



**#MINORMATTERS**



# **UNDERSTANDING PRESS COVERAGE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

**PERIOD COVERED : MAY 2019**



## INTRODUCTION

Ethno-religious violence has been a growing problem in post-war Sri Lanka. Events in Mawanella (2001),<sup>1</sup> Gintota (2017),<sup>2</sup> Aluthgama (2014),<sup>3</sup> Digana (2018)<sup>4</sup> and most recently in Kurunegala/Minuwangoda (May 2019)<sup>5</sup> demonstrate the extent and frequency of this type of violence.

This report is the sixth in a series of reports prepared by Verité Research (VR) for Minor Matters. These reports examine how the print media reports on religious freedom in Sri Lanka. They aim to analyse the frequency and tonality of coverage in various newspapers in English, Sinhala and Tamil to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights.

The press coverage is assessed by observing press articles in terms of their sentiment on religious freedom, i.e. supporting, neutral or opposing. This sentiment analysis is based on an assessment of two components: a) news grading, in which the substance of the news article/content is analysed, and b) view grading, in which the tonality of the coverage, pictures, and any other additional cues used to position sentiment regarding the news item are analysed.

The present report also qualitatively analyses articles related to religious freedom within the context of broader themes such as physical violence towards people and property; inflammatory speech; court cases, laws and regulations pertaining to religious freedom; religious inequality and discrimination; and other related reporting relevant to religious freedom. Newspaper summaries that have a bearing on religious freedom are listed in chronological order at the end of the report.

<sup>1</sup> G.H. Peiris, *A reappraisal of evidence and claims. Emerging Buddhist – Muslim rivalry in Sri Lanka?* The Island (2017). Accessed 11 December 2018 [http://www.island.lk/index.php?page\\_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code\\_title=167737](http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=167737).

<sup>2</sup> Dharisha Bastians, *Gintota and the shadows of extremism*. Daily FT (2017). Accessed 11 December 2018 <http://www.ft.lk/opinion/Gintota-and-the-shadows-of-extremism/14-643843>.

<sup>3</sup> Dharisha Bastians, *Death toll rises to 4 from Aluthgama riot..* Daily FT (2014). Accessed 11 December 2018 <http://www.ft.lk/article/308988/Death-toll-rises-to-4-from-Aluthgama-riots>.

<sup>4</sup> *Digana turns divisive* Daily FT (2018). Accessed 11 December 2018 <http://www.ft.lk/top-story/Digana-turns-divisive-/26-650661>.

<sup>5</sup> BBC, *Sri Lanka extends nationwide curfew after anti-Muslim riots* (2019), Accessed 21 May 2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48269240>.

## METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, religious freedom can be understood to comprise:

- The freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice;<sup>6</sup>
- The freedom not to be discriminated against or to suffer any disability on the grounds of religion;<sup>7</sup>
- The freedom not to be subject to any restriction or condition with regard to access to places of public worship of one's own religion;<sup>8</sup> and
- The freedom to be entitled to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching.<sup>9</sup>

Press reports on religious freedom that appeared during the month of May 2019 were monitored. The following 13 daily and weekend newspapers in the two local languages—Sinhala and Tamil—and English were examined (see table below).

| English Newspapers          | Sinhala Newspapers           | Tamil Newspapers |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| Sunday Observer/ Daily News | Lankadeepa/Sunday Lankadeepa | Virakesari       |
| Daily Mirror                | Divaina/Sunday Divaina       | Thinakaran       |
|                             | Dinamina/Silumina            | Uthayan          |
|                             | Anidda                       |                  |

The above newspapers were selected based on readership data in the National Demographic and Media Survey produced by Kantar LMRB for the year 2017. *Lankadeepa* and *Virakesari* have the highest readership of the daily Sinhala and Tamil newspapers respectively. *Divaina* has the second highest readership of the daily Sinhala newspapers. *Sunday Observer* and *Daily News* have the highest readership of the weekend and daily English newspapers respectively. *Daily Mirror* has the second highest readership of the daily English newspapers.

*Anidda* was selected, despite the absence of its readership data, as its content generally differs from coverage in the mainstream press, and therefore can be considered as providing alternative insights into events. Likewise, *Uthayan*, a Jaffna-based publication, was selected, despite the absence of its readership data, as it is a regional publication. As state-owned newspapers were included for both the English and Sinhala samples,

<sup>6</sup> Article 10 of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

<sup>7</sup> Article 12 (2) and article 27 (6) of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

<sup>8</sup> Article 12 (3) of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

<sup>9</sup> Article 14 (1) (e) of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

*Thinakaran* was selected to represent a state-owned Tamil newspaper to maintain consistency, despite it having relatively low readership.

In these newspapers, articles that **had a bearing on religious freedom** were selected for assessment of the tonality of their reporting. These articles included:<sup>10</sup>

- Articles that referred to instances of physical violence that were religiously motivated, or targeted religious communities/figures or sites;
- Articles that referred to or contained speech prompting physical violence or threatening remarks targeted at religious communities, leaders or institutions;
- Articles that discussed court cases, laws or regulations pertaining to religious freedom.

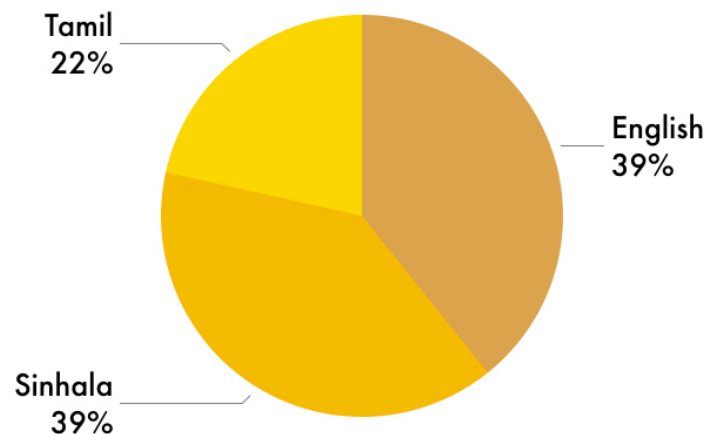
<sup>10</sup> N.B. the aforementioned list is only illustrative and not exhaustive.



## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

### NUMBER OF ARTICLES CARRIED IN PRESS

English | Sinhala | Tamil  
May 2019



For the month of May 2019, a total of 520 articles relating to religious freedom were carried in the English, Sinhala and Tamil newspapers that were monitored. Of this total, 39 per cent (206 articles) were carried in the English newspapers. Meanwhile, Sinhala and Tamil newspapers accounted for 39 per cent (201 articles) and 22 per cent (113 articles) of the coverage respectively.

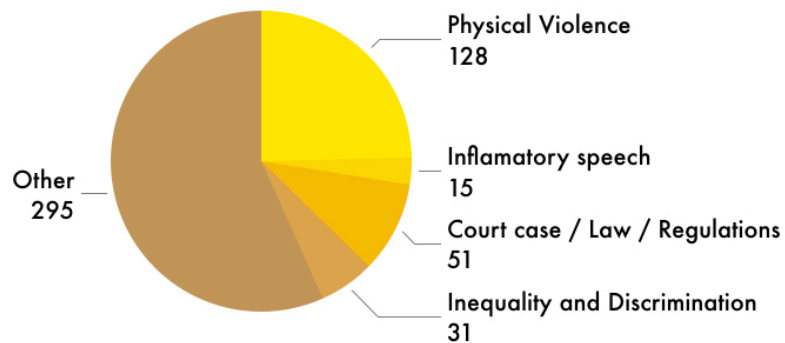
Religious freedom was discussed under the following five themes:

- a) Physical violence;
- b) Inflammatory speech;
- c) Court cases/law/regulations;
- d) Inequality and discrimination; and
- e) Other related reporting.

