are met.

(d) Permit banks to give an extension of 60 days, to borrowers who are not entitled to any other concessions, to settle loans and advances which are becoming past due during March 2020 and not to consider such facilities as past due until the end of this 60 day period.

(e) Allow banks to consider all changes made to payment terms and loan contracts from 16.03.2020 to 30.06.2020, due to challenges faced by customers amidst the COVID-19 outbreak as 'modi-

fications' instead of 'restructuring' for the purpose of classification of loans & advances and computing impairment.

(f) Defer the requirement to enhance capital by banks which are yet to meet the requirement by end 2020, till end 2022.

(g) Reset the timelines for addressing supervisory concerns, if necessary, by prioritizing on the severity/importance of the concerns raised. Banks which are required to meet timelines to address supervisory concerns/findings during the period up to May 30, 2020, are granted a further period of 3 months for addressing such supervisory concerns.

(h) Extend the deadline for submission of statutory returns to the Bank Supervision Department by two weeks and the publication of quarterly financial statements by one month, until further notice.

Food, medicine delivery reviewed

RUKSHANA RIZWIE

A special meeting of the Special Presidential Task Force on Essential Services which was held at Temple Trees yesterday has decided to maintain and streamline the distribution of essential supplies.

The current supply and distribution of essential supplies was comprehensively reviewed as the country battles an outbreak of COVID-19. It was decided to review the ongoing program of providing essential items including food to those who have not been able to get them although they have cash-in-hand.

Officials from the postal department were engaged in discussions over a program to supply medicines.

It was also mentioned that many sections of the society who did not have cash in hand could not stock up on essentials and it was decided that a mechanism would be suggested for individuals to withdraw cash.

Meanwhile the programme to grant an allowance of Rs.5000 to Samurdhi recipients would be completed by today. Attention was also drawn to provide relief measures for families who are suffering from the loss of jobs due to the Coronavirus pandemic, who were not included in the government's assistance list.

It was also recommended to boost production of food items locally and for achieving self-sufficiency in rice, vegetables, fish and poultry by next season and to maintain the livestock industry in Sri Lanka by improving the supply and transport of animal feed.

Employers directed to pay March salary to FTZ workers

IRANGIKA RANGE

Industrial Export, Investment Promotion, Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister Prasanna Ranatunga yesterday requested all Board of Investment (BOI) companies to pay the March salary of their employees who were sent back to their homes following the closing down of their factories due to the curfew.

Minister Ranathunga has made this request from company owners following the direction of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The Minister said around 137,478 employees attached to the 278 factories in 14 Free Trade Zones are waiting for their March salaries.

Factories at all Free Trade Zones in the country have temporary closed down except for several factories manufacturing essential medical supplies and having manufacturing orders. Permission has been given to the managements of operational factories to strictly adhere to the guidelines to safeguard their employees.

However, employees who were stranded at their boarding houses due to closing down of their factories in all FTZs were sent back to their homes after a complete health inspection with Government intervention.

According to the BOI statistics, 5144 workers in the Katunayake FTZ, 3264 workers at the Biyagama FTZ, 450 workers in Meerigama, Wathupitiwala and Malwatta FTZs, 962 workers in Horana FTZ and 280 in Seethawaka FTZ were sent back to their homes by both SLTB and private buses arranged by the Government.

It has also been revealed there are a number of other workers except FTZs working in factories, shops, business ventures, companies stranded in their boarding places due to the curfew in the entire Gampaha district. Minister Ranathunga said action will be taken to send them to their homes with the assistance of Police and the Security Forces following a complete health inspection shortly.



The Ambalangoda Police used a mobile Public Address System to educate the public on safe distancing methods and other health information on the current COVID-19 pandemic when the curfew was relaxed in the Southern Province yesterday. *Picture by Wimal Karunathilaka*

Online counselling for children, adolescents

AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Health Promotion Bureau of Sri Lanka together with Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists Association of Sri Lanka has launched a series of counseling sessions online for children and adolescents who are presently confined to houses due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

According to the Health Promotion Bureau of Sri Lanka, this move was taken considering the psychological complications that children and adolescents may go through during the COVID-19 lockdown. The Bureau said children and adolescent having to stay inside houses for a long period of time without outdoor activities and usual friends and peers may develop such mental complications and issues.

The said counseling sessions in video format will be streamed via the Facebook page of Sri Lanka College of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists from this week onward.

CSE market holiday

In view of the extension of the curfew by the Government, the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) has decided that the CSE will remain closed for Trading on Tuesday, 31st March 2020. Accordingly, 31st March 2020 will be considered as a market holiday.

Rs.10,000 for Samurdhi families

Measures have been taken to provide Rs.10,000 to all Samurdhi families and currently all officers are engaged in granting the advance to the Samurdhi recipients, the Samurdhi Development Department Director General Bandula Tillakasinghe said at a media briefing held at the Government Information Department.

"It is a joy to be able to give back to the people at this time of need, from the Fund created by the contributions of the people. Currently, the Samurdhi officers are in the

process of going to the homes of the recipients and handing over the advance payment of Rs. 5000.

These officers have been instructed to distribute the money among the Samurdhi families without them having to go through much hassle to obtain it.

The President focused attention on providing relief to the Samurdhi recipients as they are going through great hardships during this period due to the Coronavirus. "Therefore, with the recommendation of

the Presidential Task Force it was decided to grant each Samurdhi family Rs. 10,000 and as an initial step they would be granted an advance of Rs. 5000."

He said that the Samurdhi families could fill out a basic application form and hand it over to the nearest Samurdhi office, adding that even during the curfew period the Samurdhi officers are handing out this money to the Samurdhi beneficiaries.

This money would also be given to

the recently registered 400,000 Samurdhi recipients under the Arunala Concessionary Loan scheme.

If there are any issues faced by the Samurdhi recipients they could contact the Samurdhi Development Officer, the closest Samurdhi Bank or the District Secretary.

They could also contact the Main office on telephone numbers 071 4411947, 071 4118226, 071 1151967, the Samurdhi Director General said.

Over 7,000 curfew violators

The Police had arrested 173 persons during the six hour period from 12.00 noon to 6.00 pm yesterday (30) for violating curfew regulations, the Police Media Unit stated.

From 6.00 am to 12.00 noon, the police had arrested 75 persons and taken into custody 35 vehicles in the Gampaha, Colombo, Kalutara, Jaffna and Kandy districts where the curfew was in force.

They had also taken into custody 24 vehicles belonging to the curfew violators during this period. Since the curfew was imposed at 6.00 pm on March 20th until 6.00 pm yesterday, the police had arrested 7,098 curfew violators and taken into custody 170 vehicles.

Global cases close to 750,000

The total number of global COVID-19 cases inched towards the 750,000 mark last night as the Coronavirus Dashboard of the Johns Hopkins University, USA indicated 745,000 cases around the world, with the US leading at 144,000 cases. Italy is next with 97,000 cases. There were 35,000 deaths around the world, with Italy accounting for one-third of them. Nearly 156,000 people across the globe had fully recovered from the viral disease, with the biggest number of recoveries (76,000) in China, where several previously locked down cities are now gradually reopening for travel. Several famous people have contracted the disease including British PM Boris Johnson, Prince Charles and actor Tom Hanks. Experts say that strict social distancing measures must be practiced for one or two more months to flatten the curve of the Coronavirus spread. There is no currently no cure or vaccine for COVID-19.

Covid-19 claims second victim

The second victim among the Coronavirus infected patients was reported from the Negombo Hospital, said the Director General of Health Services Dr. Anil Jasinghe confirmed.

The 64-year-old deceased is a resident of the Kochchikade area. This patient had been transferred from a private hospital to the Negombo Hospital and he tested positive for the Coronavirus.

It had also been diagnosed that this patient was suffering from a heart ailment and over a long period was suffering from respiratory ailments.

By 4.30 pm yesterday 122 persons have tested positive for the Coronavirus in Sri Lanka.

This was confirmed by the Director General of Health Services Dr. Anil Jasinghe at the National Operation Centre for the Prevention of Covid-19.

Between yesterday's update by the National Operation Centre for the Prevention of Covid-19, and this confirmation, seven more cases have been confirmed.

However, by 29th evening two more cases were confirmed taking the total to 117. But, by 8.00 am yesterday three more patients were confirmed bringing the total to 120. The Health Promotion Bureau said that 11 patients had fully recovered and had been discharged from hospital. Another 117 suspected cases are still in hospital and were being monitored for the virus.

No decision to postpone GCE A/L

The Education Ministry said yesterday that it has not taken any decision to postpone the GCE A/L Examination scheduled for August 2020.

The Ministry in a press communiqué said there was no truth to speculation in some social media that the exam has been

postponed due to the COVID 19 outbreak.

The Education Ministry said today that arrangements have been made to release the results of the 2019 GCE O/L Examination before April 30. Schools are currently closed as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



Visitors wait to visit patients at a hospital in Southern Province when the curfew was relaxed yesterday. *PICTURE by Wimal Karunathilaka*

Contributions pour in to COVID-19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund

A large number of organizations and individual donors are contributing funds to strengthen the COVID - 19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa established this Fund on March 23 to strengthen the mitigation activities aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19 virus in the country and related social welfare programmes.

Creating the Fund, President Rajapaksa donated Rs. 100 million from the President's Fund.

Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic) Trust Fund and Malwatta and Asgiriya Chapters donated Rs. 20 million to COVID - 19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund.

At present the Fund has received donations worth Rs. 140 million including the contributions from Sri Lanka Administrative Service Association Rs.2.5 million, Presidential Secretariat Rs 200,000, Sri Lanka Engineering Service Association Rs.6.5 million, Ananda College Old Boys' Association, Colombo, Rs. 2.5 million, Organisation of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka Rs. 1 million, Association of Public Service Engineers Rs. 3 million, State Engineering Corporation of Sri Lanka Rs.1 million and cricketer Muttiah Muralitharan Rs. 5 million.

A special account had been opened at the Corporate Branch



Ananda College OBA presenting a cheque for Rs.2.5 million to Dr. P.B. Jayasundara. Below : Cricket legend Muttiah Muralitharan presenting a cheque for Rs. 5 million

of the Bank of Ceylon under the account number of 85737373. Local as well as foreign donors have made their contributions to the Fund. Donations to COVID - 19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund have been exempted from taxes and foreign exchange regulations. Deposits can be made through cheques or telegraphic transfers.

The management of the Healthcare and Social Security Fund will be entrusted to a highly qualified panel of professionals in the fields of administration, finance and banking sectors.

The panel will comprise secretaries to the Ministries, Director General of Health Services



and audit and banking experts. Secretary to the President Dr. P. B. Jayasundara emphasized that this would be an opportunity

for the local and foreign companies to make their contributions towards this humanitarian mission.



A special meeting of the Presidential Task Force on Essential Services, empowered with the responsibility to take decisions on maintaining civilian life amid the COVID 19 outbreak, was held at temple trees yesterday presided by Special Representative of the President Basil Rajapaksa.

Narcotics sellers nabbed in hospital

S.M.WIJAYARATNE,
Kurunegala Daily News Correspondent

Two minor employees attached to the Kurunegala Teaching hospital were arrested yesterday (29) by Kurunegala Police as they were selling heroin and ganja in the hospital premises during curfew hours while they were on duty.

The Police officers seized about 50 g. of heroin and 05 packets of ganja along with them. Another two minor employees of this Hospital were arrested day before yesterday too while they were selling heroin and liquor.

The Kurunegala ASP Saman Rathnayake led the raid to arrest these offenders. Mr. A.B.Punyasena, the OIC of Kurunegala

Police Division is investigating this case further.

Meanwhile, six treasure hunters including a Police sergeant were arrested while excavating a land of an ancient temple premises during curfew hours to unearth a treasure yesterday (29) by a police team of Giribawa Police, Kurunegala. The arrested police sergeant is reported to be on duty attached to the Giribawa Police Station, Kurunegala. A cab vehicle, a motor cycle and tools that were used to dig the site of the treasure too were detained along with the six suspects. Under the guidance of Galgamuwa ASP Salinda Samarakoon, further investigations are being conducted by the Giribawa Police.

Rathgama Businessmen murder case: All suspects granted bail

MAHINDA P. LIYANAGE
Galle Central Special Correspondent

Galle High Court Judge W.P.S. Nissanka released all seventeen suspects including 15 police officers and two officials of Wild Life Conservation Department on strict bail conditions when they were produced before him yesterday.

The High Court judge on consideration of the bail applications that had been tendered in respect of the suspects ordered a cash bail of Rs. 100,000 and a surety of Rs.200,000 each.

The judge further ordered each of them to report to the Crime Branch of Criminal Investigation Department in Colombo in the morning session of last Sunday of each month and pronounced that provided the suspected police officers are reinstated in their respective posts they should not be posted to Rathgama, Akmeemana and Walasmulla police stations. The overseas travels of the suspects were also banned by the High Court Judge.

The suspects bailed out are SP Special Crime Investigation Unit former OIC IP Kapila Nishantha Silva, SI H.G.Viraj Madusanka, Constable H.G.Sanjaya Chanaka, Beat Officer K. Marshal Thushara Nalinda, CI E.A.Saman Rohana, SI Vidanage Thilakrathne, Constable Upul Ranjith, SI W.R.Wimalasiri, SI G.K.Wimalarathne, Sergeant P.H.Chaminda, Sergeant S.G.Premalal, Constable Y.P.Vidanagama, and Constable B.A.R.Asanka, Police Driver H.M.S.Jayarathna, Walasmulla Forest Ranger R.S.Suwaris, Constable Anil Kumara and Constable Ragamunige Wijitha Kumara.

They are charged for abduction of two businessmen, Gonapinuwalage Asela Manjula Kumara and Kosma Rasik Chintaka of Rathnaudagama, Boossa, Rathgama on January 23, 2019, conspiring to murder and burn them and aiding to carry out the crime.

Two Navy Quarantine centres in Mihintale and Oyamaduwu

The Sri Lanka Navy which is shouldering the national effort of controlling the spread of coronavirus in the island, prepared two holiday bungalows located at Mihintale and Oyamaduwu as quarantine centres, on 29th March 2020.

On the instructions of the Commander of the Navy, Vice Admiral Piya De Silva, these two holiday bungalows owned by SL Navy, were prepared as quarantine centres. Accordingly, Mihintale quarantine centre can accommodate 100 people while

Oyamaduwu quarantine centre would provide facilities for 24 people who require such quarantine facilities.

Furthermore, those who would arrive at the quarantine centres are provided with all necessary facilities such as sanitary ware, Wi-Fi, television, fans, laundry, etc. Under the supervision of the Naval Public Health Inspectors, all necessary arrangements have been made to provide cooked nutritious food to those who arrive at the quarantine centres.



An appeal from Supreme Council of Sufi Thareeqas

The Supreme Council of Sufi Thareeqas in Sri-Lanka issued the following news release on the present situation: "Our Motherland together with the whole World is today in a state of Crisis, after the Coronavirus named COVID-19 has spread in many parts of the world, including our Island Nation. On the 11th of March, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID- 19 as a 'Pandemic'. It was emphasized by the Director-General

of WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a media briefing, saying crisis, "This is not just a public health, it is a crisis that will touch every sector, so every sector and every individual must be involved in the fights."

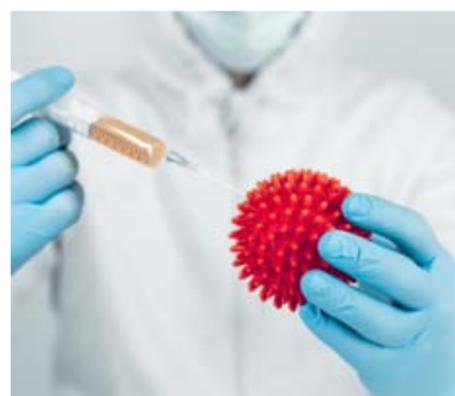
Taking the guidelines of the WHO, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the Tri-Forces of our Nation took action on the battle against COVID-19. The Government ordered all Institutions to be closed down and

placed an islandwide Curfew, which is still in effect as of today.

We, the Supreme Council of Sufi Thareeqas in Sri-Lanka abiding by the orders of the Government, together with the directions of the Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs (MRCA), immediately ordered the closure of all Mosques, Madrasas, Zaviyas, Takkiyas and religious Institutions around the country. At this juncture, we urge our fellow Muslims Brothers and Sisters as well as every Responsible Citizen

of this Country to follow the orders of the Government and not hold any gathering of any sort until the Pandemic is brought under Control.

This is for your safety as well as for your country. You are advised to stay Home and continue your prayers at home, while supplicating in the Court of Almighty Allah for granting complete recovery to all those infected by this Virus and to save our Country from all losses that will follow this Pandemic".



COVID-19 vaccine could be ready next year

Johnson and Johnson said Monday it could have a Covid-19 vaccine available for emergency use early next year and it would begin manufacturing the vaccine immediately.

