

Will sites of worship preserve signifiers of a distinct Tamil identity?

Language, culture, history and territorial integrity are some of the essential defining characteristics of the Eelam Tamils' distinct identity. However, the Tamils were forced to struggle for their distinct identity against the destruction or denial of such factors.

Practices of worship have formed an essential part of Tamils' historico-cultural ties where overtime, temples were established in every part of Eelam. Settlements were further established around such temples which often provided distinct identities to their respective locations thus facilitating relations with adjoining towns and hence increasing cohesion across the Tamil homeland. Overtime, the temples located along provincial borders amalgamated with the defining features of the Tamil nation's territorial integrity.

Furthermore, during the escalation of Tamil genocide, sites of worship such as temples became sites of sanctuary for the Tamils. As a part of its genocidal agenda, the Sri Lankan administration was capable of massacring the Tamils through targeting such temples through bombings. As a result, at least 5,000 temples were completely or partially destroyed throughout the Tamil homeland.

The genocidal government's agenda takes the following forms:

1. State terrorism: used during the armed conflict to destruct temples through bombings.
2. Structural genocide: Buddhicisation across the Tamil homeland in a post-Mullivaikkal Tamil genocide context, to target traditional Tamil sites of worship – in particular, Saivite temples.

It is as a result of such structural genocide that signifiers of Buddhism have been multiplied across the Tamil homeland through the installation of Buddhist stupors and statues. Such large-scale extremist Sinhala-Buddhist appropriation of lands has continued to occur across the Tamil homeland in the masses. The extent of such appropriation across the Tamil homeland is evident through:

- The incident at the Kinniya springs – Trincomalee (capital of Tamil Eelam)
- Sinhala-Buddhicisation efforts in Navatkuli – North
- The imposition of a Buddhist statue within the premises of the Kanakambikai Amman temple – Vanni
- The Neeraviyadi Pillaiyaar Temple incident which saw the disregard for democratic processes within the island – adjoining point of the North and East

Such appropriation continues on a daily basis in the aftermath of the 2009 Mullivaikkal Tamil genocide. This agenda is facilitated under the guise of:

- Research conducted by SL's Department of Archaeology
- Buddhicisation
- Sinhalisation
- Militarisation

Despite changes of leadership in the Sri Lankan state, historical imposition and recreation remain instrumental in the state's political programme. The Sri Lankan state attempts to establish Sinhala-Buddhist supremacy through defacing or completely replacing temples with Buddhist viharas. As a result of the state's agenda; the Sri Lankan army's militarisation of the Tamil homeland, appropriation of Tamil lands through Sinhalisation and Buddhicisation have intertwined with the assistance of the Sri Lankan government.

Despite a lengthy legacy, the intensification of such objectives following Sri Lanka's independence was interrupted by the Tamils' armed struggle. This exposes how the Tamils' liberation struggle functioned not only as one which emerged to resist the denial of the Tamils' fundamental rights, but one which protects and preserves the Eelam Tamils', language, culture, history and land. As a result, Tamil sites of worship were also protected.

The sons and daughters of Eelam fought valiantly to protect our land and our people. Subsequently, a people who worship deities who wield weapons cannot turn a blind eye towards the Tamils genocide. Whilst Sinhala-Buddhist sites of worship function as the foundational sites for the Sri Lankan state's genocidal measures, it is unjust for temples and other sites of worship to deny the presence of the Tamils' identity within such sites.

It is essential to conduct initiatives to contain the escalation of the structural genocide conducted against the Tamils through countering the Sinhalisation of the Tamil homeland. However, on the other hand, it is essential to engage in activities to establish our identity to negate the genocidal state's historical imposition. It is as a result that our brethren have engaged in establishing a distinct Tamil identity within mass socio-cultural sites of gatherings such as temples. Such establishment was achieved through the incorporation of the geographical map of Tamil Eelam into decorations used during temple festivities. Similarly, the Sinhalisation of Navatkuli through the establishment of a Buddhist stupor has been countered through erecting statues of valorous Tamil kings.