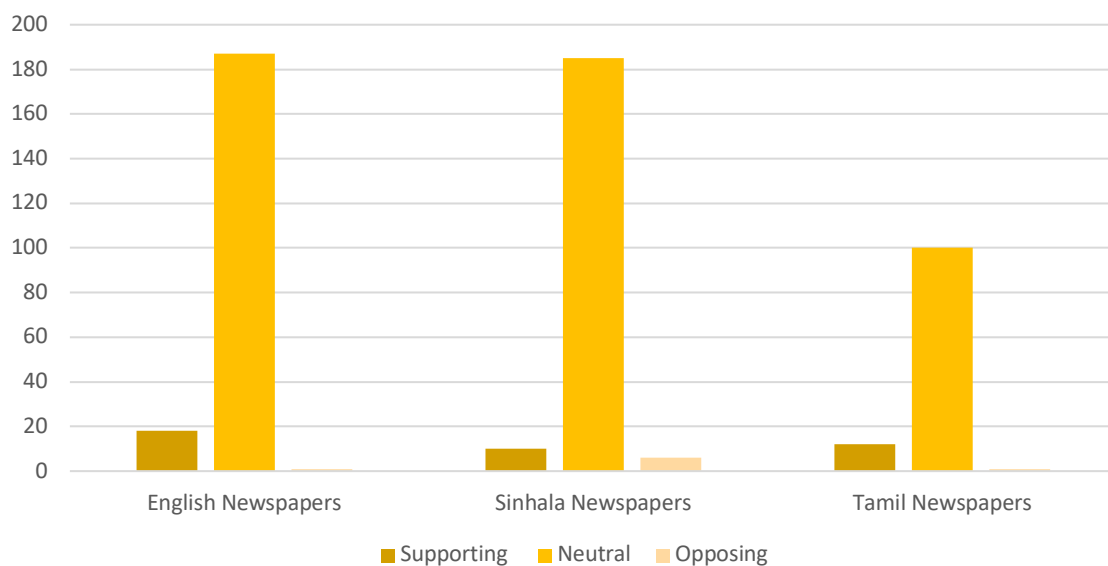


## NUMBER OF ARTICLES PERTAINING TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BY THEME

May 2019

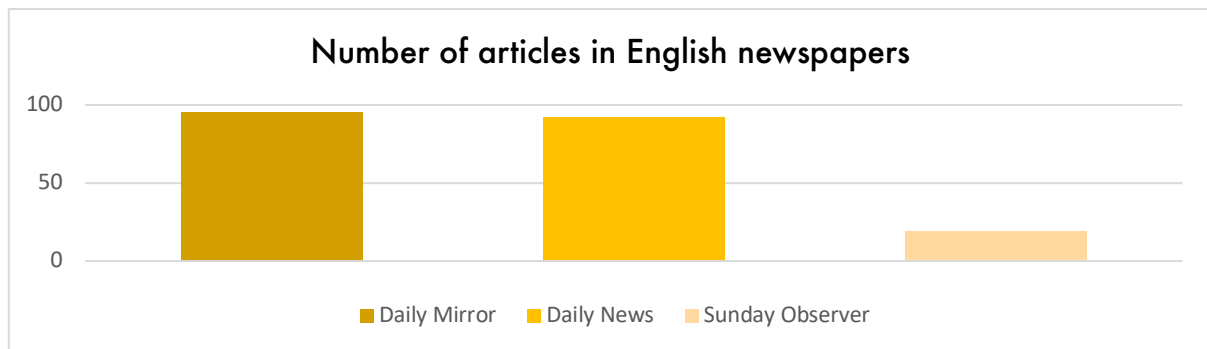


### Sentiment in reportage by local language press



- Of the 206 articles in the English newspapers, 18 were supporting religious freedom, while 187 were neutral and 1 was opposing religious freedom.
- Of the 201 articles in the Sinhala newspapers, 10 were supporting religious freedom, while 185 were neutral and 6 were opposing religious freedom.
- Of the 113 articles in the Tamil newspapers, 12 were supporting religious freedom, while 100 were neutral and 1 was opposing religious freedom.

## Coverage in English newspapers



| English Newspapers | No. of Articles | Reportage  |         |          |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|---------|----------|
|                    |                 | Supporting | Neutral | Opposing |
| Daily News         | 92              | 10         | 82      | -        |
| Daily Mirror       | 95              | 5          | 89      | 1        |
| Sunday Observer    | 19              | 3          | 16      | -        |
| Total              | 206             | 21         | 129     | 2        |

English newspapers carried 206 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. 18 supported religious freedom, while 187 were neutral and 1 opposed religious freedom.

The **18 articles supportive of religious freedom** were as follows:

- An editorial in *Sunday Observer* described the unity and the writer commended the Muslim community in their cooperation of the speedy investigations on the bombings to root out the extremists that had been inhabiting their neighbourhood community. The piece also called upon political leaders to support the endeavours of the security forces instead of aggravating inter-ethnic fears to promote party loyalties in the upcoming election season.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Sunday Observer, May 5, p. 5.



- An editorial in *Daily Mirror* discussed the state of ‘double fear’ that the Muslim community lives in. In addition to the fear of bombings, Muslims live in fear of mob attacks and arbitrary detentions with security checks. The writer suggested that as a first step towards addressing the fear of the Muslim community is the need for dialogue within the Muslim community as well as between different ethnic and religious communities. The writer believes that it is through such dialogue that bridges among ethnic and religious groups can be built.<sup>12</sup>
- An article in *Daily News* stated that the one good thing that came out of the ‘historic evil’ the country had gone through was that religious leaders had come together and are collaborating with one another for the mutual protection and safeguarding of the country. The article noted that due to the ‘forgiveness’ and ‘impressive restraint’ of Catholics, no retaliatory or vengeful actions of any sort took place and instead a peaceful calm prevailed.<sup>13</sup>
- An article in *Sunday Observer* titled ‘*Fight terrorism, avoid Islamophobia*’ discussed the spread of Islamophobia around the world, particularly within Sinhalese society following the Easter Sunday attacks. The article discussed the role played by the terror attacks and the media in fear mongering, while acknowledging that anti-Muslim sentiment seemed to go beyond this, appearing to be an organised effort towards a distinct political end. The article called for more measures to be taken to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and to ensure that the global terror war does not descend on South Asia.<sup>14</sup>
- An article in *Daily News* stated that terror and violence, hatred and spite have no place in a hallowed land such as Sri Lanka, which is an oasis of four of the greatest living religions of the world: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. They are all religions of peace matched with a spirituality that empowers their devotees to foster loving kindness and compassion towards all human beings and nature, propelling them to live and work with mutual respect and solidarity with every person.<sup>15</sup>
- An article in *Daily News* titled ‘*Stopping Islamophobia*’ discussed the wave of anti-Muslim hysteria that was sparked following the Easter Sunday attacks. The writer noted that the wider public must understand that Muslims who follow austere forms of Islam are not any different from evangelical Christians. Neither is inherently more dangerous than the other. Against this backdrop, the writer concludes that in the long-term, the public must bridge the social and cultural distance between communities via education.<sup>16</sup>

12 *Daily Mirror*, May 6, p. A8.

13 *Daily News*, May 8, p. 7.