Though not a major vaccine maker, Johnson & Johnson was among the first companies to announce a Covid-19 vaccine development program back in January. Now, the company said its program has developed a candidate vaccine and two backup candidates. It plans to begin testing the vaccine in humans in September.

Johnson & Johnson said it planned to make the vaccine available "on a not-for-profit basis." Johnson & Johnson is the largest pharmaceutical company in the world.

"The world is facing an urgent public health crisis and we are committed to doing our part to make a Covid-19 vaccine available and affordable globally as quickly as possible," Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky said in a statement.

In its statement, Johnson & Johnson said it was increasing manufacturing capacity and setting up new vaccine man-

ufacturing capabilities inside the U.S. It said it aimed to manufacture a billion doses and that it had already begun making the vaccine so it could be ready if it is proven to work.

The company also announced a collaboration with the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, a government agency that funds the development of certain categories of drugs. The company said Johnson & Johnson and the biomedical authority had jointly committed to spending \$1 billion on vaccine research, and a separate funding

partnership to find antivirals to treat Covid-19.

A widely available, safe, effective vaccine for Covid-19 would dramatically transform how health authorities deal with the virus. It is unclear how widely available the prospective Johnson & Johnson vaccine would be under an emergency-use authorization. Last week, the biotech firm Moderna (MRNA), which is also developing a Covid-19 vaccine, said it was possible a vaccine could be made available for health workers by this fall. (Barrons)



People flouting safe distancing methods as they wait in line to buy groceries in the Southern Province yesterday. (Picture by Wimal Karunathilaka)

Social distancing: beyond Covid 19

DISHAN JOSEPH

As the deadly invisible virus strikes fear into the mind of Sri Lankans, we have been presented with a new term-social distancing. To most this would be something new and challenging. If we look deeply into history we can see many cultures have indeed practiced forms of social distancing in keeping with the cultural trends of those bygone eras. The purpose of this article is beyond containing the Covid-19 virus. I want to enlighten readers on the greater importance of social distancing and its impact. You will better understand the importance of social distancing in terms of public security.

Lessons from history

We must now look into the past and learn. We can indeed take pride in our ancient kings who ruled with practical wisdom. I will present you with a classic example of social distancing. The perehara pageant staged by major Buddhist temples is the best example on social distancing in ancient times. Today thousands of tourists and locals happily gather to witness the pomp and grandeur of this festival. The long route of the perehara in ancient times was considered not only for space, but for cool breeze along the path. The torch bearers not only offered illumination, but the herbs infused inside the burning charcoal acted as a burning disinfectant. The order of the march is arranged where all stakeholders, including the majestic elephants kept their distance. Both man and beast taking part had to undergo a clean bathing ritual before the grand march. Oils used to bless people were not just ritualistic but contained healing properties. The drumbeats and chants became a unified melody. I have heard from educated seniors that in those days' people stood in clusters, to witness and worship thereby not crowding in one place. The route of the perehara was naturally blessed with large trees like Khomba, which are nature's anti bacterial sentinels.

This is one of many examples which show people living united in a community but yet staying safe from all possible hazards. Another brilliant example I have witnessed from yesteryear is



Crowded trains and buses

within the Eastern Naval Command at Trincomalee. This was the premier base of the British Eastern Fleet, and remains a strategic stronghold of the Sri Lanka Navy. The prudent British Navy had designated two islands for medical purposes, among the cluster of islands surrounding the Trincomalee Harbour. Both of these islands can be seen from the famous Osterberg Ridge. One island was maintained where infected sailors were sent to quarantine (on a steel cable, travelling in a canvas basket from the hill). If they died there was the second small island where they were buried.

What better way to contain an epidemic.

Over the decades the Sri Lankan intellect and emotional fabric has sadly been printed with superstition that still dominates the lives of people. Let us explore some examples of how we as a nation have seriously violated "social distancing". It is one thing to boast of our love and care as humans. Yet we must set the pace to eradicate unwanted gatherings of people. Take the example of a funeral. Death is not a pleasant topic. As we know families gather to comfort those who grieve, this is a good thing. In the past when

people visited funerals from villages, in bullock carts they had a right to stay and mourn. It was for these long distance travelers that a meal of rice, pumpkin and dried fish curry was given after the funeral. Today this tradition continues even when mortal remains are kept at the modern air-conditioned parlour. Some chefs have created "mala bath" funeral menus. Is it truly hygienic for people to gather from a cemetery (of any religion), come home and indulge in a meal? Why can't all Sri Lankans afford to use the services of a funeral parlour? This is definitely an economic issue.

Crowded public transport

On the other hand for Sri Lankans living in Europe and America, do you serve rice and dried fish after burying a loved one? No. You might serve coffee and everyone disperses from the cemetery. I have visited funerals in major housing complexes like Maligawatte and Soysapura, where open coffins are kept at home for three days. How hygienic is this for their neighbors? If funeral parlours are costly for these citizens, what is the next healthy alternative.

As a Sri Lankan who has used buses and trains for the past 30 years, I can only say we are so far from social distancing. The focus is not reaching your destination, be it early or late. Covid 19 or not we have to rapidly transform our transport systems, to enhance public hygiene. Some of the things that happen daily in public transport, which have been ignored by authorities for decades -

Overcrowding of buses and trains. Overcrowding of train platforms at major stations like Fort, Maradana etc; In case of a road accident or derailment the number of people killed and injured will be high. We have witnessed this; Crowded transport creates close contact, people leaning and pushing on each other. You can catch any infection like fever and sore eyes; Crowded buses and office trains are perfect for sex predators and perverts to harass young girls and women; The buses and trains are hunting fields for pick pockets and snatch thieves; There is potential for a deadly terrorist



Ayubowan: This Sri Lankan greeting paves the way for social distancing

attack on a crowded train; Vendors boarding buses and trains selling food with no permission. They can be carrying any form of disease; Elderly senior citizens and disabled persons don't have the chance to travel safely. It is their right to do so; Constant use of currency notes from conductor to passenger. Why not a introduce a card or season like foreign countries?

Emotional Intelligence

Obtaining a degree in any field is an academic achievement. However I have seen young graduates coming to the World Trade Centre for job interviews with both parents and or one relative. This is not a criminal offence, yet why do you want your parents to come with you? Imagine 50 young people coming with one parent adds another 50 people to the crowd at the WTC.

Another funny habit of Sri Lankans is a jolly family trip to the International airport at Katunayake. It is hard to leave behind family as we travel for work of higher studies. Family farewells must not extend into the departure lounge. Until the wise health authorities closed/restricted such travel except for the passenger in the past week- Sri Lankans hired and travelled in vans to send off one person. Families from villages make this a road trip. This poses a security

hazard to Police and Air Force personnel on duty. The public may like to see large aircraft, but the international Airport is not an aviation exhibition. Globally we have seen airports being attacked by terrorists. Excessive non-passengers must be curtailed by the respective authorities with immediate effect, Covid 19 or not.

During the curfew many were arrested for curfew violations. Why can't people stay at home? What are the social issues at home where they can't sit and spend a day? Do families communicate effectively? Why are some people addicted to liquor during a national crisis? Do the young boys playing cricket, really need social acceptance? Have we cultivated the true habit of reading good books? This is another day's deliberation.

Sri Lanka is an amazing land where four major religions coexist. Faith in God has been a great comfort in these challenging days. Over the decades each religion has its own annual/ traditional gatherings. We build massive crowds.

The fear of a divine deity brings unity and respect in any culture. However in the context of social distancing, in future organizers of any religious festival/event will have to plan in advance with medical/security experts and restrict unwanted gatherings of thousands of people in a tight space. Look at the last two weeks, whatever your religion you worshipped at home and sustained your holistic requirements.

In conclusion we can agree that major change is needed in how we operate as a nation. From queuing up at a theatre, visiting the zoo or buying food in public restaurants great change has to be implemented in people's mindsets.

Tough laws must come in place to regulate food sales in public with emphasis on hygiene.

Attitudes must change when shopping at Super Markets. Covid 19 or not Sri Lanka needs systematic change. Until then please respect the health warnings and police curfews.

COVID-19: Safety tips for journalists

Journalism as a public service is vital and doesn't stop. Journalists are still covering press conferences and conducting on-the-ground reporting. How can they protect themselves from contracting the disease?

Following the World Health Organization's lead, Brazil's Ministry of Health published guidelines for all businesses in the country, including the media. The guidelines recommend virtual meetings and canceling non-essential trips, and encourage employees to work from home if possible. Managers are advised to adopt alternative schedules so that workers could avoid peak commuting hours.

Many Brazilian news outlets are implementing preventive measures, while intensifying their coverage of the pandemic. The largest newspapers, including Folha de S. Paulo, O Estado de S. Paulo and O Globo, have encouraged their employees to work remotely.

For journalists who remain in the newsrooms, Dr. Jamal Suleiman, an infectious disease specialist at the Emílio Ribas Institute in São Paulo, recommends maintaining several feet of distance between you and other people, including between newscasters and interviewees.

"As soon as you get to work, you should clean your things [such as your computer] with 70% alcohol," he says. "When finished, wash your hands and then start working and do the same before leaving."

Despite taking all these precautions to reduce the exposure to the virus, Suleiman stresses, individuals can still be exposed.

Last Monday, the Union of Professional Journalists in the State of São Paulo (SJPSP in Portuguese) issued



Safe distancing in media coverages

guidelines for news outlets recommending that face-to-face interviews should only take place if strictly necessary, and all business trips that are nonessential for news coverage should be canceled.

The guidelines are more doable for digital outlets that are used to working remotely than for photojournalists and videographers. Visual journalists are instructed to rely on interviews via video conference, and when that is not possible, choose a location with fewer people and ensure that no one has cold or flu symptoms.

Dr. Suleiman says that open spaces are no longer deemed safe. "Agglomeration is a problem. There are some studies about the viability of the virus in the air, which is two [or three] hours. How much of that has an impact? We still have no idea," he explains. Therefore, ideally, choose places where few people have circulated.

For street interviews, where one cannot ascertain if interviewees are carriers or not, wear a surgical mask. "Use it and discard it. The duration of the mask is two hours, but you will not spend two hours interviewing the same person, so for each interviewee, [use] a different mask," he advises. Dr. Suleiman says he

remembers that in the 1990s when HIV cases broke out in Brazil, the television teams were huge, with four or five people.

Today he considers a small team of a maximum of two ideal for covering epidemics, which reduces the likelihood of widespread infection.

For the equipment, reporters are advised to use two microphones, one for themselves and one for the interviewee, and clean all the equipment with alcohol. For on-the-ground teams, TV Globo distributed a kit containing hand sanitizer and Lysoform to disinfect the equipment.

COVID-19 prevention tips for journalists:

Work from home if you can; In the newsroom, clean your work station every day with at least 70% alcohol; Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds; Conduct in-person interviews only if necessary; Keep a distance of at least three to six feet from interviewees; Use two microphones and sanitize them with alcohol and disposable towels; Clean all equipment with alcohol; Send teams of no more than two people; Opt for places with low foot traffic; Wear a surgical mask when interviewing random people on the streets and discard it immediately afterwards.

(JNET)

INVITATION FOR BIDS

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PROVINCIAL GENERAL HOSPITAL, BADULLA

Bids are invited for URGENT PROCUREMENT by the Chairman of the Regional Procurement Committee of the Provincial General Hospital, Badulla from qualified bidders for obtaining the following supplies.

Serial No.	Bid No.	Supplies	Qty	Non-Refundable Bid Document Fee (Rs.)	Refundable Bid Deposit (Rs.)
Medical Equipment					
01	PGHB/ FC/15/20	X Ray Machine Mobile	01	1,000.00	80,000.00
02	PGHB/ FC/16/20	Supply & installation of Central Monitoring System with 08 Nos. of ICU Multipara Monitors	08	3,500.00	200,000.00
03	PGHB/ FC/17/20	Video Laryngoscope	01	1,000.00	70,000.00
04	PGHB/ FV/17/20	Surgical Masks	100,000 Nos.	-	-

02. Bids will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding procedure.

03. Further details regarding this may be obtained during office hours on working days of the week either by calling the Accountant (Ext. 1103) or from the undermentioned hospital website.

04. Qualified bidders may obtain bid documents by email from 31.03.2020 until 08.04.2020 upon payment of the above mentioned non-refundable bid document fee for each bid to the Shroff Division of the Hospital between 9.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. on working days of the week and between 9.00 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. on Saturdays or by depositing the amount in the Hospital Account.

05. **It is mandatory to submit a letter of request for documents along with a copy of the valid NMRA (CDDA) Registration Certificate for each item and copy of the Company Registration Certificate to obtain bid documents.**

06. Duly perfected sealed bids may either be sent by Registered Post to the Provincial General Hospital, Badulla or deposited in the Tender Box to receive before 10.00 a.m. on 09.04.2020. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be opened at 10.30 a.m. on the same day and the bidder or an authorised representative may be present at the time of opening of bids.

07. Regional Procurement Committee of the Provincial General Hospital, Badulla reserves the right to take the final decision regarding this bid.

**Chairman,
Regional Procurement Committee,
Provincial General Hospital,
Badulla.**

Tel. Nos. : 055-2222261

Email : info@badullapgh.org

31.03.2020

Fax : 055-2231205

Website : www.badullapgh.org

Teaching kids to mind their manners



A SOUND MENTALITY, IS MUST TO OVERCOME THIS SITUATION

RUWINI JAYAWARDANA

As schools close, parents are suddenly faced with the challenge of keeping their children occupied at home. This may be a tedious time for parents, but experts say that it might be a good thing because parents will be able to connect and spend some quality time with their offspring. Head nurse of the National Hospital Pushpa Ramyani De Soysa tells us that even if you are stuck at home waiting for the coronavirus to clear, you can still lead a healthy lifestyle.



Head nurse of the National Hospital **Pushpa Ramyani De Soysa**



sticking to daily routines as much as possible plays a major role in achieving this purpose. Get up early each morning. Brushing your teeth properly can be the first lesson of the day.

ATTENDING TO DENTAL PROBLEMS

"A majority of children suffer from cavities and dental problems in our country. Therefore, this is the ideal time that parents can teach them to brush their teeth properly. Most children just have a go at their teeth, left to right, and think that they are done. Parents too do not push them to do a proper job because they are in a hurry to get ready for work. Since you have some time at hand train your child to use the brush. Start from the gum on the upper level and bring the bristles downwards so that any remaining food particles will come out. Bacteria often hangs out where your tooth meets your gum. We miss that area a lot," she expressed add-

ing that cultivating such habits will be rewarded with a set of healthy teeth which a person can retain till old age.

TEACHING CHILDREN HEALTHY HABITS

Children need to be trained to wash themselves properly too. Healthy hygiene habits need to be advocated during this process.

"Teach them how to use the toilet properly and clean themselves and the bathroom after the process. A washroom which is flooded with water and reeks with the smell of urine is revolting. Some people even spit on the bathroom floor thinking that it will wash away with the water. Such habits breed germs and are areas which can spread diseases easily. You need to practice self-discipline as well as teach it," she said.

She also urges people to use the bathroom only at moments when necessary. Do not spend hours in it. Wash your hands properly before leaving the bathroom.

"This is a matter that parents overlook

often when they advocate good toilet habits to their children. A person needs to make sure that their toilet is in usable condition for another person too before leaving it," she stressed.

It is essential to wear a set of clean clothes each day. Discard the clothes you have worn the previous day into a laundry basket.

"Drink a glass of warm water in the morning. Have your tea later. Discuss what kind of breakfast you are preparing with your children. They should be conscious about the nutrients included in the meal. Stress upon the fact that such ingredients will help boost their immunity. This will prepare them to look forward to their meal without fussing about it," she said.

HEALTHY MEALS

Heart-healthy meals should be introduced while meals which please the tongue but lack nutrients like fried rice and koththu should be

taken off the menu. Choose items sans artificial ingredients. Include chickpeas, cow-pea, green leaves and vegetables.

"For example include Thebu Leaves in your diet. They reduced the blood sugar level. Therefore, they are especially good for diabetic patients. They can stimulate appetite, control phlegm and bile, treat skin issues, and control fever and cough. There are many natural plants, vegetables and fruits like this which are rich with ayurvedic benefits. Make them a part of your daily diet so that you can revamp your immunity," she opined.

She also advised family members to have the meals together to make it a more enjoyable experience as well as to strengthen family bonds.

PLAN YOUR DAY

"Elaborate your plans for the day. Clean the cobwebs in your home. Put the furniture in order. Sweep the floor and tidy the house. Yes, nobody is expected to visit your home during this period but a clean and tidy home is a pleasant atmosphere to be in. You too will feel motivated

to spend time in a room after it is cleaned and tidied properly," she said adding that each and every family member can be engaged in this "cleaning spree".

Do a daily workout. Pick some exercises you can do at home like jumping jacks, lunges or jogging in one place. Exercise in short bursts and repeat two to three times per day.

Don't stress out. Take a few minutes each day to meditate. Practice good sleep habits and stay socially connected with friends and family via text, video chat or phone call.