Whilst such initiatives are being conducted within the Tamil homeland amidst direct threats from the Sri Lankan state and military, the question arises as to what we of the diaspora have done. Bern's Gnalingeswarar Thirukoyil in Switzerland is one such exemplar which effectively amalgamates socio-cultural politics. The temple incorporates the Tamil struggle into its forms of worship in both a physical and emotional manner. The signs and symbols of the struggle which decorate the temple, including the map of Tamil Eelam which is established at the entrance of the temple as well as the incorporation of nationalistic features into worship, cement such ideals.

Upon this basis, it is essential to establish a culture which simultaneously protects the Tamils' history and negates Tamil genocide, across the diaspora as well. This can be achieved through the preservation and adherence of signifiers of the Tamils' struggle for liberation. May the emergence of red and yellow decorations, the incorporation of *gloriosa superba* flowers, the inclusion of Eelam songs in instrumentals and the map of Tamil Eelam in temples form the foundational step for such initiatives. The arts and variations in

worship are intertwined with humanity's livelihood. As a result, these evolved to become a part of the Tamils' struggle. Through establishing a new purpose for our livelihood, let us generate a new history which will preserve our legacy which

continues to be degenerated due to intensified destruction.

Bala Chanthiran

Editor's note: Phoenix TNG is aware that the struggle for Tamil liberation is secular and maintains the same ideal in its practices. The views of the author reflect the nature of Buddhicisation as one which targets Saiva sites of worship as they are predominantly viewed as sites of Tamils' territorial integrity. This is not to prioritise any religion but to identify the government's agenda. Likewise, in spite of the secular nature of our struggle, we welcome Eelam Tamils to incorporate signifiers of the Tamil liberation struggle into various sites of worship. Such initiatives are also necessary to strengthen the Tamils' socio-political spaces through historical and cultural amalgamation.



Thirunelvely's Kali Amman Kovil, Tamil Eelam (2017)

International News

03.02.2020: **India** - According to Daily Mirror, SL's Prime Minister's Office was reported to have mentioned that Mahinda would make a state visit to India between 07.02.2020 – 11.02.2020 on an invitation extended by Modi. The two countries are expected to finalise the implementation agenda and follow-up discussions on India's assistance to enhance training opportunities for Sri Lanka in the sectors of employment and public services.

04.02.2020: **Russia** - According to Daily Mirror, Putin had mentioned that the development of bilateral ties with Sri Lanka was in line with the strengthening of regional security and stability.

04.02.2020: **US** - According to Daily Mirror, US State Secretary Michael R. Pompeo said that he is looking forward to deepening bilateral ties with Sri Lanka in a statement issued on Sri Lanka's Independence Day.

07.02.2020: **India** - SL PM, Mahindha reported to have arrived in New Delhi for a 3-day official visit to

the country reports Colombo Page. According to Daily Mirror, Mahindha will call on Indian President Ramnath Kovintha and hold high-level bilateral discussions with his Indian counterpart, Foreign Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jai-shankar and senior officials of the Indian Government during this visit.

08.02.2020: **India** - According to Daily Mirror, India hoped that the SL government would realise the aspirations of the Tamil community as the issue figured prominently in wide-ranging talks between Modi and Mahinda. In their talks, the two prime ministers were reported to have deliberated on the entire expanse of bilateral ties, resolved to further deepen anti-terror cooperation and boost trade and investment ties.

08.02.2020: **US** - According to Daily Mirror, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Jonathan Henick had told a group of journalists at the American Centre on 07.02.2020, that counter-terrorism was one of the top priorities of his

country's partnership with Sri Lanka. He was reported to have mentioned that the threat from terrorism in the region was very serious and was not a problem that would go away soon.

08.02.2020: **India** - According to Colombo Page, Modi had requested Gotabaya during a meeting in Colombo to implement the 13th Amendment to devolve governing powers to the provinces to supposedly ensure that Tamils could enjoy the peace, equality and justice that they expected.

09.02.2020: **India** - According to Daily Mirror, Mahinda had emphasised the long-standing relationship with India and Pakistan which had assisted the defeat of the LTTE in an interview with the Hindustan Times during his official visit to India. It was further reported that he had mentioned that the war would not have been won without the assistance from India which was clandestine in nature at the time.