14 *Sunday Observer*, May 12, p. 12.

15 *Daily News*, May 13, p. 6.

16 *Daily News*, May 15, p. 6.



- An article in *Daily Mirror* analysed the Easter Sunday attacks, the resultant retaliatory violence, and how religion can become obscured by extremist ideology. The writer stated that non-Muslims must understand that they cannot expect the Muslim community to ‘magically’ adhere to a way of living in a country that has been alien to them. He noted that introspection means looking in and figuring out what went wrong, and recognising radicalisation on both sides, instead of making excuses for it [violence] and calling it ‘retaliatory’.<sup>17</sup>
- An editorial in *Daily Mirror* titled ‘Vesak: A turning point for inter-religious unity’ called for selfless and sincere unity and deep respect for those of other faiths and beliefs, but also stated that answers and justice must be found in the aftermath of the recent attacks. It further said that ‘As all religions say, while love and mercy are essential, equally important are justice and righteousness’.<sup>18</sup>
- An editorial in *Daily News* stressed on the peaceful values of Buddhism and urged people to use this Vesak as a time of reflection. The piece also condemned ethnic and religious segregation in schools, calling instead for children to be educated about all religions, regardless of what they themselves believe.<sup>19</sup>
- An article in *Sunday Observer* condemned the anti-Muslim attacks in Chilaw, which were ‘seemingly incited’ by a Facebook post made by a “Muslim trader with deficient English”. The article looks back at the first signs of extreme religious division in the country. The writer recalled the time when conversion of Buddhists into Christianity was depicted as an ‘even greater danger than Eelam’. The editorial concluded with the writer expressing concern over the ‘danger’ of religious segregation, which begins as early as primary school, and calling for secular politics.<sup>20</sup>
- An article in *Daily News* compared the ‘unsubstantiated rumours and fear mongering’ that the writer was witness to during the JVP insurrection in 1971 and the riots in July 1983 with the similar state of affairs prevalent in aftermath of the easter Sunday attacks. The writer noted that the sri lankan muslims may not have been aware of extremism being bred in certain sections of their community, but that this fact does not make them all responsible for the attacks. The writer further stated that Muslim citizens continue to contribute to the country as much as citizens of any other group—they have enlisted as soldiers, established profitable businesses, and provided many other services. He concluded that the innocent should not be punished for the crimes of the guilty.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A13.

<sup>18</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 18, p. A8.

<sup>19</sup> *Daily News*, May 18, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Sunday Observer*, May 19, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Daily News*, May 20, p. 8.





- An editorial in *Daily News* titled ‘Towards a Sri Lankan identity’ questioned the reasoning behind the Easter Sunday bombings, stating that Muslims in Sri Lanka had never been persecuted for their religious beliefs and Sri Lanka had never done anything wrong to Muslim majority nations. The piece commended Islamic leaders for calling for a unified Sri Lankan identity and being the first to suggest regulations with regard to madrasas and the niqab, even before the government.<sup>23</sup>
- An article in *Daily News* analysed the country’s response to conflict, both now and in the past, and noted how it must change in order to prevent the repetition of past mistakes. The writer noted that educating the youth of Sri Lanka is key, especially regarding values such as tolerance and non-violent conflict resolution. He further stated that instead of simply teaching one religion, it would be better to teach the history of religions in a comparative way, for example, by emphasising the common elements between Hinduism and Buddhism, and between Christianity and Islam, as well as their overall messages of peace.<sup>24</sup>
- An article in *Daily News* condemned both the Easter Sunday attacks and the violence against Muslims and called for the country to unite. The writer opined that Sri Lanka must bring its communities together, regardless of their race or creed. The writer further stated that the attacks, both against Christians and Muslims, went against the heritage of our nationalities, and that the damage done to our mindsets, morals and sense of belonging is real. In order to combat this threat, the writer states that we must unite as Sri Lankans.<sup>25</sup>
- An article in *Daily News* featured a response to the Easter Sunday attacks and the subsequent ‘all-out attack’ on followers of Islam. He described these attacks as ‘our version of Talibanisation’ and provided examples of the print and electronic media ‘spreading hatred about Muslims inciting violence against them and causing public discontent’. The writer noted that this could result in violent backlash against the Muslim community.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Daily News*, May 20, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> A *madrassa* is an Islamic religious school.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily News*, May 22, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Daily News*, May 23, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily News*, May 24, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily News*, May 27, p. 7.



- An editorial in *Daily News* noted that lessons should be learnt from history, especially from the unjust treatment of Tamil youth prior to the decades-long civil war. The writer noted that Muslims have been in a 'state of siege following the terror attacks', with their community being viewed with suspicion. Therefore, steps should be taken speedily towards 'mending fences'. The writer further noted that this would not be a difficult task, since the three communities have been co-existing for centuries in this land, and that the key to reconciliation lies in banishing all suspicion. Lastly, the writer called for religious leaders to take the lead in this exercise of reconciliation.<sup>27</sup>
- An article in *Daily Mirror* noted that the Muslims in Sri Lanka are a 'battered race', given that people who do not practice Islam look at them with suspicion and hatred now. The article featured numerous anti-Muslim allegations reported in the media recently, which have resulted in refuelling suspicions within the majority Sinhalese community. However, the writer concluded that in spite of the prevailing situation across the island, there are hopeful stories, such as those of Sinhala families providing shelter to Muslims during periods of mob violence.<sup>28</sup>
- An article in *Daily Mirror* commended the security forces for doing laudable work in carrying out the necessary task of eradicating terrorism from the island. The writer opined that the government was incapable of preventing racial discord, and that certain segments of the media are 'spewing out venomous racism with their coverage of the security situation'. The writer saw this as a 'deliberate attempt to build anti-Muslim hatred in the Sinhalese minds'. Against this backdrop, the writer also lamented Islamophobia in Sri Lanka and called for government leaders to 'step up and eliminate racism'.<sup>29</sup>

The **1 article opposing religious freedom** was as follows.

- An article in *Daily Mirror*, in the form of a letter addressed to the head of state and the prime minister, blamed both political actors for the attacks and their failure to prevent them. The writer stated the following: 'the radical activities of Jihadists in the East, even though tipped off by alarmed civic-conscious moderate Muslims, have gone unheeded for so long. It is in this de facto 'Arabised' state that a highly controversial billion dollar, privately owned,

<sup>27</sup> *Daily News*, May 28, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 30, p. A12.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 31, p. A8.