While we want to protect our children from the worries of the outside world, this is simply not possible in the current situation, especially as children become older. This is why parents need to talk to children about coronavirus.

"This is something new for them too and it has affected their daily routines. Discuss the situation with them and update them on what kind of measures they should take to ensure their own safety. You as parents, have a duty to keep them informed," she pointed out adding that as teens have access to various forms of social media today, they themselves could form a chilling picture of the situation if the topic is not dealt with.

"Don't follow a routine in which you eat, sleep and watch TV. This would play havoc with their psychology as you would be worrying exceedingly about the COVID-19 positive numbers, number of deaths, areas affected, state in other nations etc. The term "coronavirus" would be echoing in their thoughts all day, driving you to a state near insanity. A sound mentality is a must to overcome this situation," De Soysa concluded.

DEVELOPING CHILD LEARNING PROCESS

"Though many take this situation with a pinch of salt, I see this period as a time in which you can develop a child's learning process. The physical, mental and spiritual well-being of a person matters greatly during this span. Don't disregard your physical activities and healthy eating habits as these are the foundation to maintaining and improving your health. Parents need to keep this in mind and plan each day," she said.

Prevention is key in limiting the spread of COVID-19 and with more people working remotely or limiting their exposure to crowds, it's important to maintain healthy habits at home. De Soysa points out that



A greener garden

TIPS FOR CHOOSING PLANTS

We were unprepared! We didn't think in the long term! We didn't anticipate this! We missed the signs! didn't we? The Tsunami that hit us in 2004 should have warned us that another disaster could happen anytime. The Easter Attacks that happened last year should have warned us that society could be crippled again. Last year the threat was from man. Terror came from man. Today the threat is a virus. Terror from a virus. However there have always been those who have the gift of farsightedness. Those who have maintained home gardens are secure! They have a source of food that is sufficient for them for the next few months. Today the Daily News speaks to District Agriculture Instructor and Deputy Provincial Director of Agriculture Ratmalana K.N.K Jayathilake, on what crops you should grow in your home garden, so you can enjoy a daily balanced and healthy diet.

NEXT IMPORTANT STEP

After understanding the necessity of maintaining a home garden, choosing which crops to grow in your home garden is the next most important step. Of course, we know that vegetables and fruits provide an array of health benefits. We know that different members of the family may have different health requirements.

But overall, what we want from a home garden is a source of healthy and nourishing food that is free from chemicals, that will fill our bellies and appeal to our palates.

Also, another vital factor that we need to take into account is the age of the family members.

HEALTHIER DIET

"I feel you should grow as many vegetables and fruits as possible in your home garden. The more the variety, the more balanced and healthier your diet will become. Also, if there is a variety of vegetables on your dish the tastier the meal is," said Jayathilake

Jayathilake pointed out that since you need to grow as many crops as possible, you need to systematically arrange your garden in such a way where you can utilize sunlight and shade. There are tolerant shade loving vegetable plants to put in shady corners of the garden such as Lettuce, Spinach, Broccoli, Cabbage and Turnip. Then there are vegetables that can be grown in just about any garden spot. Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Peppers and Beans, benefit from being grown in areas with full sun. Carrots, Radishes, Beets and other root vegetables require at least half a day of sun to thrive.

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS

Another factor is the number of family members. There are many options when it comes to determining the vegetable and fruit garden size. Every family has different needs and preferences when it comes to food. Also, plants vary in size, so it depends on what vegetables and fruits you grow. Carrots are heat sensitive, which is why they go well with tomato plants that can provide them a bit of shade. It is advised that Carrots should be planted near onions. Radishes can also be planted among cucumbers. Beets, cabbage, carrots, lettuce can



District Agriculture Instructor and Deputy Provincial Director of Agriculture Ratmalana **K.N.K. JAYATHILAKE**

also be planted alongside onions. Size matters a lot in a home garden. 10 feet of beets spaced two to three inches apart provides enough beets for one person. If all four family members want beets, a 40-foot row should provide enough beets for the family.

By the time the Corona Virus hit Sri Lanka, Sri Lankan home gardeners already knew the tricks. You won't really know how many vegetables to plant for your family until you've got some experience under your belt.

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Climatic conditions in the Hill country are ideal for crops such as carrot, leek, cabbage, cauliflower, salad leaves, beet, bean, bell pepper, and salad cucumber. The low country is suitable for a variety of vegetables ranging from green chili, red onion, pumpkin, bitter gourd, melon.

"Diversity is essential in a home garden. In Sri Lanka there are Up country crops, Mid country crops and Low country crops. Up Country vegetables are basically cabbage, leeks, carrots and beetroot. They need a low temperature. But carrots and cabbage can be success-

fully cultivated in Low - country as well. When it comes to Low Country vegetables you can cultivate Chillies, Capsicum, tomatoes (up to a certain extent), Winged Bean (Dambala), Long Bean (Ma), Luffa (Wata-kolu), Bitter Gourd (Karawila), Pathola, and leafy vegetables (Kang kung and Gotukola). Tomatoes can be grown in Up-country, Low Country Wet Zone and Dry Zone," explained Jayathilake.

Amongst some of the most popular vegetables, Kang Kung is a rich source of vitamins (particularly A, B and C), iron, protein, calcium, amino acids and anti-oxidants. Gotu Kola is frequently made into a breakfast soup called Kola Kanda - it is thought to cleanse the blood. One hundred grams of Bitter Gourd provides 140% of your Vitamin C (RDA). Curry leaves contain calcium, phosphorus, iron, magnesium, copper, and minerals. High in vitamin content, they contain nicotinic acid and vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin B, vitamin E, antioxidants, and amino acids.

"If you want to spice your food up then there are also many types of chillies you can grow in Sri Lankan home gardens - Malu miris, Varani-

ya miris and Kochchi miris. When it comes to long term harvesting, Kochchi miris is ideal. All these vegetables come in bright striking colors which beautify the home garden. If you can grow four of each variety, then that is enough for your home garden. If you take Bandakka, around 10 of those is enough for the home garden," pointed out Jayathilake.

YAMS AND ITS IMPORTANCE

He also pointed out that Yams is another essential crop that must be grown in a home garden. Sri Lanka is a country that has a considerable number of edible and non-edible roots and tuber varieties. This important resource is commonly

known as 'yams'. Potato is a Yam which is an upcountry vegetable. It is as popular as Manioc, Raja Ala and Sweet Potato. This up-country crop is high yielding. Yam is a good source of energy - 100 g provides 118 calories. "Aloe Vera is another plant that needs to be grown. There are many varieties of Kola Kanda that we can prepare. Some are -Hathawariya, Wel Penala, Iramusu, Monarakudumbiya, Polpala, Kohila, Karapincha (curry leaves), Elabatu Kanda, Gotukola, Mukunuwenna," said Jayathilake. When it comes to fruits, one can grow - papaya, pineapple and banana in the home garden.

(NEXT - how to prepare the soil with compost and maintain nurseries.)

APPLE DEBUTS NEW IPAD PRO

Apple has quietly launched its most advanced iPad Pro. According to an Apple news release, the A12Z Bionic chip equipped iPad Pro is faster and more powerful than most Windows PC laptops. With iPadOS 13.4, Apple brings trackpad support to iPad, giving customers an all-new way to interact with their iPad. Rather than copying the experience from macOS, trackpad support has been completely reimaged for iPad. As users move their finger across the trackpad, the pointer elegantly transforms to highlight user interface elements. Multi-Touch gestures on the trackpad make it fast and easy to navigate the entire system without users ever lifting their hand.

"The new iPad Pro introduces advanced technologies never before available in mobile computing," said Phil Schiller, Apple's senior vice president of Worldwide Marketing. "Combining the most advanced mobile display with powerful performance, pro cameras, pro audio, the breakthrough LiDAR Scanner and new Magic Keyboard with Trackpad, this is another huge leap forward for iPad. There's no other device in the world like the new iPad Pro."

Built for the most demanding tasks, like editing 4K video or designing 3D models, iPad Pro gets another performance boost with the new A12Z Bionic chip. The eight-core GPU in the A12Z Bionic, along with an enhanced thermal architecture and tuned performance controllers, gives iPad Pro the highest performance ever in an iPad. Combined with the eight-core CPU and the powerful Neural



Engine, which enables next-generation apps, there's no other chip that can offer the incredible performance found in the thin and light design of iPad Pro. It offers great battery life lasting up to 10 hours, faster Wi-Fi connectivity and gigabit-class LTE that's 60 percent faster with support for more new LTE bands.

The edge-to-edge Liquid Retina display — in both 11-inch and 12.9-inch sizes — is the world's most advanced mobile display. Featuring P3 wide color support, it lets users see photos,

videos, apps and games in great detail. ProMotion technology automatically adjusts the display refresh rate up to 120 Hz for ultra-smooth scrolling and responsiveness. The Pro camera system on iPad Pro features a 12MP Wide camera for capturing photos and 4K video, and now includes a 10MP Ultra Wide camera that zooms out two times to capture a much wider field of view. Adding a second camera doubles the photo and video possibilities.

iPad Pro now features five studio-quality microphones for

capturing super clean audio and the quietest details, and delivers an immersive sound experience with four-speaker audio that automatically adjusts to any orientation, no matter how it is held. The combination of pro cameras, pro audio and the large display make iPad Pro a versatile mobile studio for creative pros.

The breakthrough LiDAR Scanner enables capabilities never before possible on any mobile device. The LiDAR Scanner measures the distance to surrounding objects up to 5

meters away, works both indoors and outdoors, and operates at the photon level at nano-second speeds. New depth frameworks in iPadOS combine depth points measured by the LiDAR Scanner, data from both cameras and motion sensors, and is enhanced by computer vision algorithms on the A12Z Bionic for a more detailed understanding of a scene. The tight integration of these elements enables a whole new class of Augmented Reality (AR) experiences on iPad Pro.

iPadOS 13.4 brings trackpad support to iPad for the first time for a more natural typing experience and added precision for tasks such as writing and selecting text, working with spreadsheets and pro workflows. Designed specifically for the touch-first experience on iPad, the cursor appears as a circle that highlights user interface elements, text fields and apps on the Home screen and Dock, giving a clear indication of what users can click on. For the first time ever, the iPad has mouse support too.

Joining the second-generation Apple Pencil4 and an updated Smart Keyboard Folio5 is the new Magic Keyboard. Attaching magnetically to iPad Pro, the Magic Keyboard puts the beautiful Multi-Touch screen on display with its floating design, working equally well on a lap or on a desk. The portable and protective design of the Magic Keyboard delivers a full-size keyboard with backlit keys and a scissor mechanism that delivers 1mm travel, delivering the best typing experience.



Microsoft: Soaring demand for cloud services



Microsoft has seen a 775 per cent increase in demand for its cloud services, including Xbox Live, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an update on the official Microsoft Azure blog, Microsoft said that "in regions that have enforced social distancing or shelter in place order" — countries and cities that are in lockdown, in other words — the company was seeing increases across all areas of its clouding business as people work, and play, at home.

"In response to health authorities emphasizing the importance of social distancing, we've seen usage increases in services that support these scenarios — including Microsoft Teams, Windows Virtual Desktop, and Power BI," the blog post said. "We have seen a 775 per cent increase of our cloud services in regions that have enforced social distancing or shelter in place orders."

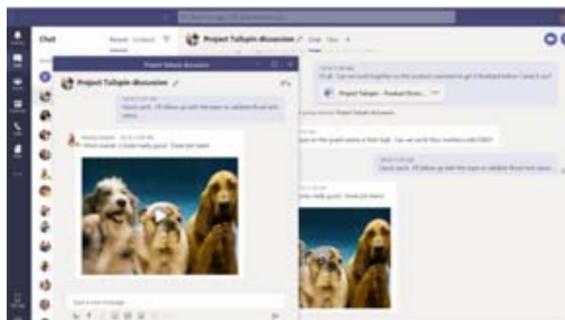
In a written Q&A that specifically asked if the strain of Xbox Live was impacting on other Microsoft servers, the blog responded: "We're actively monitoring performance and usage trends to ensure we're optimizing services for gamers

worldwide. At the same time, we're taking proactive steps to plan for high-usage periods, which includes taking prudent measures with our publishing partners to deliver higher-bandwidth activities like game updates during off-peak hours."

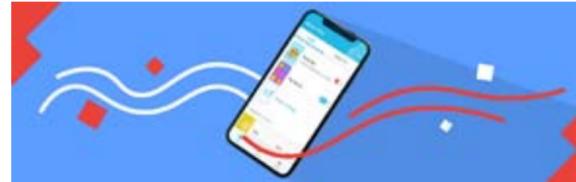
"Gaming is many things to many people around the world," further elaborated an update post on the Xbox Support page. "It's entertainment, it's connecting with friends and loved ones, it's a much-needed break, especially in times like these."

"Like many of you, we're adjusting to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The health and safety of our staff is a top priority at this time, but rest assured, we're also committed to taking care of your Xbox support needs."

Consequently, the firm is experiencing heavy support volume at the moment, so "wait times may be longer than usual". In related news, Sony recently confirmed that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has yet to have any major effects on the launch of the PS5, which is still planned for this holiday season. The new PS5 can also play 4K UHD Blu Rays. (Games Radar)



Marco Polo: Explore a new way to video chat



This week, more people downloaded the Marco Polo app from the Apple iOS app store than such long-established household names as Google Chrome, WhatsApp, Skype or Twitter, according to market tracker Apptopia.

This is a big deal for a small app run by a mom and pop who fled Poland and Ukraine to find a better life in the United States. They created the app as a way to better communicate with the folks back home.

The video messaging app was first released in 2014, so it's been around for some time and has always had its fans. But the effect of being homebound during the coronavirus shutdown has had folks looking for novel ways to stay in touch with other people, and word has spread fast about Marco Polo.

"Chat apps are great if you have lots of free time," says Vlada Bortnik, who co-founded Marco Polo with husband Michal and serves as the CEO. "But if you're like most of us — moms who are homeschooling, running a business and cooking dinner — it's hard to find the time."

Marco Polo's twist on video communication is as simple as the old swimming pool game with the same name. It's a walkie-talkie video message app. You shoot a "Marco" video message and send it to your friend who then responds with a "Polo" response video.

Thus, you've made contact, but you don't have to both be ready to connect live at the same time.

Instead, you respond when you have free time.

If you do want to talk live, you do it differently from a live video app like Skype or Zoom. You Marco Polo

back and forth, but in real time, like video texting.

Marco Polo has plenty of competition. Zoom, the app favored by companies for meetings, has been discovered by the general public, which is using it for online learning, to stream worship services and even by folks looking to re-create dinner parties and the like online. The app is No. 1 on both the iOS and Google Play Android charts, where other popular video apps include House Party, favored by teens for ground hangout sessions, and Google Duo, which is the company's answer to Apple's FaceTime video chat.

All offer real-time video chat, unlike Marco Polo's back and forth.

The Polo app itself has over 10 million downloads and in the past few weeks of the coronavirus crisis, it has experienced a 1,147% increase

in new signups and a 145% increase in activity, according to Bortnik.

"It's all been organic and just word of mouth," she says. Especially during these dark days, we all want to reach out to family and friends, and "see what they look like. You ask how they are, and are they truly fine, or coughing up a storm?"

As she said recently, on Twitter: "Now more than ever, seeing faces is so much more connecting than seeing emojis."

Of course, the Bortniks make it easy to have fun at the same time. Polo video messages get the extra additions of funny voices that can be added in — like those of a "robot," "macho" tone or a super-high "helium" balloon voice. You can also draw on the image, add text and Instagram like color filters.

Bortnik arrived in America by way of Kansas and began her tech career at Microsoft, where she met Michal and worked on products like Office, Hotmail and MSN. She and Michal ended up in the San Francisco area, where they started a consulting firm, which led to Joya Communications, the parent company of Marco Polo.

Now they're based in Palo Alto, California, and have a worldwide

team of 37 remote workers (in 15 states and 3 countries) on the app. She says they have not had a hard time keeping up with the increased traffic.

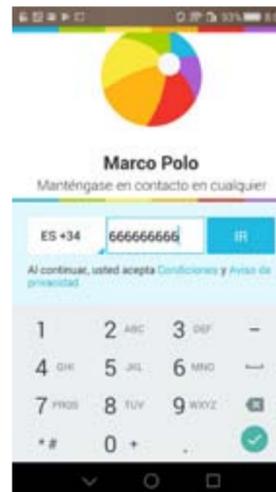
The big question investors and pesky reporters want to know: How does Marco Polo expect to make money one day? The app is currently ad-free and will always stay that way, she says.

They do offer a \$10 premium monthly subscription for fans of the app who want to help "support" it, and in return, they get access to a full library of their past Polo videos, which at some point disappear from the free model.

Her hope is that, eventually, people will pay "for something they find valuable," as she explores the economic model and final pricing that works with her vision.

Even with all the funny voices and colorful graphics, Marco Polo's audience isn't just kids, she says, but the average is adults, ages 25 to 54, who are just looking for a way to connect on their time.