12.02.2020: **Israel** - Israeli ambassador Dr. Ron Malka was reported to have met the SL's

defence secretary, Kamal Gunaratne, reports the MoD's website. In this meeting, the Israeli ambassador extended assurances in the sectors of; agriculture, education, transportation, IT, digitalisation, cyber security and intelligence sharing. Assurances for better irrigation technologies and farming methods were also provided by the Ambassador. He also met Gota on the same day according to Colombo-page.

14.02.2020: Guinea-Bissau – According to Colombo Gazette, the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau made a brief visit to Sri Lanka en route to Spain where bilateral cooperation was reportedly discussed between the visiting President and Mahinda.

14.02.2020: US travel ban - US State Department's, Michael Pompeo reported to have announced a travel ban against genocidal criminal Shavendra Silva in accordance with the *Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act* and Leahy agreement, in a published statement.

14.02.2020: US travel ban - According to Daily Mirror, the SL government has expressed strong

objection to the imposition of travel restrictions against Shavendra Silva and his immediate family members, by the US government. The SL Foreign Ministry was reported to have mentioned that the ban was imposed based upon independently unverified information.

15.02.2020: US - According to Daily Mirror, US Congressmen Ami Bera and George Holding met Mahinda in Colombo to discuss the strengthening of relations in sectors including; counter terrorism, tourism and energy sectors. The SL PM encouraged increased US investments in Sri Lanka.

16.02.2020: US Travel ban - SL Foreign Relations Minister requests the US government to review their decision regarding the travel ban imposed against Shavendra Silva upon allegedly unsubstantiated accusations, reports Daily Mirror. During the discussion today, the Minister reiterated that Lt. Gen. Silva was appointed as the Commander of the SL Army by the then Head of State upon the basis of his seniority.

16.02.2020: US Travel ban - According to Daily

Mirror, US Ambassador Teplitz confirmed that the US would refuse entry to Shavendra Silva upon the grounds of credible evidence of human rights violations committed by Silva during the final stages of the war during a meeting with SL's Ministry of Foreign Relations.

16.02.2020: India – According to Colombo Gazette, the Indian High Commission in Colombo had announced that foundation stones had been laid at the Vellai Oya Estate for an Indian Housing Project of 50 houses as a part of an Indian programme which has committed the installation of 14,000 houses in the plantation areas.

18.02.2020: UN withdrawal- According to Daily Mirror, the SL government had immediately withdrawn from the UNHRC resolutions 30/1 and 40/1 due to the supposed conflict with the interests of the current government's policies.

18.02.2020: Japan - According to Daily Mirror, Gotabaya is scheduled to visit Tokyo, Japan to participate at the global conference, "The future of Asia." which is to occur between 28.05.2020 and 29.05.2020.

20.02.2020: **Accountability** – Amnesty International and HRW publish a joint-statement calling upon the UN council to implement an international accountability mechanism on Sri Lanka at the UN's 43rd Council meeting.

20.02.2020: **UN withdrawal** – The SL Cabinet was reported to have approved the decision to withdraw from their commitments to the UNHRC resolutions, reports the Daily Mirror. Foreign Relations Minister Dinesh Gunawardane is expected to make a statement regarding the decision today in SL Parliament.

21.02.2020: **Malaysia** – According to Daily Mirror, The AGC in Malaysia had decided to drop all charges against 12 Tamils who were accused of supporting the LTTE.

22.02.2020: **Malaysia:** According to Daily Mirror, Malaysia's Home Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on had mentioned that the defunct LTTE would continue to be categorised as a terrorist organisation despite suggestions from Malaysia's Attorney-General, Tommy Thomas for review.

24.02.2020: **Pakistan** – According to PMD News,

Pakistan has expressed interests to extend bilateral cooperation in defence, trade, people-to-people relations, countering extremism, promoting religious harmony and in any other area Sri Lanka would need. This was assured by the Pakistan High Commissioner, Major General Muhammad Saad Khattak when he met with Gotabaya at the Presidential Secretariat. Improvement in cooperation for immigration was discussed as an initiative to facilitate the two countries' efforts in controlling the movement of those with "questionable records."