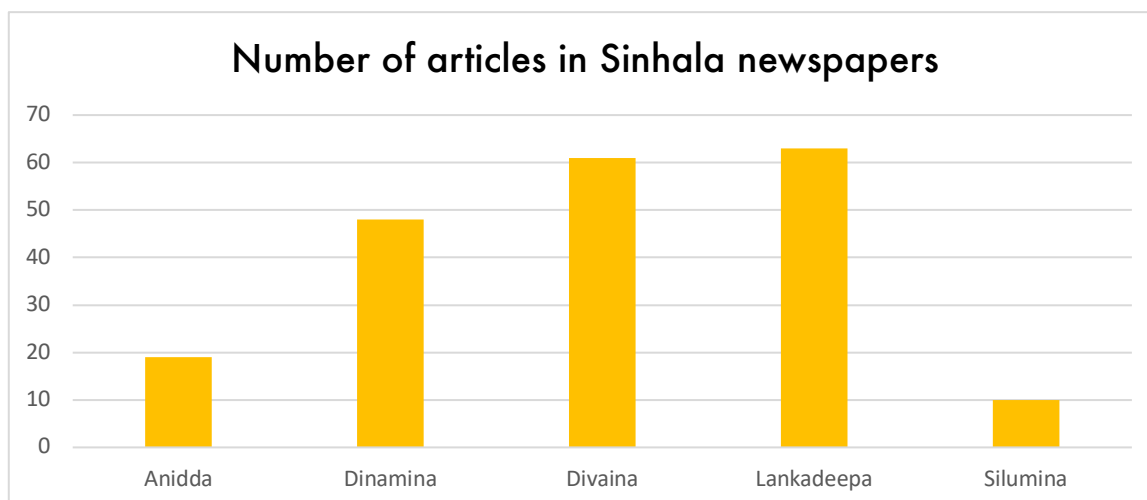


unregulated Sharia University is now taking shape! A thirty-year bloody war had to be waged to rid the North of Eelamists, but it is alleged that Hizbullah and his cronies, with dubious links and a billion dollars, had a 'cake walk' into monopolising the East whilst our leaders turned a blind eye! Are we afraid to do what is right to safeguard law-abiding citizens, Sirs, or are we hand in glove and sleeping with the enemy for our own selfish gains? The writing on the wall is very clear and that is, by the actions and admissions of the leadership, they have already sealed their fate!' Given the wording of this letter, it can be interpreted to have the potential to incite anti-Muslims sentiment.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 16, p. A9.



## Coverage in Sinhala newspapers



| Sinhala Newspapers | No. of Articles | Reportage  |         |          |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|---------|----------|
|                    |                 | Supporting | Neutral | Opposing |
| Anidda             | 19              | -          | 19      | -        |
| Dinamina           | 48              | 3          | 45      | -        |
| Divaina            | 61              | 3          | 53      | 5        |
| Lankadeepa         | 63              | 3          | 59      | 1        |
| Silumina           | 10              | 1          | 8       | -        |
| Total              | 201             | 10         | 185     | 6        |

The Sinhala press featured 201 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. 10 supported religious freedom, 185 were neutral and 6 opposed religious freedom.

The **10 articles supportive of religious freedom** were as follows:

- An editorial in *Divaina* called on people of all religious beliefs to work together to rebuild the country in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. The writer commended Malcom Cardinal Ranjith for setting a notable example for all other religious leaders in the country in the aftermath of the attacks. Additionally, the writer mentioned that the Muslim community has lived in coexistence in the past with other ethnic groups in Sri Lanka. However, they were reported as being 'in a hard place' following the attacks. The writer placed



the responsibility on every Muslim political and religious leader to bring the country back to how it was before the attacks took place.<sup>31</sup>

- An article in *Silumina* reported the opening of a Buddhist temple for a Catholic almsgiving (in honour of the dead) following the Easter Sunday attacks. The writer quotes Rev. Felix Nishantha, who praised Ven. Thummodara Samithasoma Thera for offering moral support after the attacks, arranging the almsgiving in honour of the dead and blessing the injured at the temple, since the Church was closed for security reasons.<sup>32</sup>
- An editorial in *Divaina* focused on the overall situation within the country following the Easter Sunday attacks and the violent clashes in Chilaw, Kurunagala, Bingiriya, Kuliypitiya and Kobeygane areas. The writer stated that such ethnic clashes should not take place and urged citizens to think and act wisely.<sup>33</sup>
- Editorials in *Divaina* and *Lankadeepa* and an article in *Dinamina*, noted that Buddhists, Catholics, and Muslims were involved in this year's Vesak celebrations following the Easter Sunday attacks. The editorial stated that the threat posed by the Thoweed Jamaath could be countered by strengthening the harmony between Buddhism and other religious faiths.<sup>34</sup>
- An article in *Dinamina* noted that many organisations had been instrumental in disrupting the coexistence between the Sinhala and Muslim communities in the country. However, the writer pointed out that this was not the case in the past. The article cited Ridee Viharaya [a Buddhist temple situated in Kurunegala] as evidence for Buddhist-Muslim coexistence that existed in the past. The clergy in the viharaya had made Muslim individuals official co- owners of the viharagam<sup>35</sup>, which belongs to that temple. Additionally, the writer mentioned Muslim singer Alhaj Mohideen-Bheg who sang songs in celebration of the Vesak festival. The writer noted that the responsibility to humanise men lies with the religious leaders. Further, the writer made an explicit distinction between the terrorists that belong to the Thowheed Jamaath organisations, and the general Muslim community.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Divaina*, May 3, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Silumina*, May 5, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> *Divaina*, May.14, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Divaina*, May 20, p. 8; *Lankadeepa*, May 20, p. 4; *Dinamina*, May 24, p. 9; *Lankadeepa*, May 26, p. 3; *Lankadeepa*, May 30, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Viharagam* refers to land/villages gifted by kings to temples.

<sup>36</sup> *Dinamina*, May 21, p. 4.





- An article in *Dinamina* stated that one should be free to practice and propagate any religious faith that one desires. Therefore, if any group impedes the freedom of another group, the law should be implemented against them. Against this backdrop, the writer opined that the law should be implemented against individuals who were involved in and abetted the Easter Sunday attacks. Additionally, the writer opined that steps should be taken to avert instances where there are infringements of human rights within religious communities.<sup>37</sup>

In comparison, the **6 opposing articles** were as follows:

- An editorial in *Lankadeepa* condemned the statement made by MP Abdul Haleem with regard to the recovery of swords from Muslim mosques. When inquired about the swords, the minister had responded that the swords were collected for cutting down overgrown bushes around the mosque. The writer questioned the appropriateness of making such statements in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. The writer stated that the minister should have been wiser and answered in a responsible manner as the 'Muslim community is a part of the problem created within the country'.<sup>38</sup>
- An article in *Divaina* discussed who was responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks and how Muslim terrorists had become a threat in Sri Lanka. With regard to the latter, the writer opined that the formation of the Tablighi Jama'ath organisation in the 1980s was the first step in the drifting of Muslims away from the rest of Sri Lankan society. Additionally, the writer quoted a reported statement made by former Governor of the Western Province Azath Salley in 2013: "now the time for Sri Lankan Muslims to get ready for an armed struggle is here". In the current context, the article's portrayal of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka has the potential to evoke anti-Muslim sentiment.<sup>39</sup>
- An editorial in *Divaina* focused on the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks and the 'reactionary' behaviour of Muslims with regard to certain emergency regulations. The writer claimed that Muslim women disregarded the ban of the face cover, and thus characterised the behaviour of Muslim women 'as an insult to the law'.<sup>40</sup>
- An article in *Divaina* reported on the arrest of two 'drug peddling' Muslims in possession of birth control medicine, sex stimulant pills, abortion pills and

<sup>37</sup> *Dinamina*, May 21, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> *Lankadeepa*, May 4, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Divaina*, May 5, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Divaina*, May 12, p. 4.



recreational drug pills. The writer claimed that the sterile and recreational pills were imported into the country by Muslim racketeers, not for Muslim people, but rather to destroy the Sinhala and Tamil people in the country.<sup>41</sup>

- An article in *Divaina* blamed a Muslim youth—who posted on social media—for the recent violent clashes that took place in several areas in the North Western province of the country. The article claimed that a group of ‘Muslim extremist sinners’ had destroyed the country, as they had created conflicts between religions by attacking Catholic churches. The apportionment of blame to the youth based on his ethno-religious identity has the potential to encourage anti-Muslim sentiment within certain segments of the newspaper’s Sinhala readership.<sup>42</sup>
- An editorial in *Divaina* reported that Dr. Mohammed Shafi Siyabdeen, who ‘earned limitless assets’, was arrested by the Kurunegala Police. The writer claimed that that while he was a gynaecologist, Dr. Shafi was also an ‘industrialist’, who conducted more than 8,000 caesarean operations and sterilised multitudes of Sinhala Buddhist women. The writer condemned the doctor for having sterilised thousands of Sinhala Buddhist women.<sup>43</sup> The wording of the article seems to treat Shafi as guilty although he is still a suspect. This prejudicial style of reporting has the potential to create anti-Muslim sentiments in the minds of readers, which work to oppose religious freedom.