"All of us want that," she says. (USA Today)



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The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited,
LAKE HOUSE
P. O. Box 1217 No. 35, D.R. Wijewardene Mawatha,
Colombo 10, Sri Lanka
Telephone : (011) 242 9211 Fax: (011) 234 3694
E-mail : editor.dailynews@lakehouse.lk
news.dailynews@lakehouse.lk
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Maintaining law and order amid the health crisis

As we enter the third week of lockdown in the whole country, we are keenly aware that the country's police and security forces are proceeding with numerous regular duties in addition to the multiplicity of new tasks dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

After all, the enforcers of law and order must continue to deal with the entire set of normal crime, social violence and misbehaviour. Criminal investigations must proceed. Round-ups of narcotic dealers are done. All kinds of other misdemeanours by citizens must be dealt with – from domestic violence to smuggling to cybercrime.

Yesterday, Police sleuths probing last year's Easter bombings announced their capture of a key suspect in that extremist terror attack – the main accomplice of the suicide bomber who attacked the Zion Church in Batticaloa city. With nearly a year passing since the Easter terror campaign, our police investigators can be seen to be doggedly pursuing the perpetrators without let up, whatever the other, momentous, national distractions.

Meanwhile, the Navy, earlier last week, announced the apprehension of a large stock of narcotics on board some fishing craft off the south Eastern coast. The smugglers were also caught.

At the same time, the national cyber network monitors have identified and warned the public regarding certain new computer software being offered on the Internet that are actually invasive malicious programmes aiming to invade computers, steal data and, sow a little digital mayhem for the benefit of a cyber criminal ring.

The nation must certainly appreciate the sheer hard work of our guardians of law and order and national security who must undertake all these routine tasks over and above the taxing new labours in response to the ongoing health crisis.

Tried and tested emergency response systems in the country are now in overdrive as they cope with a sudden, new, emergency that is of an entirely new nature and of an unprecedented scale.

At the same time, the continuous curfews across the island mean that, due to severe restrictions on social interactions and physical movement of people, there is less opportunity for certain types of crime, especially crime in the public sphere. Robberies are less, although it is likely that, as the curfew regime drags on, petty criminals will get tempted to venture out in less monitored neighbourhoods. While drug peddling on the street is not viable, that will still not completely deter illicit 'delivery' to addict customers.

The general public is, thus, challenged to both rigorously practice the social hygiene measures while, at the same time, remaining alert for other social threats in the form of not only petty crime and human misbehaviour, but also subversive activities by extremists whenever they arise.

These are indeed testing times and, while our various contingency response agencies are ultra busy, we must steadfastly maintain our own composure and step up to the challenge of patience in the face of new hardships and inconveniences. And we do this even as we grittily and rigorously practice those 'must' social hygiene requirements – washing hands and staying apart.

As our medical community (as well as the world's medical authority, the WHO) now exhorts constantly, we must stay apart to stay alive – as individuals and as a society.

There is no doubt that little Sri Lanka, despite its relative poverty, has already done better than most of the rich countries in meeting the COVID-19 threat. This success has already been noted by global health monitoring agencies.

The Government, no doubt, still faces the challenge of providing more and more Novel Coronavirus test kits to test as much of the population as possible. Hopefully, we will get more outside help in this expensive exercise. China, Japan and South Korea have already stepped forward to help with generous gifts of this equipment. We must hope that our private sector will also contribute by helping make this equipment domestically.

As at yesterday evening, the death toll from COVID-19 had risen to two persons and the count of infected cases to 122. Nearly a dozen COVID-19 patients have successfully been treated and have completely recovered from the disease. While over two thousand 'suspect' cases remain in quarantine, and many more are likely to be added to that number as and when fresh infection cases are detected and their contact persons are identified and corralled for quarantine.

Amid all this, our police and Security Forces work to maintain the peace and law and order in order to provide us with the socially stable foundation to devote our energies to fight this potentially devastating biological menace. Ultimately, however, it is us, all Sri Lankans, who must make it work.

Given the untiring labours and sheer bravery of our healthcare community and security agencies, the citizenry must not betray that whole endeavour by a mediocre laxity in doing its part to defeat COVID-19.

The key to tackling the Coronavirus

TRACE, TEST, ISOLATE AND TREAT

DR RUVAIZ HANIFFA

As we come to the end of the 'official quarantine' period and begin to relax the 'lockdown' within Sri Lanka but keeping the 'international lockdown' in place, we need to look at how the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 has behaved in other countries.

Based on actual case numbers from the other countries, Sri Lanka can expect an upsurge in the number of COVID 19 cases in the coming weeks. This may get further aggravated during the upcoming Sinhalese and Tamil New Year in mid-April 2020 (week six) where we can expect mass internal migration of fellow citizens within the country.

This calls for the health (both state and private sector) and non-health sectors to act in a pre-emptive manner to deal with the inevitable morbidity and mortality which is to be expected. The health authorities should as per the WHO appeal use all available health resources within the country to deal with the health outcomes and outputs of the pandemic to contain and mitigate it and sustain such control over time.

A key scientific tool in containing and mitigation of the spread of the virus is to know with certainty who has the virus and where those who have the virus are located geographically. THE ONLY WAY OF DOING THIS IS TO TEST FOR THE VIRUS (Trace, Test, Isolate and Treat).

Therefore, there is a dire need to rapidly increase and expand the testing of our citizens if we as a country want to have a positive impact on the pandemic in our country and there by secure the health and wellbeing of our fellow countrymen. The strongest point of our response to the pandemic from a healthcare perspective should be how we improve our weakest point which at the moment is testing for COVID-19.

Please consider this appeal as one of high priority – we have only one chance to get this right and there is no plan B.

I give below comments from my colleagues on the issue of the need for rapid expansion of Testing for COVID-19 in the Sri Lankan population.

Comment 1 - Prof. Vidya Jyothi Vajira H. W. Dissanayake

If we do not expand testing and identify those with the virus the curfews would be useless. In addition we need to test the exposed healthcare workers and either clear them as soon as possible so that they can continue to work after the minimum period of isolation or send them for treatment as soon as possible.

I looked at the list of lab equipment that the Ministry of Health has requested from donors. I cannot understand the logic behind the genetic equipment that they want include 9 RT PCR machines presumably to set up nine labs in different hospitals. The cost of the equipment



Healthcare workers prepare to treat a suspected Coronavirus patient

that the ministry is looking for is above 300 million rupees. Even if you get the money for these equipment, constructing the labs, bringing down equipment, installing and commissioning them, hiring people, training them, trouble shoot etc. will take six to nine months. I am talking from experience.

In the meantime there are labs in universities – Colombo, SJP, Kelaniya, Peradeniya, KDU and the private sector Asiri, Durdans, Nawaloka, Lanka hospitals and SLINTEC that have already functioning labs with RT PCR machines. All you have to do is get the kits and pay for the overheads. I know the universities and the private sector will do it as a national need. You will be up and running by next week. We need testing to be started now. Last Friday's and later incidents where people were freely mingling in markets would have speeded up the spread. If we are not detecting cases, the reason is we are not testing.

Comment 2 - Vidyajothi Prof. Harendra de Silva

We cannot be complacent. We are sitting on the tip of the iceberg. Our testing is limited to PCR at MRI and JPU. We are not looking out to detect and track cases actively. We are passive; only a selected lot of those seeking treatment are tested. If we do not actively detect the iceberg would become a volcano. We should now go for rapid slide tests similar to NS1.

Comment 3 - Dr Ravi P. Rannan-Eliya

The current lockdown (national curfews, work at home, school clo-

tures) plus MOH actively tracing contacts of foreign arrivals should work in controlling the current outbreak and bringing cases down to zero within two weeks.

MOH's policy will work in stopping the epidemic, but this policy cannot be sustained. The economy is at a standstill, unemployment will rise, businesses will go bankrupt, living standards will fall, and the government has no revenue. We need to allow businesses and schools to reopen to restart normal life and get the economy going.

We also need to open our ports, even on a restricted basis. But allowing foreign arrivals will import the virus again, since it has now spread to every country in the world. This is not going to change for the next 12 months. If we open the airport and keep businesses and schools open, then the virus will re-enter and spark a new outbreak, and the government will have no alternative to shutting the airport once again and imposing curfew.

The only solution that allows us to keep our airport open and allows business and schools to stay open is to vastly expand our testing capacity. Much more extensive testing as in Singapore and South Korea would allow us to manage the risk of the virus coming in again and allow the MOH to know much earlier when an outbreak is developing, allowing much faster corrective action and avoiding lockdowns. More extensive testing means increasing our testing capacity by at least ten fold so we can test up to 10,000 people a day in an emergency. This capacity will also

allow us to adopt Singapore's policy of testing arrivals to further protect the country, which is probably the safest approach if we want to reopen the airport.

■ As of 29/03/2020 Sri Lanka has done 2082 tests (Reference <http://covid.iq.lk>)

■ Of these 2082 test 115 persons were positive – 5.5% of tested cases positive. This is a relatively high rate compared to other countries

■ E.G – Australia which has population similar to ours has 3,966 positive cases and done 160,000 tests – positive case rate 2.47%

Hence, given that we are Stage 3 of the WHO defined stages of COVID and trying very hard not to move in to Stage 4 (Community Transmission Stage) it is absolutely necessary to move away from current policy of testing to a policy which rapidly expands testing to detect asymptomatic cases who are not connected to the known cluster in order to prevent STEALTH TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19

The low number tested in Sri Lanka means that we are not aggressively testing people other than initial cases and their immediate contacts with symptoms; Most people with COVID do not have symptoms but they can still spread the virus. We need to detect these people to reduce spread and we need to test lots more people to find them. We cannot put in that capacity next month or when the situation gets out of hand in the future; There are huge global shortages of testing equipment - we need to invest rapidly now to for the future.

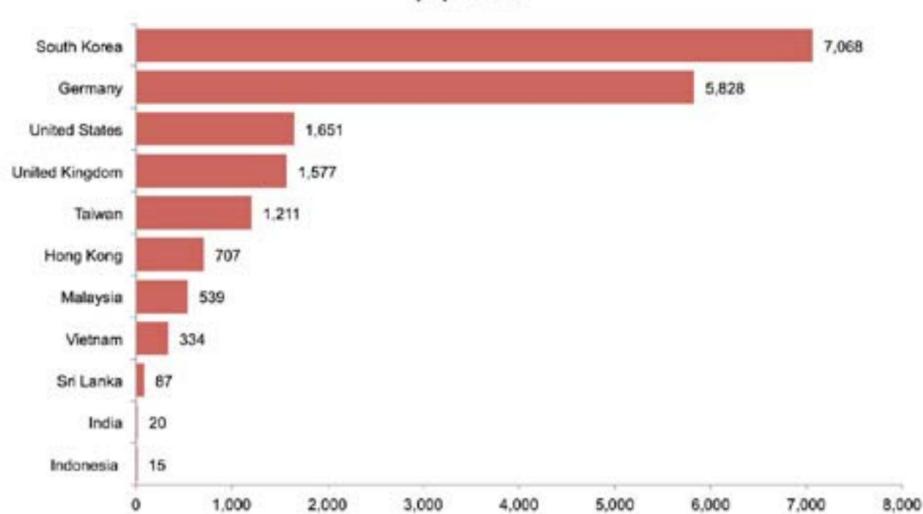
Lockdown is not sustainable, eventually we need to return to normalcy and once movement of people returns infectivity continues and grows exponentially. Due to the pandemic, entry of infected cases would continue from overseas unless a global solution is made and hence we need to provide ample facility for people to test and re test and diagnose COVID 19 cases. Every organization, port of entry should be able to screen public and isolate to curb the spread of disease.

The success of South Korea was swift implementation of mass scale testing

633 testing centres; Ability to do 20,000 tests per day; Drive through test clinics; Pop up facilities using telephone booths near highly infected areas; Over 1200 medical staff to carry out testing; More than a quarter million south Koreans were tested within two weeks and the test was offered free of charge.

(The writer is Head, Dept. Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo)

Total tests for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) performed per million population



Graph: How Sri Lanka fares in terms of testing

“When England sneezes...”

VINOD MOONESINGHE

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought chaos to the world. On the other hand, the prompt and no-holds-barred approach of the Sri Lanka Government, while having its drawbacks, seems effective in slowing down the spread of the disease.

However, the economic consequences of the pandemic, not least the blow-back from the measures instituted by governments, globally, have been catastrophic. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which measures the stock exchange performance of 30 large companies in the USA, which peaked at its highest-ever value of 29,551 on 12 February, plunged to 18,592 by 23 March (although it did recover slightly to 22,552 by 26 March).

Klemens Metternich, the Austrian Empire's Chancellor, once said that “When England sneezes, Europe catches a cold.” This has been paraphrased as “When England sneezes, Sri Lanka catches pneumonia,” meaning that Sri Lanka's economic dependence on the First World means that our prosperity if totally reliant on the economic wellbeing of the latter.

Dependent economy

The outbreak of Covid 19 in China proved just how dependent Sri Lanka really is. Not only did the shops run out of manufactured goods (most of which come from China), but even the garment manufacturing sector, one of the five main bulwarks of the economy (the others being foreign employment, tourism, tea and rubber, and software) suffered.

One telling factor proved to be garment factories' shortage of sewing machine needles. The late Dr SBD de Silva, one of the world's leading development economists, was wont to express Sri Lanka's lack of industrialisation as “we produce garments, but not one single needle.”

By this, “SB” meant (although he did not say so in so many words) that Sri Lanka lacks an industrial ecosystem, with integrated supply chains. We have industries, but they receive their raw materials and machinery from overseas, and their markets are overseas.

Hopefully, the jolt provided by Covid-19 will now cause Sri Lanka to wake up, and proceed with an industrialisation strategy.

“SB” pointed out that industrialisation means that farmers and fishers need to be freed from debt-peonage, and for investment to be made to increase their productivity. This creates an internal market for industrial goods, both in terms of machinery and equipment, and of consumer goods.

Former government servant Garvin Karunaratne sug-

Fish	Price (Rs. per 1kg)
Kelawalla	Rs. 680.00
Thalapath	Rs. 680.00
Atissa	Rs. 630.00
Salaya	Rs. 130.00
Della	Rs. 760.00
Prawns L	Rs. 1000.00
Kakuluwa	Rs. 460.00
Piyamessa	Rs. 300.00
Pothubari	Rs. 220.00

The Fisheries Corp App

gests that the Marketing Department be revived, allowing farmers to sell their vegetables and fruit at reasonable prices, and for consumers to buy these at reasonable prices.

Technology

Technology can help, especially the big data apps, which developed from Chilean President Allende's Cybersyn project, which are currently being used to provide curfew-bound consumers with food supplies. The Fisheries Corporation is using an app to provide fresh fish to suppliers and, via them, to consumers. An extension of this to the farming sector could help eradicate rapacious middlemen.

In other areas, progress occurs, but fitfully. The Government has begun locally-sourcing protective clothing for use by medical staff. All over the country, tailors have

begun making face masks. A team of technologists is working on a cheap, easy-to-make ventilator. And a private firm has developed a remote robot for medical uses.

If necessity is the mother of invention, then Government support is the wet-nurse of development. The Government must make use of this opportunity to develop an integrated, self-reliant local industrial sector, able to operate in isolation from the rest of the world.

This means vertically-integrating the supply chain. The products being made locally need to source their raw materials and the machinery locally. The tailors making face masks need locally-made textiles and locally-made needles. The ventilators and robots being developed need to have locally-made parts.

There are reports from China, South Korea and France, that Chloroquine and Hydroxychloroquine have been effective in treating Covid-19 patients, although clinical trials are continuing. Both substances are made from quinine, which is extracted from the bark of the cinchona plant.

In the days before tea became widely grown in Sri



The Atlas AGV Robot

Lanka, and after the coffee blight, many coffee planters turned to growing Cinchona. Consequently, the world price of quinine, then used only for treating malaria (and for making tonic water) plummeted.

Perhaps today we should start re-planting uneconomic mid-grown tea lands with Cinchona, and jump-start our pharmaceuticals industry on this basis. Certainly, we need to be putting more research and development more into this area.

We can turn this monstrous pandemic to our advantage, but it needs considerable funds and Governmental will. We must strive to become immune to England's sneeze.



Tailoring PPE suits at Panadura Hospital

In Passing...

There's canvas and brush to paint the portraits of love

MALINDA SENEVIRATNE

Kusal Gunasekara teaches art at the Vibhavi Academy of Fine Arts. A dedicated and much loved teacher, Kusal probably doesn't have enough time to do what he loves most (and what pays little, comparatively). Paint.

Well, he has time now. We all do, in fact. Kusal decided to do something he hasn't done in a long time. Portraits. That's his way of 'asking' (his) friends to be safe and spend (their) time in a profitable manner.

Kusal decided to paint his wife Dilini. I don't know about art. I don't know about painting. Nothing about light and shadow. Nothing about composition. He had her sit by a window, light streaming in, with a book in her hand, Martin Wickramasinghe's Bana Katha Sahithya (Buddhist Folk Literature), published in 1955. A good book to read.