24.02.2020: **Malaysia** – According to Colombo Gazette, Malaysian legislator Gunasekaran was acquitted by the Malaysian High Court for alleged links to the LTTE.

24.02.2020: **Singapore** – According to Colombo Gazette, the High Commissioner of SL to Singapore, Sashikala Premawardhane and Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Law had met to discuss bilateral cooperation.

24.02.2020: **Germany** – A German parliamentary delegation led by Dr Ramsauer and Ambassador Rohde were reported to have visited

the "Memory Space" which was established at the German Embassy in Colombo on 20.02.2020, reports Colombo Gazette. During the visit, Germany was reported to have committed that its role in SL encompassed their support for SL's reconciliation process.

25.02.2020: **UN withdrawal-** According to News First LK, SL's Minister of Foreign Relations, Dinesh Gunawardena who led the SL delegation to the UN's 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council arrived in Geneva this evening. The Minister is scheduled to address the HRC on 26.02.2020 to formally inform the council members of the decision of the GoSL's decisions to withdraw from UNHRC resolution commitments and present 5 proposals. Gunawardena is also reported to be scheduled to respond to an oral update regarding SL by the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights on 27.02.2020 and subsequently meet with her on 28.02.2020.

25.02.2020: **Malaysia** – According to Daily Mirror, Malaysian Attorney General Tommy Thomas has faced calls to resign after he dropped terrorism charges against 12 Tamils who accused of alleged links to the LTTE.

26.02.2020: **UN withdrawal:** According to Daily Mirror, SL's Foreign Relation Minister said the government would set up a domestically designed reconciliation and accountability process to achieve sustainable peace, which would also include a Commission of Inquiry (COI) headed by a Justice of the Supreme Court.

26.02.2020: **UN withdrawal** – UK and Canada have been reported to have expressed their condemnation of SL's decision to withdraw from their UNHRC commitments, reports Colombo Gazette.

27.02.2020: **China** - According to PMD News, the Chinese ambassador, Cheng had visited SL's Presidential Secretariat to bid farewell to Gotabaya and assured that the Port City would have high-rise buildings within two years.

28.02.2020: **UN withdrawal** - According to Sunday Times LK, the EU had expressed concerns regarding the SL government's decision to withdraw from co-sponsoring UNHRC resolutions. The EU was reported to have called upon the GoSL to maintain a sustainable and durable reconciliation process.

28.02.2020: **Accountability** – The ICJ published a statement calling upon the imposition of a completely independent and international mechanism to establish accountability and justice in Sri Lanka.

28.02.2020: **MCC** – According to Newswire.lk, the SL government had decided not to sign the MCC agreement with the USA.

28.02.2020: **EU** – According to Colombo Gazette, the EU had requested SL to implement a human rights action plan following SL's withdrawal from their UNHRC resolutions.

29.02.2020: **UN withdrawal** - According to News First LK, the Core Group on Sri Lanka, expressing disappointment over Sri Lanka's decision to withdraw from the UN resolutions on the promotion of reconciliation and accountability, on the 28.02.2020. UNHRC High Commissioner, Michelle Bachelet appreciated the SL government's assurance to the HRC of its continued cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner and UN bodies.

Military News

31.01.2020: **Japan** - A Japanese self-defence force delegation met the commander of the Sri Lankan navy. According to the SL navy's homepage, they had held discussions on several matters of bilateral significance.

01.02.2020: **US** - Sri Lanka's navy reported to receive assistance from the US to safeguard internal strategic communication mechanisms to strengthen security and diplomatic cooperation reports TamilNet.

03.02.2020: **Russia** - The Commander-in-Chief of the Land Forces of the Russian Federation, arrived in Sri Lanka on 03.02.2020 on a five-day goodwill tour at the invitation of SLA Commander Lieutenant General, Shavendra Silva. General Salyukov met the Sri Lankan defence secretary, where he committed to bilateral cooperation through sharing intelligence to counter terrorism. According to the MoD's website, he had also pledged to offer more training to the Sri Lankan military and to develop the capacity of the Sri Lankan air force. The commitments to counter terrorism in a post-war

environment were reported to have been received with gratitude by SL's defence secretary.