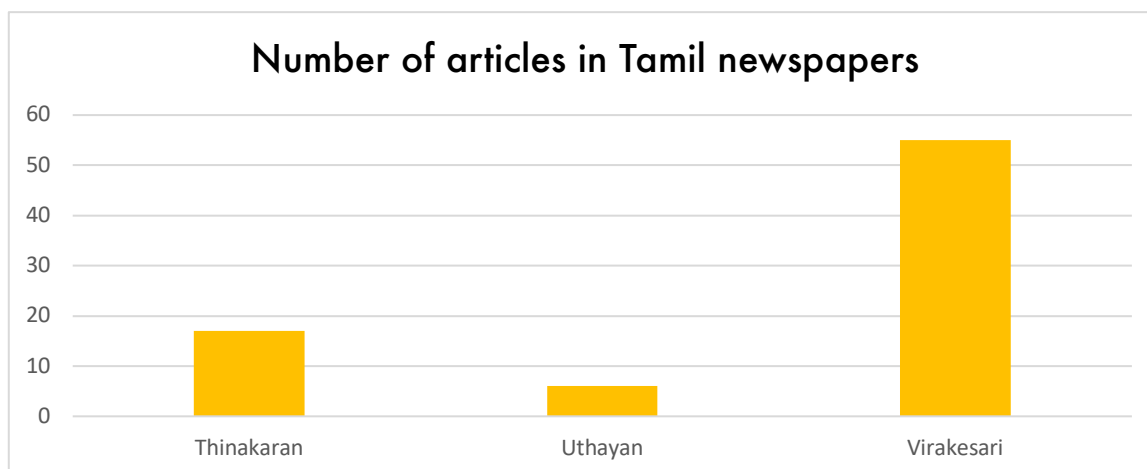
<sup>41</sup> *Divaina*, May 12, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Divaina*, May 19, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Divaina*, May 27, p. 8.



## Coverage in Tamil newspapers



| Tamil Newspapers | No. of Articles | Reportage  |         |          |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|---------|----------|
|                  |                 | Supporting | Neutral | Opposing |
| Thinakaran       | 23              | 4          | 19      | -        |
| Uthayan          | 10              | -          | 6       | -        |
| Virakesari       | 80              | 8          | 71      | 1        |
| Total            | 113             | 12         | 100     | 1        |

The Tamil papers carried 113 articles relating to religious freedom. 12 articles supported religious freedom, 100 were neutral and 1 opposed religious freedom.

The 12 articles supporting religious freedom were as follows.

- An article in *Virakesari* discussed the importance of the role played by Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday bombings. The writer lauded him for ensuring that tensions between ethno-religious communities were not aggravated. Additionally, the article emphasised the importance and responsibility of religious leaders in promoting reconciliation and submitting proposals to the government to prevent religious fundamentalism in the country.<sup>44</sup>
- An editorial in *Virakesari*, in discussing the communal violence that transpired in Negombo, emphasised that not all Muslims should be viewed in a suspicious

<sup>44</sup> *Virakesari*, May 4, p. 14.



manner. The piece also stressed the importance of not repeating past mistakes that led the country into war.<sup>45</sup>

- An article in *Virakesari* discussed the communal violence, which reportedly took place in Negombo affecting several Muslims in the area. The article states that an entire community cannot be held responsible for acts that were carried out by a few individuals with fundamentalist ideologies. The piece urged people to accommodate Muslims and make them feel accepted at this time.<sup>46</sup>
- An article in *Virakesari* discussed the violence that transpired in Negombo. The violence resulted in the injury of several Muslims and the damage of Muslim- owned buildings. The article discussed the role played by Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith in controlling the situation. It particularly noted that the archbishop, who had visited the affected area, urged people not to raise their hands against Muslims.<sup>47</sup>
- An editorial in *Virakesari* discussed the attacks targeting Muslims in Kurunegala, Nikaweratiya and Kuliyaipitiya. The writer pointed out that these attacks had been carried out to target Muslims in the aftermath of the Easter bombings, triggering fear among the Muslim community. The writer further noted that there were claims that the police and security forces had not acted promptly during the incidents and urged the authorities to ensure that such incidents do not recur.<sup>48</sup>
- An editorial in *Virakesari* entitled '*Take immediate steps to stop attacks on Muslims*' condemned the attacks targeting Muslims that were carried out in Kurunegala and Kuliyaipitiya in the North Western Province.<sup>49</sup>
- An article in *Virakesari* entitled '*A decision against racial harmony*' criticised the president's decision to release General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena, Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera. The article pointed out the track record of the monk is not favourable to Muslims. The writer cited examples such as violence against Muslims in Aluthgama in 2014.<sup>50</sup>
- An editorial in *Thinakaran* discussed the problems faced by Muslims in the aftermath of the bomb attacks, which (according to the writer) have been linked to Islamic fundamentalists. The writer pointed out that Muslims at large

<sup>45</sup> *Virakesari*, May 7, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Virakesari*, May 11, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Virakesari*, May 11, p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> *Virakesari*, May 14, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Virakesari*, May 15, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Virakesari*, May 28, p. 4.



are against such extremist activities and that Islam does not preach violence. The writer urged the authorities and the public to provide a suitable environment for Muslims to observe the holy month of Ramadan, which is to commence shortly.<sup>51</sup>

- An editorial in *Thinakaran* condemned the Easter Sunday attacks targeting Christians. The writer stated that certain politicians had sowed the seeds of racial hatred in the minds of the people and the youth, who had been misled by their propaganda. The editorial called for the end of such politics and urged leaders to encourage ethno-religious coexistence.<sup>52</sup>
- An editorial in *Virakesari* pointed out that the entire Muslim community is being looked at in a suspicious manner because the masterminds of the Easter Sunday attacks were Muslims. The writer stated that such an outlook was wrong. The writer further pointed out that Muslims were also inconvenienced due to the search operations carried out by the armed forces in the aftermath of the attacks. Finally, while condemning baseless suspicion against all Muslims, the writer urged the government and the security forces to address the inconvenience suffered by the Muslim community.<sup>53</sup>
- An editorial in *Thinakaran* discussed the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. The writer pointed out that when people attempted to unite and share their grief in the aftermath of the attacks, certain segments of society had tried to create tensions by targeting Muslims in Minuwangoda, Chilaw, Kurunegala, and Kuliapitiya. The writer claimed that these attacks were carried out with political patronage. Finally, the writer stated that respecting and understanding others is a basic need for coexistence and that people need to work towards unity in diversity.<sup>54</sup>
- A news article in *Thinakaran* entitled '*Ifthar event in Ampara to strengthen racial harmony*' reported that special Ifthar events were being conducted in Muslim villages in Ampara in order to strengthen racial harmony. The organisers pointed out that the relationships between communities had been adversely affected following the Easter Sunday attacks, and therefore, these special Ifthar events were organised to rebuild the relationships between communities.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Thinakaran*, May 4, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Thinakaran*, May 7, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Virakesari*, May 4, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Thinakaran*, May 26, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> *Thinakaran*, May, 26, p. 9.