Dilini says it was not a prop; she was actually reading the book. Like Kusal and of course like all of us, she's quarantined and far away from Tiangong University (better known as Tianjin Polytechnic University) where she is in the final year of a doctoral program focusing on developing fabricating sensors for the textile industry.

I don't know if Kusal is trying to give a message with the choice of book, but Bana Katha Sahithya cannot hurt anyone. What is important is the overall message which he posted. 'Be safe, be profitable.' Reading alone is profitable, one can argue, but I am thinking more about portraits. Portraits of those close to us, people we love.

Not everyone can paint and even those who do dab-



ble with easels, palettes and paint can't communicate the way Kusal does. There are however more than one way to 'portrait.' You could write it down. You could sculpt. You could turn a person, a relationship or a particular memory into a melody. You could turn all of that into a conversation, a moment of togetherness or shared silence.

Let me try. How would I paint my daughters, one 18 and the other 16 plus? Made of dreams. Decodes narratives encrusted in pebbles, stones, sea glass and shells. Gathers pigment from love and constellations which she mixes and makes fresh unnamed colors with dewdrops of yearning. Has made brushes from delicate hair dropped from myriad literary creatures. Her canvas is often a cloud picked from the astral territories that are her preferred home away from home. Rearranges drops of heart and mind. Thus does she slay her demons and gives wings to those who want to fly away to high cliffs and freedom. Thus does she celebrate the earth to which they will one day descend and find the truths that were perhaps once too embarrassing to embrace. She finds herself in these and other ways. She gets lost, happily. Cries in secret, I am sure, but smiles in her own coy ways

she does not want the world to see. In her eyes, I see myself, I like to think, but wish for her a thousand gazes made of things I have never seen.

And the other? All heart. She was born in a distillery where the world's knotty questions were dissolved and reduced to essence. She grew up learning words and their traps simply by using and abusing them. No one gifted light, shade and color; she moved and moves to those endearing and rare places where such things congregate in combination and distance that match the memory, agitation and resolution of the moment. She holds her tongue in her heart which is washed in proud tears she will not shed but which, by and by, cleanse and pardon that which is insufferable about the world. In her words, I see a myself that took many more decades to come into being, and I wish for her words that will fill a library or a poem that says it all, delicate in description and finesse. In ways I could never imagine or write.

We are sequestered. This is a moment for appreciation. For love. Kusal Gunasekara, artist, teacher, cousin and friend, has spoken. I heard.

malindasenevi@gmail.com
www.malindawords.blogspot.com

COVID-19 and Climate

ALI TAUQEER SHEIKH

In less than three months, the Covid-19 pandemic has engulfed the entire world. As the number of infections and deaths continue to increase, it has brought the global economy to a screeching halt. This pandemic combines an unfortunate triple jeopardy: rapid loss of human lives, fast economic recession, and structural disruption in efforts to combat global warming. Never before had these three factors coincided to determine the gravity of a pandemic. This year was regarded as critical for international climate action, centred on COP-26 in Glasgow, but the pandemic has distracted world attention. Given the fact that climate change is the defining challenge of our time, even as serious a crisis as this should not be allowed to derail the Paris Agreement.

While Covid-19 is affecting humans directly and its impact is tragically visible, climate change is affecting the ecological system within which humans live and upon which their very survival depends. Perhaps Covid-19 will forever change our globalised lifestyles — something climate change has so far not been able to do, despite its seriousness.

The pandemic has significantly reduced carbon emissions released into the atmosphere. Ironically, it has cut emissions faster than 25 years of global climate negotiations. According to the New York Times, the reduction of emissions in China since January has surpassed the total emissions of New York City for a year. NASA's monitoring satellites have shown a dramatic fall in nitrous oxide, a pollutant emitted from fossil fuels. This abrupt reduction has an illustrative value of what the world would

need to do to stabilise global temperatures at less than 2°C.

Similar past events, such as the 2008 recession, did not affect the overall atmospheric pollution because of the carbon stock that had already been released into the atmosphere. As the pandemic is contained, hopefully, in the coming months and the world economy begins to resurge, global emissions will also pick up as factories will be expected to make up for lost time. The recent sharp decline in oil prices, however, has provided a rare opportunity to fast-track energy supplies from renewable sources to propel climate compatible development.

Under the Paris Agreement, all signatories are expected to announce new pledges to reduce emissions. The pandemic has already disrupted the crucial negotiations process ahead of COP-26. Preparatory meetings have been called off, potentially derailing climate negotiations at a critical juncture. Additionally, Covid-19 threatens to hamper policymakers' ability to make ambitious commitments to climate financing and emissions reductions. It is important to note that economic measures being taken in response to the pandemic will have a long-term bearing on addressing climate mitigation and adaptation. Covid-19 has made a bad situation worse. But it has also provided a rare opportunity to make some hard decisions.

For decades, the scientific community has listed seven broad areas in which climate change will affect health: temperature-related death and illness, air quality, extreme events (such as disasters), vector-borne diseases, water-related illness, food safety and nutrition,

and mental health. Several WHO studies have predicted climate-induced epidemics and pandemics.

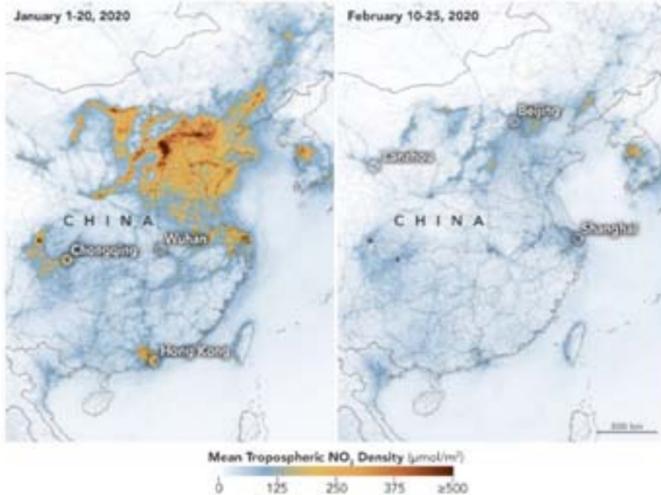
Unlike past pandemics, Covid-19 and the climate crisis go hand in hand. There is no scientific evidence that the pandemic was caused by global warming, yet it is too early to rule out that it was not ignited by climate change. There is growing scientific evidence that changing weather patterns are driving species northward, towards higher altitudes, potentially putting them in contact with diseases for which they have little immunity. We have witnessed this in Pakistan as both malaria and dengue have steadily moved towards higher altitudes.

A watertight demarcation between these two crises is not desirable. Yet, the parallels between the response to the coronavirus and climate crisis are compelling: we have known about the adverse impacts of climate change for at least four decades, whereas the arrival of coronavirus is sudden, almost overnight. Yet, most governments, including Pakistan's, have made response plans on an emergency basis — an urgency that is, ironically, still absent from the climate change arena.

While pandemics affect everyone, the most immediately exposed to Covid-19 are elderly people, mostly men, and the middle classes (and those working with them) that are more closely tied to the global economy through international travel, trade, production, supply chain, and public, cultural, religious and sports events — mostly in urban and crowded areas. Climate change, on the other hand, also affects everyone, but immediately vulnerable are the poor, marginalised, women, children, elderly, and people living off nature, in low-lying coastal areas, islands and high-altitude glacial terrains, or engaged in subsistence agriculture. In other words, while the pandemic has a stronger bias against the urban elite that has shared and defined the size of the ecological and carbon footprint over the last half century, victims of climate change are often those who have contributed little to climate emissions. Climate-induced disasters visit them often, though, and hit them hard through extreme events such as droughts, floods, heat waves, and seawater intrusion; these people mostly fall in the realm of poverty and adaptation.

Urgent action to prevent Covid-19 is, of course, necessary. While the pandemic poses many challenges and threats, there are hardly any long-term opportunities. On the other hand, a systematic response to climate change would provide many co-benefits: ranging from green jobs, clean air, renewable energy, affordable transportation, to protected ecosystems and biodiversity. If climate change represents an existential threat, why, then, is the same sense of urgency absent from policy circles?

The writer is an Islamabad-based expert on climate change and development. (ataqueer-sheikh@gmail.com)



Air quality improving over China

TB Vaccine trialled for COVID-19

A vaccine that's been used to prevent tuberculosis is being given to health-care workers in Melbourne to see if it will protect them against the coronavirus.

The bacillus Calmette-Guerin, or BCG, shot has been used widely for about 100 years, with a growing appreciation for its off-target benefits. Not only is it a common immunotherapy for early-stage bladder cancer, it also seems to train the body's first line of immune defense to better fight infections.

With an immunization specifically targeted against the pandemic-causing Covid-19 disease at least a year away, the World Health Organization says it's important to know whether the BCG vaccine can reduce disease in those infected with the coronavirus, and is encouraging international groups to collaborate with a study led by Nigel Curtis, head of infectious diseases research, at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne.

"It can boost the immune system

so that it defends better against a whole range of different infections, a whole range of different viruses and bacteria in a lot more generalized way," said Curtis, who's also a professor of pediatric infectious diseases at the University of Melbourne and head of the infectious diseases unit at the city's Royal Children's Hospital.

Hospital staff who volunteered to be part of a six-month trial in Australia involving 4,000 health-care workers will be randomly allocated to be vaccinated starting Monday

against seasonal influenza and TB, or the flu shot only.

A placebo vaccine won't work as a control in this case because the BCG shot typically causes a localized skin reaction that leaves a scar, making it obvious which group received the TB vaccination.

Similar research is going on in the Netherlands. Curtis, in an interview Saturday, said he's in discussions with potential trial sites in other Australian cities as well as Boston. *(Bloomberg)*

Scientists identify eight strains of Coronavirus

Scientists have identified at least eight strains of coronavirus as the bug wreaks havoc spreading across the globe.

More than 2,000 genetic sequences of the virus have been submitted from labs to the open database NextStrain, which shows it mutating on maps in real time, according to the site.

Researchers said the data, which includes samples every continent except Antarctica, revealed the virus is mutating on average every 15 days, National Geographic reported.

But Nextstrain cofounder Trevor Bedford said the mutations are so small that there is no strain of the virus that is more harmful.

"These mutations are completely benign and useful as a puzzle piece to uncover how the virus is spreading," Bedford told the outlet. He said the various strains allow researchers to see whether community transmission is widespread throughout a region, which can inform whether lockdown measures have been effective.

"We'll be able to tell how much less transmission we're seeing and answer the question, 'Can we take our foot off the gas?'" Bedford said.

Charles Chiu, a professor of medicine and infectious disease at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, said that the database also provides insight into how the virus is moving throughout the US. "The outbreaks are trackable," Chiu said. "We have the ability to do genomic sequencing almost in real-time to see what strains or lineages are circulating."

Most of the cases on the West Coast are linked to a strain first identified in Washington state, which is only three mutations away from the first known strain, the outlet reported.

Meanwhile, on the East Coast, the virus appeared to have come from China to Europe and then to New York and other states.

But Kristian Andersen, a professor at Scripps Research, cautioned that the maps don't show the full picture of the spread of the virus.

"Remember, we're seeing a very small glimpse into the much larger pandemic," Anderson told USA Today. "We have half a million described cases right now but maybe 1,000 genomes sequenced. So there are a lot of lineages we're missing."

(New York Post)

EasyJet grounds all planes

EasyJet has grounded its entire fleet of planes and said it cannot give a date for when they will restart.

The budget airline said it had made the move due to the "unprecedented travel restrictions" imposed by governments globally due to the virus pandemic.

It had already cancelled most flights but had been running rescue flights to repatriate Britons stranded abroad.

The move came as regional airline Loganair said airlines were unlikely to survive without a government bailout.

The pandemic has had a severe impact on airlines, Loganair boss Jonathan Hinkles told the BBC's Tom Burridge.

He said that any airline saying it could survive without government help "would probably be lying".

EasyJet said its cabin crew would be furloughed, with staff paid 80% of their wage from 1 April through the government's job retention scheme.

The budget airline's boss Johan Lundgren said he was "working tirelessly" to make sure the airline was "well positioned to overcome the challenges of coronavirus".

"I am extremely proud of the way in which



people across EasyJet have given their absolute best at such a challenging time," he added.

EasyJet's headquarters are at London Luton Airport and it has 331 planes. In normal times, it serves 159 airports and 1,051 routes.

Lundgren said the airline had operated its last rescue flight on Sunday 29 March, but would continue to offer further rescue flights "as requested".

Industry group the International Air Transport Association (IATA) has warned of an

"apocalypse" in the aviation sector as it urged governments around the world to help.

Loganair's Hinkles warned that the connectivity of remote Scottish islands and rural communities across the UK "cannot be maintained without air services", arguing that government support for his airline was "essential".

Loganair operates routes to the UK's most remote airports such as Barra in the Outer Hebrides, where 19-seater planes land on the beach.

North Korea tests another missile

North Korea fired an unidentified projectile into the sea off the coast of Japan Sunday morning, the sixth launch by the Kim Jong Un regime in less than a month.

Japan's Self Defense Force said in a statement Sunday that the missile had landed outside the country's Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends 200 nautical miles from Japan's shores.

"It is a serious issue for the whole international society including Japan that North Korea has repeatedly launched the missiles lately," the statement said.

"We continue to put the utmost effort to collect and analyze infor-

mation and vigilance to protect the life and property of Japanese citizens."

Both South Korea and the US also acknowledged the launch, but were unable to confirm what type of projectile was fired, other than that it was short-range. Japan said it was "seen to be a missile."

The Japanese Coast Guard first warned about the launch at 6 a.m. local time Sunday (5 p.m. ET Saturday).

Sunday that the missile had landed outside the country's Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends 200 nautical miles from Japan's shores.

After a long pause in missile testing, North Korea appears to have ramped up its program in the past month.

On March 9, three unidentified projectiles were fired by North Korea from the Sondok area on the east coast into the water between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

The South Korean Defense Ministry said at the time that the launches could be "joint strike drills that include multiple types of multiple rocket launchers" as part of Pyongyang's winter military drills.

Two weeks later, on March 21,

another two projectiles were fired into the same area, this time from the northern Pyongan region.

Kim warned the United States in 2019 that it had until the end of that year to jump start stalled denuclearization talks.

When that deadline came and went without any movement from Washington, Kim announced during a New Year's Day message that his country would bolster its nuclear deterrent, and no longer be held to a self-imposed moratorium on major weapons testing.

Kim also pledged to show off a "new strategic weapon" in the near future. *(CNN)*

Placido Domingo hospitalized



Opera legend Placido Domingo has been hospitalized in Acapulco, Mexico, with complications related to coronavirus, according to the singer's spokesperson.

"He is doing well and is responding to treatment," Domingo's spokesperson said in a statement to CNN.

Domingo announced on his Facebook page last week that he had tested positive for the disease. He encouraged his fans to wash their hands and follow the guidelines and regulations that local governments have put in place.

"Together we can fight this virus and stop the current worldwide crisis, so we can hopefully return to our normal daily lives very soon," Domingo wrote.

The 79-year-old Spanish tenor resigned as general director of the Los Angeles Opera last year, after being accused of sexual harassment.

While Domingo denied all allegations, the Los Angeles Opera's independent investigation into 10 allegations of sexual harassment by Domingo were found to be credible earlier this month.

Domingo joins a growing list of celebrities that have tested positive for coronavirus, including Idris Elba, Tom Hanks and his wife Rita Wilson, singer-songwriter John Prine, Kevin Durant and Daniel Dae Kim. *(CNN)*



Food security can be affected - FAO

The coronavirus outbreak could affect food security as the global pandemic disrupts labor availability and the supply chain.

"We risk a looming food crisis unless measures are taken fast to protect the most vulnerable, keep global food supply chains alive and mitigate the pandemic's impacts across the food system," said the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in a recent post on its website.

The FAO said disruptions can be expected in April and May.

Restrictions on movements and "basic aversion behaviour" by workers could impede farming, said the FAO. Food processors, who handle the vast majority of agricultural products, could also be prevented from processing the farm products.

"We are already seeing, however, challenges in terms of the logistics involving the movement of food (not being able to move food from point A to point B), and the pandemic's impact on livestock sector due to reduced access to animal feed and slaughterhouses' diminished capacity (due to logistical constraints and labour shortages) similar to what happened in China," said the FAO.

As of now, disruptions are minimal as food supplies have been adequate.

But price spikes are more likely for higher value products like meat and perishable commodities rather than for major staples which are still in adequate supply, said the FAO.

Indeed, Fitch Solutions says global food supply is relatively ample with the outlook for the 2020 to 2021 crop year positive thanks to mild weather conditions in key producing regions.

"Grain production in developed markets, usually done on large farms in low-density areas are less prone to contagion, but labour-intensive sectors such as plantations (palm oil) and manufacturing (meat processing) are more at risk of employee contagion and therefore of temporary lockdown

measures," said Fitch Solutions in a recent note.