04.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - According to Daily Mirror, Sri Lanka's navy had accorded a 25-Gun Salute at the Lighthouse premises in Colombo Fort to mark SL's 72nd Independence Day.

05.02.2020: **Russia** - TamilNet reports that a Russian military delegation headed by Russia's General and Commander-in-Chief of Russia's Land Forces, Oleg Salyukov would be inspecting the genocidal Sri Lankan Navy's Marine Academy in Trincomalee on 06.02.2020.

06.02.2020: **Exhibition** - Gunaratne and the SLA commander attended "DEFEXPO-20" - a defence-related exhibition in India. They were reported to have met with India's defence minister, Rajnath Singh and defence secretary, Dr. Ajay Kumar at this exhibition. According to the MoD's website, topics of discussion between the parties included but were not limited to; security interests, military technologies, research and innovative products. It

was further reported that they had also met with a high-profile Russian delegation at the exhibition.

06.02.2020: **India** - According to SL's navy, the Indian hydrographic survey ship, Jamuna called at the Colombo Port today for hydrographic survey in Sri Lanka until 03.04.2020. The ship was reported to be scheduled to undertake a hydrographic survey from Colombo to Galle, by Daily Mirror.

06.02.2020: **UK** - Commanding Officer Fleet Diving Squadron of the UK's Royal Navy, Commander Al Nekrews met the commander of the Sri Lankan navy. According to the SL Navy's website, they had held a cordial discussion on several matters of bilateral importance.

07.02.2020: **Navy** - According to Colombo Gazette, a 3rd notice was issued by Sri Lanka's Permanent High Court Trial-at-Bar to SL Navy commander Karannagoda after his failure to appear on the previous 2 occasions regarding a hearing about the abduction case of 11 youth.

07.02.2020: **Pakistan** - According to the Navy's homepage, the Chief of the Air Staff of the Pakistan Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Mujhid Anwar Khan, met the Commander of the SL navy. During the cordial discussion, they were reported to have shared views on matters of bilateral interest and mutual importance.

10.02.2020: **Pakistan** - According to MoD's website, Pakistan's Air Force Chief, Air Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan had met Kamal Gunaratne. In this meeting, the Pakistani Air Force Chief was reported to have assured their assistance to counter drug trafficking and human smuggling. He was also reported to have pledged assistance to train the SL air force.

10.02.2020: **Appointments** - According to News First LK, SL's MoD had announced that 6,259 tri-forces personnel had re-joined the service during the General Amnesty period.

10.02.2020: **VBSS** - Visit Board Search & Seizure (VBSS) Course for personnel of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was commenced in Trincomalee according to the Navy's homepage. The course is scheduled for 12 days. The

participants are expected to develop their knowledge about drug identification, drug transferring methods and planning, preparation and boarding procedures.

10.02.2020: **UN** - SL's navy was reported to have held a discussion with officials from the United Nation's Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) by the Navy's homepage. The meeting was reported to have extensively discussed, the jurisdiction of enforcement over vessels engaged in illegal activities - especially narcotic trafficking.

10.02.2020: **UK** - The Commander of the SL navy was reported to have visited the Diving School in Trincomalee. According to the SL navy's homepage, the purpose for the visit was to inspect the progress of the joint-diving course that was being conducted between the SL navy and the UK's Royal Navy.

11.02.2020: **Russia** - According to Colombo Page, Russia's Ambassador to Colombo, Matery had indicated in an interview that Sri Lanka had expressed interest to purchase military equipment from Russia following an official visit to Sri Lanka.

12.02.2020: **Turkey** - During a meeting between Turkey's new Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Demet Sekercioglu, and Mahinda, the expansion of defence and bilateral relations were discussed, reports Colombo Gazette. The discussion reportedly included the importance of intelligence sharing and economic expansion between the 2 countries. According to the SL navy's homepage, Sekercioglu had also met with the SL navy's commander on the 26.01.2020.