- The 1 article opposing religious freedom was as follows.
- An article in *Virakesari* contained the view that that the aim of Buddhist extremists was to destroy the wealth of the Muslims and to chase them away from their homes. The writer claimed that these extremist elements were functioning with the backing of current leaders. The writer further stated that these extremists had indulged in violence against Muslims and attempted to ban their religious values. The piece drew parallels with attacks on Tamils in the past, such as the burning of the Jaffna Public Library, which the writer explained was an attempt to prevent Tamils from developing academically and economically. This article was predominantly anti-Sinhala Buddhist in tonality.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Virakesari*, May 16, p. 4.

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The articles monitored during the month of May 2019 can be categorised under five overarching themes pertaining to religious freedom. These themes are: ***physical violence towards people and/or property; inflammatory speech; court cases, laws and regulations pertaining to religious freedom; religious inequality and discrimination; and other related reporting.***

This section aims to identify and understand press sentiment in reporting on events/issues related to the overarching themes. These events/issues are selected on the basis of coverage in editorials, opinion articles, feature articles, and statements made by political/non-political actors and groups. The events/issues that were selected for the analysis received the most coverage in Sinhala and/or Tamil and/or English print media in the monitoring period. These two issues/events were: 1) the communal violence that transpired in several areas in the North Western and Western provinces; and 2) the allegations of illegal sterilisation surgeries performed by a Muslim doctor on Sinhala Buddhist women.

The first event was categorised under the theme of ***physical violence towards people and/or property.*** The second event was categorised under the theme of ***other related reporting.*** Coverage of issues/events under the other three themes, i.e. ***inflammatory speech; court cases, laws and regulations pertaining to religious freedom; and religious inequality and discrimination,*** was low, and therefore did not qualify for in-depth qualitative analysis in this report.

| Overarching Theme       | Event   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Physical violence       | ((1) Communal violence in several areas in the North Western and Western provinces                        |
| Other related reporting | (2) Allegations of illegal sterilisation surgeries performed by a Muslim doctor on Sinhala Buddhist women |

## Physical violence towards people and/or property

### Communal violence in several areas in the North Western and Western provinces

This theme covers religiously motivated violence or attempted violence perpetrated towards people and/or property. Reporting under this theme appeared in relation to one incident that took place during the month of May: the communal violence that transpired in several areas in the North Western and Western provinces.

Coverage of the incident dominated English, Sinhala and Tamil press reportage in the month of May 2019. The following analysis will aim to explain the similarities and dissimilarities in press reporting and sentiment on the incident across the local language newspapers. Certain aspects of the analysis presented below was extracted from Verité Research's trademark product *The Media Analysis*, Volume 09, Issue no. 18 and 19, published on May 29, 2019.<sup>57</sup>

On May 12 and 13, mob attacks took place in several areas in the North Western and Western provinces in the country, including in Chilaw, Kuliyaipitiya, Hettipola and Minuwangoda towns. These attacks resulted in the damage and destruction of Muslim- owned businesses, homes and places of worship and the death of one Muslim individual.

Press coverage across the board featured unanimous condemnation of racism and violence against the Muslim community. This condemnation came from commentators, journalists, and politicians.<sup>58</sup> **Press reporting on communal violence gave rise to an explicitly expressed narrative that promoted ethno-religious co-existence.**<sup>59</sup> **In effect, the overarching sentiment in the press was anti-extremist.** For instance, the English and Tamil press called on all Sri Lankan communities to unite, irrespective of race and creed.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, Sinhala press editorials placed responsibility on citizens to avert racist conflicts.<sup>61</sup> However, reporting within each of the local language newspapers also revealed another **implicitly conveyed attitude**. In this context, the **English and Tamil press featured bias in favour of the Muslim ethno-religious group**. By contrast, the **Sinhala press featured bias in favour of the Sinhala Buddhist ethno-religious group**. This attitude can be seen through the press': (1) framing of the alleged perpetrators behind the communal violence that transpired, and (2) characterisation of the communal violence.

<sup>57</sup> To purchase this issue of *The Media Analysis*, please follow the link below

<https://www.researchpool.com/provider/verite-research/mob-attacks-attitudes-and-airbrushing-the-media-analysis-vol9-no-18-1>.

<sup>58</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 15, p. A4; *Daily News*, May 15, p. 1, 8; *Daily News*, May 15, p. 2; *Daily News*, May 15, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Daily News*, May 15, p. 1, 8; *Daily News*, May 15, p. 2; *Daily News*, May 15, p. 6; *Daily Mirror*, May 16, p. A8.

<sup>60</sup> *Daily News*, May 24, p. 7; *Thinakaran*, May 26, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> *Divaina*, May 14, p. 8.



## (1) Perpetrators of communal violence

The manner in which the press framed the alleged perpetrators of the communal violence reflects the implicit bias in reporting.

In addition to referring to organised groups that carried out the violence, the English and Tamil press explicitly identified ‘politically backed Sinhala Buddhist extremists’ as perpetrators of the communal violence.<sup>62</sup> Each of the local language newspapers differed on its framing of the perpetrators in its reporting.

**The Tamil press** attributed the violent behaviour to the Sinhala Buddhist ‘extremists’ and provided two interpretations for their violent conduct: (i) exertion of Sinhala Buddhist dominance and (ii) projection of insecurity about the alleged economic prosperity enjoyed by the ethno-religious minorities, which is inclusive of the Muslim community. Notably, these interpretations can be seen to come out as being biased against the Sinhalese majority and biased in favour of the ethno-religious minority communities.

### (i) Sinhala Buddhist dominance

This narrative holds that the members of the majority (dominant) Sinhala Buddhist demographic are the primary citizens or ‘hosts’ of the nation, while the minority groups are ‘guests’. Accordingly, this narrative establishes a ‘host-guest’ dynamic within the country, whereby the guests ‘should not challenge existing power structures’.<sup>63</sup> Against this backdrop, the voices in the Tamil press questioned whether certain Sinhala Buddhist groups targeting the Muslim community were ‘trying to portray that Sri Lanka was a Sinhala Buddhist country’.<sup>64</sup> In effect, the Tamil press characterised the action of the ‘Sinhala Buddhist extremists’ as a demonstration of the power and control the majority group has over the ethno-religious minorities.

### (ii) Economic prosperity

This narrative draws on notions that ethno-religious minority groups in Sri Lanka are more prosperous than the Sinhala Buddhist community and that they dominate the business sector, thereby posing a threat to Sinhala Buddhist businesspeople. Tamil press reporting claimed that ‘Buddhist extremists aim to destroy the economy of the Muslims and chase them [Muslims] away from their places’. Further, the Tamil press drew parallels with past attacks on Tamils by the Sinhalese, whose intention was to ‘prevent Tamils from developing economically and academically’.<sup>65</sup> An example of such attacks reported in the press was the burning of the Jaffna library. In effect, the Tamil press

<sup>62</sup> *Daily News*, May 16, p. 6; *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A8; *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A10; *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A12; *Sunday Observer*, May 19, p. 10; *Daily Mirror*, May 25, p. A11.