Malaysia's largest palm oil producing state, Sabah, ordered the closure of palm oil plantations in three districts after some workers tested positive for the coronavirus disease, formally known as COVID-19.

Even though there are adequate supplies of staple food, notwithstanding manpower and logistical challenges, any restrictions by countries reserving strategic supplies would heighten risks.

"Some countries could resort to trade restrictions or aggressive stockpiling in a bid to safeguard food security, which could quickly escalate and support grain and oilseed prices," said Fitch Solutions.

Among the major crop producing countries that have implemented export restrictions are Vietnam, which has curbed rice exports and Russia, which has halted processed grain exports. Kazakhstan has also suspended exports of wheat flour, buckwheat, sugar, sunflower oil, and some vegetables. Such moves could lead to an acceleration of food price inflation during a time when consumers are concerned about lockdowns and have created their own stockpiles at home, said Fitch Solutions.

"The potential implementation of food protectionism measures at the country level in an attempt to safeguard food security, such as export restrictions in key suppliers or aggressive state stockpiling could also significantly disrupt the global food supply," said Fitch Solutions. Countries most exposed to a rise in food price inflation include those with elevated imports as a share of domestic food supply, such as the Middle East, China, Japan and South Korea, said Fitch Solutions.

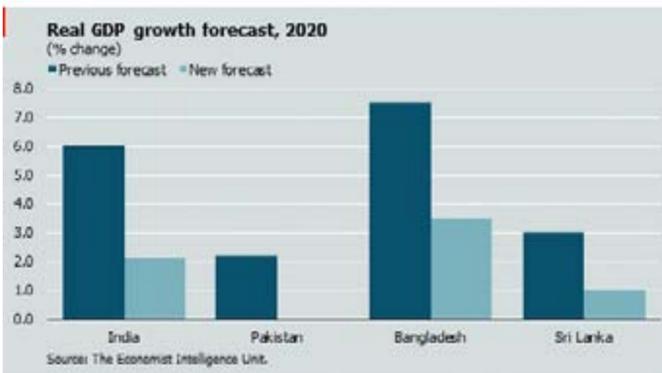
Economies with weakened currencies, such as India and Indonesia are also exposed, as most commodities are denominated in the dollar on the international market. *(cnbc)*



Finance

Business: 0112 429221 / 0112429299 Fax: +94112343694 email: business.dailynews@lakehouse.lk www.dailynews.lk

'Coronavirus pandemic will dampen economic growth'



The Economist Intelligence Unit (The EIU) says that it expects countries to provide fiscal and monetary stimulus, (due to the negative impact to economies from coronavirus) although the scope of such measures will vary.

India and Bangladesh, given their stronger economic positions, will be able to provide relatively more; meanwhile,

measures in Pakistan and Sri Lanka will be more limited.

Countries like Bhutan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka have already experienced a halt in tourist inflows owing to travel restrictions and a collapse in demand. Lower private consumption and exports will lead to a loss of regular business revenue, making firms unable to pay dues on their loans and

forcing them to defer investment plans.

Central banks and governments have responded by providing stimulus in the face of the economic costs of the pandemic. However, we believe the measures will not come close to offsetting the loss of economic activity. The Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan central banks have cut



All Free Trade Zones island wide were closed until further notice and the employees were sent home with the assistance of the security forces. Here employees 'health checked' before they were boarded the buses.

their policy rates and announced other measures to ensure liquidity in the financial sector, while the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi governments have announced fiscal stimulus plans, primarily to support low-income households.

The EIU also anticipates to struggle as the number of cases rises in the coming

weeks. Chronic underinvestment in healthcare infrastructure and a low number of doctors and hospital beds in relation to the population mean that health systems will not be able to cope with the further toll, exacerbating the spread of the virus and the death rate.

The coronavirus pandemic will dampen economic growth substantially. Preventive measures

taken by governments to curtail the movement of people will lead to a demand-side shock to private consumption—the primary driver of economic growth in many South Asian economies.

The closure of factories and businesses will result in a supply-side shock, and the subsequent lay-offs will exacerbate the demand shock.

National Carrier brings down medical aid from China



Colombo March 30, 2020: Sri Lankan Airlines, continuing to answer the call of the Nation, uplifted a consignment of medical aid from Shanghai, China today (March 28, 2020). This was a donation made by the Sri Lankan Community in China through the Consulate Generals of Sri Lanka in Guangzhou and Shanghai, facilitated by the Embassy of Sri Lanka in China.

The consignment contained essential medical items such as masks, protective clothing, goggles, face protection splashguards, nebulizers, pulse oximeters, thermometers and glucometers, which will be handed over to the Sri Lankan health authorities to be distributed among state hospitals for the benefit of medical staff tirelessly serving in the country's battle against COVID 19 pandemic.

Ever since the global outbreak, Sri Lankan Airlines has been fulfilling a pivotal humanitarian role through facilitating passage home to many Sri Lankan citizens across the globe, which includes the relief flight operated from Wuhan and ferry flights from India that brought over 800 stranded pilgrims back to the island.

The staff and the management of Sri Lankan Airlines take immense pride in fulfilling a national mission in this hour of need and the Airline will continue to reach out where assistance is required in the country's collective endeavor to fight the COVID 19 pandemic.

'Global economic community must unite amid COVID-19 pandemic'

COLOMBO, March 28 (Xinhua) -- Global communities and financial institutions must unite to put the world economy back in order amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a senior Sri Lankan economic expert said here Saturday.

Ajith Nivard Cabraal, Senior Economic Advisor to Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa

told Xinhua that developing countries like Sri Lanka could face unemployment, low economic growth and debt problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Sri Lanka is looking at an economic situation created by circumstances beyond our shores. The global community must therefore come together to provide a solution to put the world economy back in shape," Cabraal said.

Cabraal, who is a former Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, said that Sri Lanka would attempt to tide over businesses and keep the economy afloat amid precautions taken against the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

However, he noted that Sri Lanka's biggest foreign exchange earners include apparel manufacturing and tourism, both of which rely on external demand which has been contracting due to the impact of COVID-19 on developed economies in the West.

"No amount of stimulus packages by Sri Lanka can help re-

correct these sectors if the global conditions are not right," Cabraal said.

Similarly, lower oil prices, while beneficial to Sri Lanka's import bill, could lead to job losses for Sri Lankan migrant workers in West Asia. The resulting loss in remittances could negate the benefit of low oil prices, Cabraal said.

"The current crisis will need an international response similar to the Bretton Woods system which was set up after World War II to promote reconstruction and recovery of demand," Cabraal said. "We have to lobby institutions like the G20, IMF, World Bank and UN to create global policies to address these issues," he added.



Ajith Nivard Cabraal

Low-rated sovereigns vulnerable to contagion shocks - Moody's

Singapore, March 30, 2020 -- Moody's Investors Service says in a new report that low-rated emerging market sovereigns with large near-term international bond repayments and significant reliance on foreign currency, private-sector credit are particularly vulnerable to the impact of deteriorating economic conditions on capital markets.

"The coronavirus outbreak and sharp commodity price declines are triggering significant financial market volatility and risk aversion that few emerging market sovereigns are immune to," says Christian Fang, a Moody's Assistant Vice President and Analyst.

"Emerging market sovereigns that need to access international bond markets to refinance their foreign-currency debt or that borrow heavily from private sector lenders in foreign currency would currently face prohibitive conditions," adds Fang.

Moreover, policymakers have limited capacity to mitigate capital flight and/or the sharp increase in credit risk premium in foreign currency.

While some countries have already secured refinancing for maturing international bonds, Sri Lanka (B2 stable), Honduras (B1 stable), Turkey (B1 negative) and Tunisia (B2 stable) are susceptible given the size of upcoming international bond redemptions as a share of foreign-exchange reserves.

Non-investment grade sovereigns with a large amount of foreign currency debt owed to private creditors, such as Bahrain (B2 sta-

ble), Oman (Ba2 stable) and Angola (B3 stable) are also particularly vulnerable. Access to financing from development partners or waivers on official debt service may mitigate this risk for some, but pressure will remain on exposure to private sector debt.

Should the risk-off environment persist for some time, leading to capital flight, sharp local currency depreciation and higher domestic interest rates, credit metrics are likely to deteriorate significantly for some sovereigns.

In particular, persistent tightening in financing conditions will increase debt burdens, weaken debt affordability and intensify external vulnerability risk. Under Moody's stress scenario, Bahrain, Tajikistan (B3 negative), Zambia (Caa2 negative) and Belarus (B3 stable) would face significant external pressure. Sri Lanka, Pakistan (B3 stable) and Egypt (B2 stable) would see a marked weakening in debt metrics because of large gross borrowing needs that raise interest payments when borrowing costs rise, and/or narrow revenue bases that push fiscal deficits wider when interest payments rise.



Christian Fang

NDB Bank on Wheels visits customers at their Homes

While the COVID-19 outbreak in the country has forced all citizens to remain indoors and has brought many banking activities to a halt, NDB has taken several steps to assist the Bank's customers to perform their banking transactions in a secure and safe fashion with minimal contact.

Thus, all NDB customers can have their daily banking needs met securely just as before through the NDB Bank on Wheels- a Mobile Banking unit that will bring the Bank to the customer's doorstep.

The NDB Bank on Wheels will be travelling around Colombo and suburbs for the Bank's customers and stakeholders to conduct their banking transactions. NDB Bank customers as well as other Bank customers can withdraw cash up to Rs. 100,000 through any ATM card from the Mobile ATM which will also be available.

Among the several mobile Banking Units that have been dispatched is one vehicle solely dedicated to NDB bank customers to carry out their transactions. The other vehicle will carry the mobile ATM unit that can be used by the Bank's customers as well as other bank customers to withdraw cash.



A NDB Bank on Wheels- a Mobile Banking unit

NDB Senior Vice President Personal Banking and Branch Network Management Sanjaya Perera said that this was an initiative taken by the Bank purely to make the lives of the Bank's customers easier during these trying times.

"We understand that it is difficult for customers to travel even a short distance to withdraw cash or perform their banking transactions. We also understand that since there are several essential goods delivered to their doorstep, the need for cash is also a necessity. That is what prompted us to deploy the NDB Bank on Wheels," he said.

He further added "Initially, this service will be available in the Western Province but we hope to take this to other cities in the future."

Meanwhile, the Bank's island wide networks of over 141 ATM/CRM Machines are also all in operation.

NDB Bank, which is the first and to date the only corporate in Sri Lanka to officially be certified with EDGE Certification (Economic Dividend for Gender Equality) is a premier retail Bank with over 113 branches across the island, serving millions of Sri Lankans through a host of financial services.

Airbus to pause majority of production in Spain

Toulouse, 30 March 2020 -- The Spanish Government announced new measures on 29 March in the fight against COVID-19. These measures are taking effect between Monday 30 March and Thursday 9 April inclusive and restrict all non-essential activities across the country.

Some key activities in Commercial Aircraft, Helicopters and

Defence and Space remain essential. Minimum activity in these areas for necessary support functions such as Security, IT, Engineering, will remain under the stringent health and safety measures implemented by Airbus to protect its employees against the COVID-19 pandemic.

All other activities in Commercial Aircraft, Defence and Space as well

as Helicopters in Spain will be paused until 9 April, the date when it is foreseen that restrictions will be lifted.

Airbus will closely work with its social partners to apply the social measures applicable under the latest restrictions. Airbus employees in Spain whose jobs are not linked to production and assembly activities

and can work from home will continue to support Airbus business continuity in these difficult times.

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2019, it generated revenues of € 70 billion and employed a workforce of around 135,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners.



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NATIONAL SAVINGS BANK

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

For the year ended 31st December 2019

AAA(SL)

For the year ended 31st December	INCOME STATEMENT - AUDITED			
	Bank		Group	
	2019	2018	2019	2018
	Rs. '000	Rs. '000	Rs. '000	Rs. '000
Income	121,829,059	111,902,078	125,810,171	112,760,454
Interest income	118,729,784	110,506,931	120,351,774	111,718,948
Interest expenses	(89,897,770)	(85,822,273)	(90,988,139)	(86,480,289)
Net interest income	28,832,014	24,684,658	29,483,635	25,238,659
Fee and commission income	1,261,268	1,005,262	1,269,521	1,008,482
Fee and commission expenses	(173,954)	(141,196)	(136,838)	(144,853)
Net fee and commission income	1,129,314	864,066	1,132,683	863,797
Net gains/(losses) from trading	1,491,610	(707,433)	1,963,239	(1,062,421)
Net fair value gains/(losses)	-	-	-	-
financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	-	-	-	-
financial liabilities at fair value through profit or loss	-	-	-	-
Net gains/(losses) on recognition of financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income	22,021	6,906	22,021	6,906
Net other operating income	424,376	1,090,412	2,205,628	1,088,539
Total operating income	31,889,335	26,135,807	34,805,194	26,155,500
Impairment charges	(565,536)	(871,049)	(590,700)	(670,984)
Net operating income	31,323,799	25,264,758	34,214,494	25,284,500
Personnel expenses	(10,157,826)	(9,262,705)	(10,217,979)	(9,302,548)
Depreciation and amortization expenses	(1,042,933)	(838,793)	(1,042,933)	(838,793)
Other expenses	(4,474,053)	(4,194,979)	(4,461,453)	(4,160,782)
Operating profit/(loss) before VAT, NBT & DRL on financial services	15,658,887	11,171,079	18,486,964	11,181,397
Value Added Tax (VAT) on financial services	(3,045,821)	(2,577,857)	(3,208,584)	(2,584,220)
National Building Tax (NBT) on financial services	(986,157)	(343,688)	(983,614)	(344,563)
Debt Repayment Levy (DRL) on financial services	(1,785,171)	(308,371)	(1,803,225)	(308,371)
Operating profit/(loss) after VAT, NBT and DRL on financial services	10,461,638	7,941,364	13,091,541	7,944,243
Share of profits of associates and joint ventures	-	-	-	-
Profit/(Loss) before tax	10,461,638	7,941,364	13,091,541	7,944,243
Income tax expenses	(3,763,495)	(3,441,213)	(4,081,589)	(3,444,050)
Profit/(Loss) for the year	6,698,233	4,500,151	9,029,972	4,500,187
Profit attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Bank	6,698,233	4,500,151	9,029,972	4,500,187
Non-controlling interests	-	-	-	-
Earnings per share on profit				
Basic earnings per ordinary share (Rs.)	7.13	6.72	9.61	6.72
Diluted earnings per ordinary share (Rs.)	7.13	6.72	9.61	6.72

For the year ended 31st December	STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME - AUDITED			
	Bank		Group	
	2019	2018	2019	2018
	Rs. '000	Rs. '000	Rs. '000	Rs. '000
Profit / (Loss) for the year	6,698,233	4,500,151	9,029,972	4,500,187
Items that will be reclassified to Income Statement				
Exchange differences on translation of foreign operations	-	(291,924)	-	(291,924)
Net gains/(losses) on cash flow hedges	-	-	-	-
Net gains/(losses) on investments in debt instruments measured at fair value through other comprehensive income	-	-	-	-
Share of profits of associates and joint ventures	127,928	(127,741)	227,305	(149,144)
Debt instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income	(13,717)	1,370	(13,717)	1,370
Net gains/(losses) on investment in debt instruments transferred to income statement	-	-	-	-
Less: Tax expense relating to items that will be reclassified to income statement	-	-	-	-
Total other comprehensive income to be reclassified to Income Statement	114,211	(418,295)	213,588	(439,698)
Items that will not be reclassified to Income Statement				
Change in fair value on investments in equity instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income	(324,635)	(690,435)	(320,297)	(690,435)
Change in the fair value attributable to change in the Bank's own credit risk on financial liabilities designated at fair value through profit or loss	-	-	-	-
Re-measurement of post-employment benefit obligations	(3,700,967)	(210,861)	(3,700,344)	(211,258)
Change in revaluation surplus	-	-	-	-
Share of profits of associates and joint ventures	-	-	-	-
Less: Tax expense relating to items that will be reclassified to income statement	-	-	-	-
Total other comprehensive income to be reclassified to Income Statement	(4,025,602)	(901,296)	(4,022,641)	(901,694)
Total other comprehensive income(OCI) for the year, net of taxes	(3,911,391)	(1,319,591)	(3,809,653)	(1,341,392)
Total comprehensive income for the year	2,786,842	3,180,560	5,220,919	3,158,795
Attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Bank	2,786,842	3,180,560	5,220,919	3,158,795
Non-controlling interests	-	-	-	-

Explanatory Notes :-

- There are no changes to the accounting policies and methods of computation except the application of SLFRS - 16 - Leases since the publication of annual accounts for the year 2018. The Bank has applied SLFRS - 16 effective from 01/01/2019 for the preparation of Financial Statements.
- The Bank has not restated comparative information for 2018 for Leases in the scope of SLFRS 16.
- There are no material events taken place after the reporting period, which requires adjustment or disclosure in these Financial Statements.