12.02.2020: **Energy** - According to Newswire.lk, the Russian ambassador had notified Sputnik International in an interview, that Russia could build a nuclear plant in Sri Lanka. According to this interview, the Russian nuclear cooperation, "Rosatom" and relevant Sri Lankan "bodies" had held their first consultations in 2017. The ambassador also added that Sri Lanka had expressed interest in purchasing Russian military equipment.

15.02.2020: **UK** - Colonel David Ashman, the Defence Adviser at the British High Commission in Sri Lanka, met SL's Commander of the Eastern Naval Area, Rear Admiral Merrill Wickramasinghe reports the SL

navy's homepage. Several topics were reportedly discussed during the meeting.

15.02.2020: **Seychelles** – According to Colombo Gazette, two patrol vessels donated by the SL government to assist in maritime surveillance had officially engaged with the Seychelles Coast Guard fleet. It is noteworthy that officers of the Seychelles Coast Guard had undergone a 3-week course of operational training in SL.

17.02.2020: **China** – The new defence attaché of the Embassy of People's Republic of China, Senior Colonel Wan Dong, met the commander of the SL navy. According to the SL navy's homepage, several matters of bilateral importance were discussed during the meeting. The defence attaché is scheduled to meet SL's Commander of the Eastern Naval area on 21.02.2020.

17.02.2020: **India** - A Dornier Aircraft of the Indian Navy was reported to have conducted an Air Observer Training Exercise, where officers from the SL navy and the SL air force had participated thus increasing capacities reports the SL navy's homepage.

17.02.2020: **Turkey** - The Turkish ambassador, Sekeroioglu met Kamal Gunaratne reports the MoD's website. In this meeting, Turkey was reported to seek the enhancement of bilateral cooperation for intelligence sharing in combating violent fundamental extremism. She was also reported to have mentioned that Turkey would be confronting terrorism upon internal and external fronts. As a result, Turkey had reportedly requested SL's assistance upon the basis of the SL government's expertise in countering the LTTE.

18.02.2020: **Raid** – Following earlier directives from Gotabaya and the SL defence ministry's declaration of a firearms amnesty between 05.02.2020 and 12.02.2020, the SL police and other intelligence agencies have been reported by Colombo Gazette to have commenced raids of illegal firearms across the island.

19.02.2020: **Germany** - Colonel Michael Fricke, the Military Attaché at the German Embassy in India met the commander of the SL navy, reports the SL navy's homepage. Fricke is also scheduled to visit SL's commander of the

Eastern Naval area on 20.02.2020.

20.02.2020: **Naval Technology** - Tropic Engineering Supplies and Services known as TESS (Pvt) Ltd, was reported to have presented the Commander of the SL navy with an underwater drone. According the SL navy's website, this underwater drone is remotely controlled and capable of capturing images from a depth of 100m. The drone has been reported to be used for the purpose of coral development monitoring.

21.02.2020: **Japan** - A Japanese naval ship named "Takanami" was reported to have arrived at the port of Colombo on a goodwill visit. The commanding officer of the ship, Commander Ryouichi Nihara, met the SL Commander of the Western Naval Area, Rear Admiral Sumith Weerasinghe, reports the SL navy's website.

25.02.2020: **Military** - According to Daily Mirror, SL's former Army Commander and current Ports Authority Chairman, Daya Ratnayake, has criticised the former government for failing to protect the image of the SL military in the international arena within the past 5 years which led to Lieutenant General

Shavendra Silva and his family from being banned to enter the US. He was further reported to have mentioned that it was unjust for countries to impose allegations of war crimes against senior military officers who had liberated the country from terrorism.

25.02.2020: **Zambia** - According to the MoD's website Kamal Gunaratne had met a Zambian military delegation. In this meeting, Gunaratne was reported to have stated

that the ideology of the LTTE was still intact. Upon a request from the Zambian delegation regarding SL's expertise in the field of asymmetric warfare tactics, Gunaratne expressed the ministry's willingness facilitate an instructor team to assist Zambia. It is noteworthy that seven members of the Zambian military are currently undergoing training with SL military institutions and these members were present at the meeting. The Zambian delegation had met the SL

commander of the Eastern Naval Command and the commander of the SL navy on 23.02.2020.