<sup>63</sup> Gehan Gunatilleke, *The Chronic and the Entrenched: Ethno-religious Violence in Sri Lanka* (Equitas and ICES 2018), p. 70. <http://ices.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Chronic-and-the-Entrenched-Mr.Gihan-Book-FINAL-WEB-PDF.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> *Virakesari*, May 20, p. 3; *Virakesari*, May 16, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Virakesari*, May 16, p. 4.



further characterised the Sinhala Buddhist extremist action against the Muslim community as a projection of a pre-existing insecurity held by some segments of the Sinhala Buddhist population. Additionally, past events were characterised by the press as projections of insecurities held by the segments of the Sinhala-Buddhist community include physically damaging Muslim-owned businesses, dissuading consumers from patronising Muslim-owned shops during the Sinhala and Tamil New Year and promoting social media campaigns calling for the boycotting of Muslim-owned businesses.<sup>66</sup>

English press reportage was overwhelming critical of the alleged Sinhala Buddhist perpetrators. The English press: (1) condemned the ‘retaliatory’ actions of the Sinhala Buddhist extremist groups, (2) framed their action as a threat to the ethno-religious co-existence of the country, and (3) criticised Sinhala Buddhist extremist positions that offered grounds for violence against religious minorities.<sup>67</sup> The English press dismissed the grounds reportedly relied on by Sinhala Buddhist extremists, who held that the violence against Muslims was a consequence of rising ‘Islamic extremism’ in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. For instance, the English press carried headlines such as *‘From Islamic extremism to marauding Sinhala Buddhist violence’*.<sup>68</sup> Further, journalists in the English press called on the public to ‘recognise the radicalisation on both sides, instead of making excuses for it [both Islamic and Sinhala Buddhist extremism] and calling it “retaliatory”’.<sup>69</sup>

Accordingly, the framing of the alleged perpetrators of communal violence in the Tamil and English press can be perceived as being sympathetic towards the victims of the attacks, most of whom were Muslims, and critical of the alleged perpetrators, who were identified to be Sinhala Buddhists.<sup>70</sup>

The mainstream Sinhala press did not clearly identify the perpetrators. For instance, the Sinhala press characterised the perpetrators as ‘drunk groups breaking-in in their motorcycles’, ‘organised groups’, ‘a mob’, ‘several youths in the area and *allegedly* a number of Buddhist Bhikkhus’, ‘extremists’ and ‘outsiders’.<sup>71</sup> This framing in the Sinhala press did not identify the perpetrators’ ethno-religious identity, which was explicitly identified in the English and Tamil press to belong to the majority Sinhala Buddhist group. This framing could be yet another instance of bias in favour of the ethno-religious group the local language press caters to.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> This idea has previously been explored by Verité Research in its weekly publication *The Media Analysis*. For example, refer Verité Research, *The Media Analysis*, Vol.9 #20 (May 27 – June 2, 2019).

<sup>67</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A10; *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A12; *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A13.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A12.

<sup>69</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 17, p. A13; *Daily Mirror*, May 30, p. A11.

<sup>70</sup> *Sunday Observer*, May 19, p. 8; *Daily News*, May 23, p. 7; *Daily Mirror*, May 24, p. A8; *Daily Mirror*, May 25, p. A11; *Sunday Observer*, May 26 p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> *Dinamina*, May 15, p. 4; *Divaina*, May 15, p.1, 4; *Anidda*, May 19, p. 1, 2; *Silumina*, May 19, p. 9; *Anidda*, May 26, p. 4.

<sup>72</sup> See previous reports on *Understanding Press Coverage on Religious Freedom*.





## (2) Characterisation of the communal violence

The English and Tamil newspapers described the attacks using terms including ‘organised communal terrorist attacks’, ‘retaliatory violence against the Muslim communities’, ‘premeditated social violence’ ‘systematic attacks targeting Muslim villages’, and ‘severe tensions...escalated into violence’.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, the Sinhala press reportage on the mob attacks was also seen to downplay the violence of the attacks against Muslims. This becomes clear when comparing reporting in the Sinhala press to that in the English and Tamil press. For example, some of the Sinhala press used terms such as ‘sulu sulu siduweem’ (සුළු සුළු සිදුවීම්/small, small incidents) and ‘sarala siduweem’ (සරල සිදුවීම්/minor incidents) to describe the mob attacks. Sinhala press’ downplaying of such violence may serve as evidence of the bias in reporting, which is in favour of the Sinhala Buddhist ethno-religious group.

<sup>73</sup> Virakesari, May 14, p. 1; Virakesari, May 14, p. 4; Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A10; Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A13; Virakesari, May 15, p.4; Thinakaran, May 21, p.10; Sunday Observer, May 26 p. <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2019/05/26/news-features/religious-terrorism-extremism-and-citizen-responsibility>; Uthayan, May 6, p. 1.

## Other related reporting

### **Allegations of illegal sterilisation surgeries performed by a Muslim doctor on Sinhala Buddhist women**

This theme accounts for all reportage in relation to religious freedom that cannot be brought under any of the other themes. In the monitoring period, reporting that fell within this theme comprised the highest number of articles (286 in total). Reporting under this theme appeared most prominently in relation to one incident that took place during the month of May: allegations made by several Sinhala Buddhist women saying that they had been sterilised after caesarean operations performed by a Muslim doctor.

The analysis presented below was extracted from Verité Research's trademark product The Media Analysis, Volume 09, Issue no. 20, published on June 5, 2019.<sup>74</sup>

Notably, the above incident differed from the type of issue chosen for qualitative analysis in previous reports. Previous chosen issues have featured reporting on incidents that have been more explicit in impeding religious freedom. Such incidents include the vandalism of Buddha statues in Mawanella in December 2018; the attempted assault and verbal abuse by a Buddhist monk against Tamil politicians in the Northern Province in October 2018; threats to Hindu places of worship; attacks against Christian and Muslim communities. In this analysis, the chosen incident impeded religious freedom in a more implicit manner, as the incident in question has the potential to fuel anti-Muslim sentiments and tensions between ethno-religious communities. Accordingly, there is potential for the Muslim community to be discriminated against on the grounds of religion.

Besides reporting on the above incident, the rest of the coverage that fell within this theme was scattered among a variety of issues, including the celebration of Vesak in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks and talks on religious reconciliation and co-existence.

Reportage on the allegations against the doctor were largely contained in the Sinhala and English press. The issue gained minimal traction in the Tamil press, which limited its coverage to neutral news reports on the allegations. The following analysis aims to capture the sentiment prevalent in the Sinhala and English press in light of the ethno-religious identity of the doctor involved.

On May 23, the Divaina reported that a special police unit had commenced investigations on an unnamed doctor, who was said to be a strong member of a Thowheed Jamath organisation. The doctor was reported to have 'sterilised' more than 4,000 Sinhala Buddhist women after caesarean operations.<sup>75</sup> However, the article did not refer to any

<sup>74</sup> To purchase this issue of The Media Analysis, please follow the link below

<https://www.researchpool.com/provider/verite-research/dr-shafis-trial-by-media-the-media-analysis-vol9-no-20>.