For the year ended 31.12.2018	STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY - BANK - AUDITED							
	Stated Capital/Assigned Capital	Statutory Reserve Fund	Revaluation Reserve	OCI Reserve	Cash Flow Hedging Reserve	Retained Earnings	Other Reserves	Total Equity
Balance as at 1st January 2018	6,700,000	3,002,952	7,793,317	1,345,237	291,924	1,102,798	18,859,461	39,095,691
Prior year adjustment	-	-	-	-	-	(837,406)	-	(837,406)
Re-stated opening balance as at 1st January 2018	6,700,000	3,002,952	7,793,317	1,345,237	291,924	465,392	18,859,461	38,458,285
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	-	-	4,500,151	-	4,500,151
Net profit for the year	-	-	-	-	-	(291,924)	-	(502,784)
Other comprehensive income net of tax	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net change in fair value of debt instrument of Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income	-	-	-	(126,371)	-	-	-	(126,371)
Net change in fair value of equity instrument of Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income	-	-	-	(690,436)	-	-	-	(690,436)
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	-	(291,924)	4,289,290	-	3,180,559
Transaction with equity holders, recognised directly in equity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers to unclaimed deposits reserve / issued share capital	2,700,000	-	-	-	-	-	(698,587)	2,001,413
Contribution to the consolidated fund-Dividend/Levy	-	-	-	-	-	(500,000)	-	(500,000)
Contribution to national insurance trust fund	-	-	-	-	-	(45,000)	-	(45,000)
Transfers during the year	-	225,008	-	-	-	-	-	225,008
Total transaction with equity holders	2,700,000	225,008	-	-	-	(698,587)	-	1,456,411
Balance as at 31.12.2018	9,400,000	3,227,960	7,793,317	528,430	-	3,984,674	18,160,874	43,095,259

For the year ended 31.12.2019	STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY - GROUP - AUDITED							
	Stated Capital/Assigned Capital	Statutory Reserve Fund	Revaluation Reserve	OCI Reserve	Cash Flow Hedging Reserve	Retained Earnings	Other Reserves	Total Equity
Balance as at 1st January 2019	9,400,000	3,227,960	7,793,317	528,430	-	3,984,674	18,160,874	43,095,259
Impact of adopting SLFRS - 16	-	-	-	-	-	(115,694)	-	(115,694)
Re-stated opening balance under SLFRS - 16	9,400,000	3,227,960	7,793,317	528,430	-	3,869,079	18,160,874	42,979,655
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	-	-	4,500,187	-	4,500,187
Net profit for the year	-	-	-	-	-	(291,924)	-	(503,181)
Other comprehensive income net of tax	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net change in fair value of debt instrument of Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income	-	-	-	(147,774)	-	-	-	(147,774)
Net change in fair value of equity instrument of Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income	-	-	-	(690,436)	-	-	-	(690,436)
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	-	(291,924)	4,289,929	-	3,158,795
Transaction with equity holders, recognised directly in equity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers to unclaimed deposits reserve	2,700,000	-	-	-	-	-	(677,811)	2,022,189
Contribution to the consolidated fund-Dividend/Levy	-	-	-	-	-	(500,000)	-	(500,000)
Contribution to national insurance trust fund	-	-	-	-	-	(45,000)	-	(45,000)
Transfers during the year	-	225,008	-	-	-	-	-	225,008
Total transaction with equity holders	2,700,000	225,008	-	-	-	(770,018)	-	1,456,411
Balance as at 31.12.2019	9,400,000	3,227,960	7,793,317	390,210	-	4,561,045	18,745,544	44,118,079

For the year ended 31.12.2019

For the year ended 31.12.2019	STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY - GROUP - AUDITED							
	Stated Capital/Assigned Capital	Statutory Reserve Fund	Revaluation Reserve	OCI Reserve	Cash Flow Hedging Reserve	Retained Earnings	Other Reserves	Total Equity
Balance as at 1st January 2019	9,400,000	3,227,960	7,793,317	390,210	-	4,561,045	18,745,544	44,118,079
Impact of adopting SLFRS - 16	-	-	-	-	-	(44,000)	-	(44,000)
Re-stated opening balance under SLFRS - 16	9,400,000	3,227,960	7,793,317	390,210	-	4,445,440	18,745,544	44,024,475
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	-	-	9,029,975	-	9,029,975
Net profit for the year	-	-	-	-	-	(3,702,343)	-	(3,702,343)
Other comprehensive income net of tax	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net change in fair value of debt instrument of Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income	-	-	-	(213,588)	-	-	-	(213,588)
Net change in fair value of equity instrument of Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income	-	-	-	(320,297)	-	-	-	(320,297)
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	-	-	(106,709)	5,327,628	-	5,220,919
Transaction with equity holders, recognised directly in equity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers to unclaimed deposits reserve	2,700,000	-	-	-	-	-	(677,811)	2,022,189
Contribution to the consolidated fund-Dividend/Levy	-	-	-	-	-	(500,000)	-	(500,000)
Contribution to national insurance trust fund	-	-	-	-	-	(46,982)	-	(46,982)
Transfers during the year	-	343,254	-	-	-	-	-	343,254
Total transaction with equity holders	2,700,000	343,254	-	-	-	(2,539,088)	-	806,663
Balance as at 31.12.2019	9,400,000	3,571,214	7,793,317	283,501	-	7,233,981	19,552,207	47,834,222

The NSB Act No. 30 of 1971 certifies government guarantee for your savings at NSB and interest due thereon.

For the year ended 31st December	STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - AUDITED			
	Bank		Group	
	As at 31.12.2019	As at 31.12.2018	As at 31.12.2019	As at 31.12.2018
	Rs. '000	Rs. '000	Rs. '000	Rs. '000
Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	5,376,715	3,434,524	5,564,824	3,436,929
Balances with central banks	-	-	58	177
Placements with banks	12,364,469	17,588,445	15,745,184	17,588,445
Derivative financial instruments	11,622	11,622	4,740,106	4,740,106
Financial assets recognized through profit or loss measured at fair value	11,459,882	16,680,382	22,130,273	26,867,533
Financial assets at amortised cost	-	-	-	-
Loans and advances	454,394,957	422,894,740	456,636,285	422,919,713
Debt and other instruments	615,634,321	518,947,969	619,567,786	522,973,159
Financial assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income	3,478,811	6,184,430	4,626,582	7,788,560
Investments in subsidiaries	4,811,000	1,700,000	-	-
Investments in associates and joint ventures	-	-	-	-
Property, plant and equipment	14,163,454	13,465,755	14,457,494	13,468,776
Right of use assets	1,073,507	-	-	-
Investment properties	-	-	333,315	-
Goodwill and intangible assets	-	-	-	-
Deferred tax assets	-	-	338	73
Other assets	35,197,923	31,209,216	35,370,115	31,332,684
Total assets	1,157,966,664	1,036,845,567	1,175,574,745	1,051,316,155
Liabilities				
Due to banks	35,045,251	77,119,146	36,139,122	83,615,264
Derivative financial instruments	-	1,533	-	1,533
Financial liabilities recognized through profit or loss	-	-	-	-
Financial liabilities at amortised cost				

BANK OF CHINA LIMITED COLOMBO BRANCH



INCOME STATEMENT		
For the period	12 months ended 31 Dec. 2019 LKR '000	For the period from 04 Oct. 2017 to 31 Dec. 2018
Interest income	1,787,520	1,126,153
Interest expenses	447,328	1,289
Net interest income	1,340,192	1,124,864
Fee and commission income	30,791	204
Fee and commission expenses	(1,706)	-
Net fee and commission income	29,085	204
Net gain/(loss) from trading	-	-
Net fair value gains/(losses) from financial instruments at fair value through profit or loss	-	-
Net gains/(losses) from derecognition of financial assets	-	-
Net other operating income	50,341	(96,901)
Total operating income	1,419,618	1,028,167
Impairment charges	(16,929)	24,714
Net operating income	1,436,548	1,003,453
Personnel expenses	390,274	263,846
Depreciation of PPE and Right-of-Use Asset	186,023	59,046
Amortisation of intangible assets	1,332	-
Other expenses	209,525	344,136
Operating profit before taxes on financial services	649,304	336,425
Value Added Tax (VAT) on financial services	132,377	69,127
Nation Building Tax (NBT) on financial services	12,404	9,217
Debt Repayment Levy	73,704	3,648
Operating profit after taxes on financial services	430,908	254,433
Share of profits of associates and joint ventures	-	-
Profit before tax	430,908	254,433
Income tax expenses	189,375	107,533
Profit for the period	241,532	146,900

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION		
As at	31-Dec-19 LKR '000 (Audited)	31-Dec-18 LKR '000 (Audited)
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	7,432,322	14,512,453
Balances with central banks	9,415,664	31,147
Placements with banks	15,539,168	-
Financial assets measured at fair value through other comprehensive income	13,130	12,557
Property, plant and equipment and Right-of-Use Asset	2,015,076	302,312
Investment properties	-	-
Goodwill and intangible assets	3,995	-
Deferred tax assets	16,045	-
Income Tax Refund Due	23,721	-
Other assets	244,831	49,958
Total assets	34,703,952	14,908,427
Liabilities		
Due to banks	15,482,379	-
Financial liabilities at amortised cost	-	-
- due to depositors	4,436,438	1,073,624
Current tax liabilities	-	56,645
Other liabilities	2,028,129	1,263,258
Total liabilities	21,946,946	2,393,527
Equity		
Assigned Capital	12,368,000	12,368,000
Statutory Reserve Fund	19,422	7,345
Fair Value Reserve	573	-
Retained Earnings	368,011	139,555
Total equity	12,757,006	12,514,900
Total equity and liabilities	34,703,952	14,908,427
Contingent liabilities and commitments	10,988,612	2,033,880
Memorandum Information		
Number of Employees	39	23

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
For the period	12 months ended 31 Dec. 2019 LKR '000	For the period from 04 Oct. 2017 to 31 Dec. 2018
Profit for the year	241,532	146,900
Items that will be reclassified to Income statement	-	-
Change in fair value of investment in equity at fair value through other comprehensive income	573	-
Items that will not be reclassified to Income statement	-	-
Other comprehensive income for the period, net of taxes	573	-
Total comprehensive income for the period	242,105	146,900

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
For the period	12 months ended 31 Dec. 2019	For the period from 04 Oct. 2017 to 31 Dec. 2018
Cash flows from operating activities		
Interest receipts	1,787,520	1,126,153
Interest payments	(413,437)	(1,289)
Net commission receipts	29,085	204
Payments to employees	(390,274)	(263,846)
Payments on other operating activities	(207,306)	(344,135)
Operating profit before change in operating assets & liabilities	805,588	517,087
Increase/Decrease in operating assets		
Other assets	(194,873)	(62,814)
Increase in operating liabilities		
Financial liabilities at amortised cost - due to depositors	3,362,814	1,073,624
Other liabilities	(12,097)	1,032,021
Net cash generated from operating activities before tax	3,961,432	2,559,918
Income tax paid	(280,155)	-
Other tax Paid	(223,410)	-
Net cash from operating activities	3,457,867	2,559,918
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	(1,073,646)	(361,358)
Purchase of financial investments	(15,539,168)	-
Dividends received from investment	214	-
Investment in intangible assets	(5,326)	-
Net cash (used in)/from investing activities	(16,617,926)	(361,358)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Borrowings from Banks	15,482,379	-
Funds Received from Head office	-	12,368,000
Lease Payment	(77,541)	-
Net cash (used in)/from financing activities	15,404,838	12,368,000
Net increase/(decrease) in cash & cash equivalents	2,244,779	14,566,559
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	14,566,559	14,566,559
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	16,811,338	14,566,559
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	16,811,338	14,566,559
Cash and cash equivalents	7,433,339	14,535,736
Statutory Deposit with Central Bank of Sri Lanka (SDF)	9,378,000	30,823
	16,811,338	14,566,559

ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS BY MEASUREMENT BASIS				
As at 31 December 2019	Financial Assets/ Liabilities measured at Amortised Cost LKR '000	Financial Assets/ Liabilities measured at Fair Value through Profit and Loss LKR '000	Financial Assets/ Liabilities measured at Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income LKR '000	Total LKR '000
ASSETS				
Cash and Cash Equivalents	7,432,322	-	-	7,432,322
Balance with Central Bank of Sri Lanka	9,415,664	-	-	9,415,664
Placements with banks	15,539,168	-	-	15,539,168
Equity Instruments	-	-	13,130	13,130
Total Financial Assets	32,387,154	-	13,130	32,400,284
LIABILITIES				
Due to Banks	15,482,379	-	-	15,482,379
Financial liabilities - due to depositors	4,436,438	-	-	4,436,438
Total Financial Liabilities	19,918,817	-	-	19,918,817

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY					
	Assigned Capital LKR '000	Statutory Reserve Fund LKR '000	Fair Value Reserve LKR '000	Retained Earnings LKR '000	Total Equity LKR '000
Balance as at 01/01/2019 - Audited	12,368,000	7,345	-	139,555	12,514,900
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	-	-	-	241,532	241,532
Profit for the year (Net of Tax)	-	-	-	241,532	241,532
Other Comprehensive Income (Net of Tax)	-	-	573	-	573
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	-	-	573	241,532	242,105
Transactions with Equity Holders, recognised directly in Equity	-	-	-	-	-
Capital funds received from Head Office	-	12,077	-	(12,077)	-
Transfer to Statutory Reserve fund	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transactions with Equity Holders	-	12,077	-	(12,077)	-
Balance as at 31/12/2019	12,368,000	19,422	573	369,011	12,757,005

ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS BY MEASUREMENT BASIS				
As at 31 December 2018	Financial Assets/ Liabilities measured at Amortised Cost LKR '000	Financial Assets/ Liabilities measured at Fair Value through Profit and Loss LKR '000	Financial Assets/ Liabilities measured at Fair Value through Other Comprehensive Income LKR '000	Total LKR '000
ASSETS				
Cash and Cash equivalents	14,512,453	-	-	14,512,453
Balances with Central Bank of Sri Lanka	31,147	-	-	31,147
Other Financial Assets	-	-	12,557	12,557
Total Financial Assets	14,543,600	-	12,557	14,556,157
LIABILITIES				
Financial liabilities - due to depositors	1,073,624	-	-	1,073,624
Total Financial Liabilities	1,073,624	-	-	1,073,624

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY					
	Assigned Capital LKR '000	Statutory Reserve Fund LKR '000	Fair Value Reserve LKR '000	Retained Earnings LKR '000	Total Equity LKR '000
Balance as at 01/01/2019 - Audited	12,368,000	7,345	-	139,555	12,514,900
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	-	-	-	241,532	241,532
Profit for the year (Net of Tax)	-	-	-	241,532	241,532
Other Comprehensive Income (Net of Tax)	-	-	573	-	573
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	-	-	573	241,532	242,105
Transactions with Equity Holders, recognised directly in Equity	-	-	-	-	-
Capital funds received from Head Office	-	12,077	-	(12,077)	-
Transfer to Statutory Reserve fund	-	-	-	-	-
Total Transactions with Equity Holders	-	12,077	-	(12,077)	-
Balance as at 31/12/2019	12,368,000	19,422	573	369,011	12,757,005

Finance

BANK OF CHINA LIMITED COLOMBO BRANCH



SELECTED PERFORMANCE INDICATORS		
Item	As at 31-12-2019	As at 31-12-2018
Regulatory Capital Adequacy (LKR in Millions)		
Common Equity Tier 1	9,752	11,477
Core (Tier 1) Capital	9,752	11,477
Total Capital Base	9,760	11,477
Regulatory Capital Ratio (%)		
Common Equity Tier 1 Capital (%) (Minimum requirement - 7%)	110.78	244.31
Core (Tier 1) Capital (%) (Minimum requirement - 8.5%)	110.78	244.31
Total Capital Base (%) (Minimum requirement - 12.5%)	110.87	244.31
Regulatory Liquidity		
Statutory Liquid Assets		
Domestic banking unit (LKR in Millions)	29,815	0.49
Off-Shore Banking Unit (USD in Millions)	17	-
Statutory Liquid Assets (%) (Minimum requirement - 20%)	203.17	45.13
Domestic Banking Unit (%)	109.12	-
Off-Shore Banking Unit (%)	9.384	0.0299
Total Stock of High-Quality Liquid Assets (LKR in Millions)		
Liquidity Coverage Ratio (%) (Minimum Requirement - 90%)		
Rupee (%)	2,021.06	5,954.85
All currency (%)	6,806.67	111.55
Profitability		
Interest Margin (%)	4.53	7.55
Return on Assets (before Tax) (%)	1.01	1.70
Return on Equity (%)	1.98	1.17

ANALYSIS OF DEPOSITS		
	31-12-2019	31-12-2018
By product - Domestic Currency		
Demand Deposits (Current Accounts)	1,193,666	-
Savings Deposits	28,966	5,096
Fixed Deposits	156,286	15,016
Subtotal	1,378,918	20,112
By product - Foreign Currency		
Demand Deposits (Current Accounts)	204,512	-
Savings Deposits	105,057	20,375
Fixed Deposits	2,747,951	1,033,137
Subtotal	3,057,520	1,053,512
Total	4,436,438	1,073,624

Explanatory Notes

1. Bank of China Limited Sri Lanka Branch ("Bank") is a licensed commercial bank established under the Banking Act No. 30 of 1988. It is a foreign branch of Bank of China Limited, which is incorporated in People's Republic of China. The registered office of the Bank is located at No. 01, Fuxingmen Nei Dajie, Beijing, China. The Branch was incorporated on 4th October 2017 and obtained the license of Central Bank of Sri Lanka on 12th March 2018.