26.02.2020:

Collaboration - Kamal Gunaratne has been reported to have announced that SL military police personnel, SL navy and air force personnel had been deployed across Colombo as a temporary measure to assist with traffic congestion in the city.

Economic News

02.02.2020: **Financial** - According to PMD News, Gotabaya has ordered a comprehensive investigation into reports of allegations over financial irregularities said to have been committed during the deal between Sri Lankan Airlines and Airbus SE (Europe-based Airbus Industries) for the purchase of aircrafts.

08.02.2020: **IMF** - IMF has been reported by Colombo Page to have projected 3.7% GDP growth in 2020 for Sri Lanka's economy.

08.02.2020: **Denmark** - According to Colombo Page, Denmark-based fruit export company, Orana is to invest 1.5 million USD as the first phase of establishing a

fruit processing plant in Sri Lanka which is anticipated to generate 30 new jobs.

09.02.2020: **Afghanistan** - Colombo Page reports that Afghanistan's Minister of Finance had visited Gotabaya in Colombo to discuss regional issues.

09.02.2020: **Hungary** - Sri Lanka has been reported by Colombo Page to engage with Hungary in a MoU to expand higher education opportunities for the island's students.

11.02.2020: **EU** - According to Colombo Page, a report released by the European Commission on Sri Lanka's compliance with

the GSP + program (2018 - 2019), Sri Lanka had made progress in their commitment to 27 international conventions outlined in the GSP + arrangement.

11.02.2020: **Privatisation** - Colombo Page reports that Sri Lanka is to purchase 200 MW of power from the private sector to combat the island's current power crisis but also to increase privatisation.

11.02.2020: **US** - The US Department of State's FY 2021 budget has requested US\$ 39.2 million under the Economic Support and Development Fund to support the Sri Lankan government's programs reports Colombo Page.

12.02.2020: **Hotels** - According to Newswire.lk the two hotel chains “JW Marriot” and “Ritz Carlton” are to open up their branches in Sri Lanka within the next two years.

12.02.2020: **Import** - Following a report submitted by the Secretary to the President to SL cabinet ministers which outlined the current state of the rice market, the SL government has been reported to have made a policy decision to end rice import. A program has also been introduced to focus more on the local market through the purchase of paddies and increased incentives for paddy farmers reports Colombo Page.

12.02.2020: **India** - According to Colombo Page, India’s Union Cabinet has implemented amendments to their Double Taxation

Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) which was initially signed between India and Sri Lanka in 2013 to curb tax evasion within both countries. The amendments have been implemented to meet the minimum standards of treaty abuse under 6-20 OECD BEPS Project.

13.02.2020: **Wages** - According to Colombo Gazette, the SL government is still engaged in discussions to establish a decision regarding the implementation of a Rs. 1000 daily wage for plantation workers and hope to make a decision by 01.03.2020.

13.02.2020: **India** - At the Sri Lankan Chapter of the 3rd Renewable Energy Growth Forum which was held between 13.02.2020 and 14.02.2020 at the Taj Samudra, the acting High Commissioner of India to SL, Vinod Jacob was reported to have mentioned that India is

prepared to cooperate with SL to develop post-millennium energy security, reports the Colombo Gazette.

14.02.2020: **Wages** - According to Colombo Gazette, a 15-member National Salaries Commission headed by Upali Wijeweera is to be established under the direct orders of Gotabaya to satisfy the workforce needs of SL’s public and private sectors.

20.02.2020: **India** - SL cabinet had approved the signing of a MoU between India and SL to develop Jaffna Airport, reports Colombo Gazette.

21.02.2020: **India** - A MoU was reportedly signed between India and SL in Colombo for the development of infrastructure in Plantation schools, reports Colombo Gazette.

News about Oppression & Resistance

03.02.2020: **Appointment** - JDS and ITJP have released a joint press release and dossier outlining the genocidal background of C.A. Chandraprema who was appointed as the Ambassador designate for Sri Lanka to Geneva.