2. The Financial Statements of the Bank have been prepared in accordance with Sri Lanka Accounting Standards comprising SLFRS and LKAS as issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka.

CERTIFICATION:
We, the undersigned, being the Country Manager and the Assistant Country Manager of Bank of China, Colombo Branch jointly certify that:
(a) the above statements have been prepared in compliance with the format and definitions prescribed by Central Bank of Sri Lanka;
(b) the information contained in these statements have been extracted from the audited financial statements of the bank.

Wang Chuan
(Sgd.) Country Manager
14th March 2020

Yang Lixin
(Sgd.) Assistant Country Manager
14th March 2020

EU supports communities through water, sanitation and hygiene facilities

Two years ago when 60-year old R. Rasamma, living in the G.T. Division, Shannon Estate, Hatton was hospitalised, her experience was unpleasant. "2 years ago, I was admitted to the Dickoya Base Hospital and I had such a bad experience. The toilets were inaccessible by wheelchairs, there was no water and you could smell the toilets from the next ward."

The four-year long project, 'Assisting Communities in Creating Environmental and Nutritional Development' funded by the European Union and jointly implemented by ADRA UK together with ADRA Sri Lanka, and OXFAM in association with Maskeliya MOH (Office of the Medical Officer of Health) and the Department of National Community Water Supply, government institutions and line ministries, focused on the renovation of latrines and water filtration units in the Dickoya Base Hospital in the Nuwaraeliya district, which serves approximately 500 patients per day. The renovated toilets included a number of child friendly toilets and disabled accessible toilets in the Hospital's old wing and other areas including the Physiotherapy Ward, Stroke Unit, Paediatric Ward and Male and Female Wards.

The project's main objective is to ensure that the vulnerable rural and estate communities have increased access to water, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition facilities, improved personal



Community latrine before intervention

hygiene and sanitation practices, and community driven services managed in collaboration with strengthened public authorities. The project is engaged in improving health, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation among Sri Lanka's rural and estate communities in the Uva and Central Provinces - including Nuwaraeliya, Monaragala and Matale Districts. A total of 300,000 families are set to benefit from this project that will contribute towards improving their quality of life.

The project also conducted training on Health and Hygiene for the MOH staff in Maskeliya and Bogawantalawa, in addition to more focused training towards Public Health Midwives and Public Health Inspectors in these areas.

Rasamma is no longer worried about using sanitation facilities when visiting the hospital. She said, "When I fell ill again, I was worried I will experience the same, but I was very pleasantly surprised. For the first time, I could take my wheelchair inside the toilet and use all the facilities with minimum help from my caretaker."

They had even installed a sanitary pad disposal unit, which is wonderful. I am no longer worried to come to this hospital. I find this very comfort-



Community latrine after intervention

ing." Another important feature of this project is its unique approach of "water as a connector" to unite and engage the community, estate management, and government officials at the provincial, district and local levels to contribute towards the implementation of the Government's Rural Water and Sanitation Supply (RWSS) Policy. Elaborating on ADRA's contribution and work in relation to the project, Prabhoob Bandaratilleke, Programs Director, ADRA Sri Lanka said, "This is our first working experience with the EU. The commitment demonstrated by the EU Delegation in Sri Lanka towards ensuring sustainable development is admirable. They spearhead several initiatives such as national level steering committees and coordination with relevant Ministries that has impacted our work in the field positively. Development work is challenging and can be faced only through real partnerships and we are fortunate to have received the opportunity to work with the EU."

The project has also been a catalyst and lifeline for many individuals such as A. D. Imanantha, a widow and her son, Isuru Pathum, a quadriplegic from birth. Her son needs to be carried to and from the bed for his basic needs. Even though well-wishers have

supported the family with a provision of a wheelchair, the house nor the temporary toilet were wheelchair accessible. Based on the recommendation of the leaders of the Health and Nutrition Committee which is a Community Based Organisation leading the health and nutrition components of the project.

The project constructed a disability-friendly toilet together with a water supply system that uses the hand pump to manually pump water to an overhead tank so the toilet will have running water.

Another aspect of the project is the strengthening of existing government services by building the capacity of the staff of the MOH. These trainings are focused on attitude, skills and knowledge development. A notable training, titled 'Health sector disaster management for public health staff', which was designed by the disaster preparedness and response division of the Ministry of Health was conducted for the MOH staff of Maskeliya and Bogawantalawa.

E.G.N. Chanika, a Public Health Midwife from the Bogawantalawa MOH who was able to develop her capacity through this project said, "I have worked as a Public Health Midwife for the past 15 years. However, this was the first training I have attended. I greatly appreciate the practical aspect of this training."

Smart Maps guide COVID-19 investigations and monitor effectiveness

Location intelligence provides a valuable lens for COVID-19 response—exploring the dynamic connections between people, their health and well-being, and changing physical and social environments.

When the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that the situation would worsen. Yet, he noted, this is the first world pandemic that can be controlled, in part due to global connectivity and awareness. The controllability of COVID-19 can be attributed to tools that quantify data inputs—and aggregate information about who and when in the context of where. Geographic information system (GIS) technology underpins mapping dashboards and provides the means to investigate and understand the spread, guide control measures, and assess strategies for COVID-19 response.

Health analysts are using GIS to track the situation. At Seoul National University, a spatiotemporal epidemiologist named Hwang Seung-sik was able to determine that someone known as "Patient 31" became a superspreader in South Korea. This patient infected fellow members of a church, and this gave rise to 60 percent of the country's current cases.

Sri Lanka cricket captain on COVID-19 lockdown

We must try to maximise the time to be with our families - Dimuth

SAADI THAWFEEQ

For Sri Lanka's Test and ODI cricket captain Dimuth Karunaratne the curfew imposed by the government to curb the dreaded Coronavirus has given him a God-given chance to spend time with his family.

"Focus on cricket is less these days but we are maintaining our fitness and we have time to spend with our families which is something we don't get when we are playing cricket around the year," Karunaratne told the Daily News.

"We won't get a chance like this to spend time with our families. When we have the chance we must try to maximise it without using it towards cricket," he said.

Speaking further Karunaratne said, "Most of the time we are at practice or spending times in hotels or we are overseas. This is the first time after a long period I have spent a week at home without going anywhere. My mother is extremely happy because I have time to spend time with her and sit down and have a meal with her.

This relationship we can bond it these days and I am focussing a lot on that with cricket taking a back seat.

"I have put cricket out of my mind because there is no point thinking of it. We don't know when we will play our next series."

Sri Lanka's next opponents are South Africa who are due to tour the country in June for 3 ODIs and 3 T20Is but with the strict government restrictions imposed on travel to the

country whether the series will take place as scheduled is doubtful.

How does the Lankan captain spend the day at home apart from being with his family - he lives with his wife Anuradha and his parents at Battaramulla.

"These days I do the fitness training schedule sent to us by the trainer in the mornings and evenings at home either with weights, if you have them at home or with the body weight," explained Karunaratne.

"I watch movies, and do some gardening I have a big garden and spend time with my pet dog a Labrador. In the night I make some meal whatever I require from what is available at home. After that I watch a movie and then go to sleep.

"Sometimes I read a book related to cricket otherwise I watch some cricket CD's. Recently I watched a prime time video the Australia-England Ashes series. I mix it up each day so that I don't get bored," he said.

Sitting it out of cricket is nothing new to Karunaratne who has done so many times when he has suffered injuries.

"I have experienced this many times through injuries sometimes I have been away from cricket for 2-3 months. I've had a lot of injuries. In the previous World Cup (2015) I broke my finger and was out for two months. It is like sitting out on an injury," he said.

Karunaratne was of the view that it was not that difficult to come back to playing interna-



Sri Lanka cricket captain Dimuth Karunaratne tries his hand in the kitchen watched by his wife Anuradha.

tional cricket after a long layoff as long as you maintain your fitness.

"If you are doing your fitness and maintaining your body, to get there is not a problem.

What we have to do is put double the effort at practice to catch up on the lost days. If we bat for about 3 hours a day, we bat against the bowling machine for another 30 minutes to

one hour. What you have missed during your layoff you must find a way to catch up. As professional cricketers we know that. Once we begin practices all this will fall into our routine," said Karunaratne.

How good or bad is this break from cricket? "Percentage wise it's 50-50. Being unable to play cricket is unfortunate because it's a sport we love and it's our profession. To keep away from it is a loss, we lose our momentum and body rhythm etc.," said Karunaratne.

"The current situation we are placed is not something we expected so we must try to make use of it to our advantage. Instead of staying at home and sleeping, we can train more than we do at other times and spend time with the family. There are a lot of things you miss when you are playing cricket, now you can catch upon them in the days we are at home. Otherwise every time we say we are busy because of cricket."

Karunaratne said that he has not experienced much difficulty with regards to getting food items.

"I am staying at Battaramulla and most of the media people whom I know whenever they get the opportunity they bring what I require because they have the facilities to move about during curfew hours. There are no big issues with regard to food. We have stored some goods before the curfew was imposed so we can manage until it finishes, after that only we'll have to see," Karunaratne said.

England players set for pay cuts due to coronavirus crisis - report



England players set for pay cuts.

LONDON, SUNDAY - England's cricket players must "realise the bigger picture" and will be expected to take a pay cut as the country's cricket governing body (ECB) tries to deal with the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic, The Times reported on Sunday.

More than 662,700 people have been infected by the novel coronavirus across the world and 30,751 have died, according to a recent tally, and the outbreak has brought global sport to a virtual standstill.

England's tour of Sri Lanka was cancelled earlier this month and the ECB announced no professional cricket will be played until the end of May. England's home test series against West Indies and Pakistan and limited overs series with Australia from June to August are also at risk of being post-

poned or cancelled if the situation does not improve, leading to a further loss of revenue.

"We're looking at everything about how the game can make savings," an ECB spokesman was quoted as saying by The Times. "There's a formal process to go through with centrally contracted players but the game needs to pull together at this time. We believe the players realise the bigger picture."

English players on central contracts have their salaries paid in full by the ECB, who awarded 10 test contracts and 12 white-ball contracts in September last year. The Times reported players such as Joe Root, Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler - who play for England in all three formats - would be expected to take pay cuts of approximately 200,000 pounds during the three-month shutdown.

- Agencies

Postponed Tokyo Olympics to open July 23 next year

TOKYO, MONDAY - The Tokyo Olympics will begin on July 23 next year, organisers said on Monday, after the coronavirus forced the historic decision to postpone the Games until 2021.

"The Olympics will be held from July 23 to August 8, 2021. The Paralympics will be held from August 24 to September 5," Tokyo 2020 chief Yoshiro Mori told reporters at a hastily arranged news conference.

Only hours earlier, Mori had said he expected a decision from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) dur-

ing the course of the week. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics were due to open on July 24 this year and run for 16 days, but the coronavirus pandemic forced the first peace-time postponement of the Games.

The IOC and Japan had for weeks insisted the show could go on but the rapid spread of COVID-19 prompted growing disquiet among athletes and sporting federations.

The Olympics was the highest-profile sporting casualty of the coronavirus that has wiped out fixtures worldwide

and all but halted professional sport. According to the latest budget, the Games were due to cost \$12.6 billion, shared between the organising committee, the government of Japan and Tokyo city.

The postponement affects every aspect of the organisation - hotels, ticketing, venues and transport being among the major headaches.

Hotels have had to cancel bookings, dealing them a bitter blow at a time when tourism is already being hampered by the coronavirus. - AFP

We need to reorganise matches with tighter spectator control says FFSL chief

KARUPPIAH RAMAKRISHNAN

Football Federation of Sri Lanka (FFSL) president Anura de Silva said that their biggest challenge following the Coronavirus outbreak was rebuilding and reorganising football to face similar situations in the future.

"Depending on the outcome of the current Covid-19 situation faced globally we are currently making plans for the next six months," said De Silva.

"So far all our qualification matches globally have been postponed and hopefully we will be able to overcome this situation in the next few months," he said.

"Football is a spectator based sport and we need to reorganize and plan how to

conduct our matches in the future by controlling spectators considering the social distancing.

"We need teamwork to combat the Coronavirus, and the FFSL is always ready to combat the current issues with the government stakeholders because health comes first. I call upon the football community to follow the guidelines and interact with the government.

"The biggest support we can give is to follow the guidelines given by the government. At the moment we were happy with the government's progress so far compared with that of other nations who are fighting the dreaded disease," De Silva said.



FFSL president Anura de Silva

Coronavirus may prove virtual sports game changer

PARIS, MONDAY - With an unprecedented captive audience of three billion people in coronavirus lockdown virtual sports events are wooing fans after traditional live sports were shut down and public gatherings banned in many countries.

Horse-racing, boxing, cycling, football and motor-racing chiefs are desperate to maintain their fanbase and are scrambling to provide a fix and maintain revenues.

With stadiums closed and events such as the Tokyo Olympics and Euro 2020 postponed, organisers are generating advertising revenue by streaming virtual sports on YouTube, Facebook and Twitch or even broadcasting them on traditional television platforms.

Sports is where the numbers are and fans denied real games are turning to live streaming, watching people play games, and taking part in those video games themselves.

Italy's Mugello motorcycling circuit, which would have attracted 200,000 people for its MotoGP weekend on Sunday, may just have pulverised that figure with a live-streamed virtual race promoted as "The stay at home GP".

Honda's world champion Marc Marquez came fifth as the globe's top riders sat uncomfortably on their sofas livestreaming from their living rooms. Alex Rins looked bored playing with his pet dog on his knee.

Alex Marquez, younger brother of the world champion, won the race and asked jokingly "will the points count to the championship?"

Millions of fans, credit cards at the ready, are expected to copy them after downloading the app.



Boxing legend Muhammad Ali, who died in 2016, was even back in action, beating Sonny Liston in a virtual bout with 35,000 YouTube viewers.

Old-school purists will be heartened by veteran Valentino Rossi's refusal to take part.

The seven-time world champion said this week he was "cheering on the people of Brescia and Bergamo, those who usually cheer me on. It looks like a war zone," he said of his coronavirus-stricken region.

"I have seen very bad images, we must hold on," he told Sky Italia, who will also broadcast the virtual race.

Formula One chiefs have also galvanised some of their drivers to grab their gaming controllers, racing a Virtual Bahrain Grand Prix which was abbreviated because of technical difficulties.

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali, who died in 2016, was even back in action, beating Sonny Liston again on Friday in a virtual bout with 35,000 YouTube viewers.

Ali will now meet the long retired Mike Tyson after he beat up George Foreman on Saturday.

Racing-mad Britain comes to a standstill each year for the Grand National and with the courses all closed, broadcaster ITV will show a virtual race on April 4.

The real race can be a dangerous lottery with horses and riders potentially suffering serious injuries in the many falls, but it makes millions for the bookies, who this time will run online betting for the field of 40 runners.

"We use the latest CGI technology and algorithms and were ready to go ahead as a forerunner to the big race," said executive producer Rob McLoughlin.

As with the boxing, there will also be a race of champions pitting the late Red Rum, who won the National three times in the 1970s, against defending champion Tiger Roll.

Baseball staged a four-player video-game tournament called "MLB The Show" on Friday. It also suffered some technical problems before it was won by Amir Garrett, a Cincinnati Reds pitcher, who played at home wearing his team uniform.

"A win's a win," said Garrett but he also said: "You've got to realise it's a video game." - AFP

NOC tells athletes to focus on Olympics for 2021

KARUPPIAH RAMAKRISHNAN

General-secretary of the National Olympic Committee of Sri Lanka (NOC) Maxwell de Silva said that all work at the NOCSL has come to a virtual stop due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have welcomed the decision taken by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and host nation Japan Olympic Committee for postponing the Games for 12 months. We have also advised our athletes to conduct their training and work outs at their premises as far as possible," said De Silva.

"This outbreak is unprecedented and the unpredictable spread has seen the situation around the rest of the world deteriorating," noted De Silva. He further said that the NOC has requested the Lankan athletes to focus on qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics after all the issues faced globally are under control. The Tokyo Olympic Games has been postponed to 2021 due to the current situation



Maxwell de Silva secretary of NOCSL

- the first such postponement in the Games' 124-year modern history.

The IOC took the decision last week after talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and local organisers ending weeks of speculation and uncertainty about the Summer Games initially scheduled to kickoff in July.

It was also agreed that the Olympic flame will stay in Japan and that the Games will keep the name Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020.