04.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - In his speech at SL’s 72nd Independence Day military parade, Gotabaya emphasised the unitary nature of Sri Lanka and his unwavering commitment to protecting and nurturing Buddhist philosophy within the island

under his leadership. He also mentioned that social media presents a threat to democracy in Sri Lanka thus emphasising the need to monitor and control it.

04.02.2020: **Student statement** - The Jaffna University Students’ Union (JUSU) were reported to have

announced Sri Lanka's Independence Day as a Black Day for Tamils through a published statement reports Tamil Net. The statement further called for an international mechanism to be implemented to establish a political solution to satisfy the Tamils' aspirations.

04.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - According to Tamil Guardian, Jaffna University students hung black flags across the campus to express opposition to Sri Lanka's Independence Day and to mark the day as a day of mourning for Eelam Tamils.

04.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - Eelam Tamils reported to have conducted protests across the Tamil homeland to express their dissent to Sri Lanka's Independence Day.

04.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - Families of forcibly disappeared Tamils were reported by Tamil Guardian to have conducted a protest in Killinochchi demanding accountability and justice for their missing relatives.

04.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - Eelam Tamils protest in Batticaloa in solidarity with their brethren across

Tamil Eelam to demand justice for their forcibly disappeared relatives and the immediate reference of Sri Lanka to the ICC reports Tamil Guardian.

04.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - Eelam Tamils of Trincomalee raised black flags in solidarity with their brethren across the Tamil homeland to express dissent to Sri Lanka's Independence Day celebrations. They also demanded international investigations to establish justice and accountability for their forcibly disappeared relatives reports Tamil Guardian.

05.02.2020: **SL Independence Day** - As previously announced, the Tamil version of SL's national anthem was not sung at SL's official Independence Day celebrations.

08.02.2020: **Security** - SL Cabinet has approved SL's Ports Authority's proposal to implement a comprehensive CCTV camera system to increase the safety of Colombo Port reports Colombo Page.

11.02.2020: **Land** - Colombo Page reports that Gotabaya has instructed the Ministry of Lands and Land Development to complete the surveying

process of a total of 14 million land units across the island.

11.02.2020: **Arrest** - According to Tamil Guardian, a former LTTE cadre from Vavunithivu, Gunasekaran Surendran and Mohamed Azim were arrested and detained following instructions from Batticaloa Magistrates' Court.

11.02.2020: **Vandalism** - A Christian Madha shrine in Vavuniya was reported by Tamil Guardian to have been vandalised by locals as a representation of religious disharmony within the region.

11.02.2020: **Media Interrogation** - According to Colombo Gazette, Colombo Magistrate's Court was informed that, journalist Anurangi Singh was interrogated by the CID on 10.02.2020 regarding possible links to the alleged abduction of a local Swiss Embassy employee.

12.02.2020: **Bones** - Human bones have been reported to have been found by deminers near a hospital in Mankulam, Mullativu who were clearing the area for construction purposes reports Colombo Gazette. Reports further indicate that the area has been cordoned off by occu-

pational government forces for further investigations into the discovery.

14.02.2020: **Media** – According to Colombo Gazette, the World Association of Newspapers had condemned SL's restriction of press freedom through regressive legislation. Concerns regarding the *Sri Lanka Press Council Act* which includes a clause to jail publishers and editors was specifically condemned in the Association's statement.

20.02.2020: **Burqa Ban** – According to Colombo Gazette, SL's Parliament Sectoral Oversight Committee on National Security had submitted a report to SL Parliament, recommending the ban of the Burqa in SL.

22.02.2020: **Denial** – According to Colombo Gazette, SL's defence ministry had denied allegations that the HRW had put forth. The allegations were that SL was keeping families of forcibly disappeared Tamils under surveillance and constant intimidation.

23.02.2020: **Task force** – According to Colombo Gazette, SL's Chief of National Intelligence, Maj. Gen. Jagath Alwis has been appointed by the MoD to head a 6-member Task Force to monitor the Easter Sunday Attack investigation.