<sup>75</sup> Divaina, May 23, p. 1, 4.



sources. On the same day, Dr. Channa Jayasumana of Rajarata University shared the name and picture of Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi, attached to the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital (KTH), in relation to the issue that was reported in the Divaina.<sup>76</sup> On May 24, Dr. Shafi was arrested over charges of earning assets through suspicious means.<sup>77</sup> The following day, KTH Director Dr. Sarath Weerabandara convened a media briefing, calling for women who suspect that they have been sterilised by Dr. Shafi after caesarian operations to lodge complaints against him.<sup>78</sup> As of June 3, reports record that over 600 complaints have been lodged by women who have undergone caesarian operations under Dr. Shafi.<sup>79</sup>

The Sinhala press featured two varied accounts of Dr. Shafi's arrest. Mainstream press coverage reported the doctor's arrest with no mention of the official charge against him. The mention of his arrest came among widespread reporting on the allegations that he had performed illegal sterilisations. Therefore, the mainstream narrative, which dominated reporting, appeared to presume/imply that he was arrested due to the sterilisation allegations. By contrast, the alternative press framing cast doubt on the mainstream press framing. Reports in the Annida explained that Dr. Shafi was arrested not over sterilisation allegations, but over allegations of having earned assets through suspicious means.<sup>80</sup> These newspapers further explained that the doctor's arrest reportedly followed tensions between the doctor and members of the Kurunegala Sinhala Trade Union (KSTU) over the alleged sale of a plot of land that the doctor had recently purchased. Given that the doctor was arrested in relation to the earning of assets through suspicious means, the predominant framing of his arrest in the Sinhala mainstream press is misleading.

Press reporting on this issue revealed three pre-existing narratives about how Sri Lanka's Muslim community poses a threat to the Sinhala Buddhist majority. These narratives are based on: (1) population rebalancing, (2) Muslim extremism, and (3) land acquisition. The first and second narratives were revealed through mainstream press criticism of the doctor. The third narrative was alluded to in the alternative press' account of the doctor's arrest and in its criticism of the mainstream press' reporting on

For more information on the lack of sources to substantiate this claim, refer <https://twitter.com/EthicsEye/status/1131574341362114560>.

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/jayasumanachanna/posts/2408230822834981>.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/55353/doctor-arrested-over-suspicious-assets>.

<sup>78</sup> [http://www.dailymirror.lk/front\\_page/Unlawful-sterilization-Affected-women-requested-to-give-evidence/238-167937](http://www.dailymirror.lk/front_page/Unlawful-sterilization-Affected-women-requested-to-give-evidence/238-167937).

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.adaderana.lk/news/55526/over-630-complaints-received-against-dr-shafi>.

<sup>80</sup> This article (Anidra, June 2, p. 3) falls within the purview of the articles monitored for the month of June 2019. However, for the purposes of this analysis, this article has been exceptionally included in the report for the month of May 2019. This article has been included to provide insight into press discussion on incidents relating to Muslim individuals in the wake of the Easter Sunday attacks. Further, the issue on Dr. Shafi took place in the month of May and is unlikely to be discussed in the month of June. Therefore, articles that appeared in relation to Dr. Shafi in the first week of June were included in the analysis.



the issue. Notably, the English press also alluded to the above narratives in its criticism of the racially biased ‘media’ reporting on the issue.

### **(1) Population rebalancing**

This narrative features the idea held by some segments of Sinhala-Buddhist society that the Muslim community in Sri Lanka is pursuing an agenda of rebalancing Sri Lanka’s population.<sup>81</sup> The Muslim community is perceived as pursuing this agenda by employing two strategies: (1) reducing the Sinhala Buddhist population until ‘extinction’, and (2) expanding the Muslim population. The allegations of illegal sterilisations performed by Dr. Shafi have served to revive long-standing concerns over strategy (1) – the fear of ‘extinction’ of the Sinhala-Buddhist community. This fear has emerged continually in the press over the past few years in the form of allegations that Muslim business owners are a) using ‘sterilisation pills’ in preparing food items for sale, and b) applying infertility-inducing substances to undergarments sold to Sinhalese women in order to ‘stop the spread of the Sinhala race’.<sup>82</sup> In terms of strategy (2), the perceived growth of the Muslim population between 1981 to 2012 has reinforced the idea that this community threatens the majority Sinhala-Buddhist population numerically and in terms of the predominant ethno-religious identity of the country.<sup>83</sup>

### **(2) Muslim Extremism**

This narrative contains the idea that religious extremism and terrorism are being fostered within Sri Lanka’s Islamic community. This view has strengthened in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. Against this backdrop, reporting noted that Dr. Shafi was alleged to have been funded by Muslim extremist organisations to carry out the illegal sterilisations on Sinhala-Buddhist women. Mainstream newspaper Lankadeepa characterised the actions of the doctor as aligned with those of a terrorist by likening his actions to ‘genocide’ and ‘Nazi doctors in concentration camps’, as well as casting Muslim extremist terrorist efforts as being more pervasive and concerted than the LTTE, ‘who only battled on the battleground’.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, this narrative highlights the long-standing perception of the threat of increasing Muslim extremism in Sri Lanka.

81 Daily Mirror, May 31, p. A8.

82 For more information on how the Sinhala press reported on the alleged discovery of sterilisation pills in food items sold by Muslim business, refer

<https://www.facebook.com/ethicseye/photos/a.234027673618964/578233309198397/?type=3&theater>

83 Gehan Gunatilleke, *The Chronic and the Entrenched: Ethno-religious Violence in Sri Lanka* (Equitas and ICES 2018), at 74. <http://ices.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Chronic-and-the-Entrenched-Mr.-Gihan-Book-FINAL-WEB-PDF.pdf>.

84 This article (Lankadeepa, June 2, p. 4) falls within the purview of the articles monitored for the month of June 2019. However, for the purposes of this analysis, this article has been exceptionally included in the Understanding Press Coverage on Religious Freedom Report for the month of May 2019 (reasons stated above).

### (3) Land acquisition

This narrative holds that the members of the Muslim community are acquiring land that has historically been owned and populated by Sinhala-Buddhists. This narrative was alluded to in alternative press reporting on informal policies that prevent Muslims from owning land. These policies are said to be adopted in several areas including Kurunegala, where the doctor reportedly purchased land. Notably, this narrative has also been used to justify criticism against the alleged Muslim settlements being established in Wilpattu.

In the context of these narratives, the nature of reporting on Dr. Shafi in the Sinhala mainstream press may indicate that even before the findings of an investigation have been produced, the press has established his culpability for the alleged sterilisations based on his Muslim identity. Noting this trend of reporting, not only prevalent in Sinhala press reporting but across all segments of the media (i.e. mainstream and social media), the English press condemned these segments of the media for ‘deliberately attempting to build anti-Muslim hatred in the Sinhalese minds’.<sup>85</sup> Further, the English press perceived certain segments of media reporting on the doctor as ‘media terrorism’ on the basis that such reporting perceived the ‘enemy as Muslims in their totality’.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Daily Mirror, May 31, p. A8.

<sup>86</sup> Daily Mirror, May 31, p. A8; Daily Mirror, May 31, p. A9.



## CONCLUSION

This study was based on media reportage produced during the month of May 2019 in all three languages on issues related to religious freedom. The analysis in the study considered 520 articles dealing with religious freedom under five overarching themes. The events/issues that were qualitatively analysed in this report related to two out of these five themes: **physical violence towards people and/or property and other related reporting**. These articles picked for analysis were chosen due to the high degree of traction that they received in the English and/or Tamil and/or Sinhala press. These articles were analysed by taking into account the sentiment contained therein. Sentiment was identified through content, perspective and tone of reporting. A qualitative analysis of the reported content led to two key findings:

1. Press reporting across reporting in all three languages on communal violence gave rise to an explicitly expressed narrative that promoted ethno-religious co-existence. In effect, the overarching sentiment in the press was anti-extremist. However, reporting within the press of each local language also revealed other implicitly conveyed attitudes. The implicit attitude in the English and Tamil press appeared to be biased in favour of the Muslim ethno-religious group. By contrast, the Sinhala press appeared to be biased in favour of the Sinhala Buddhist ethno-religious group. These attitudes were seen through press framing of (1) the alleged perpetrators behind the communal violence that transpired, and (2) the communal violence.
2. Press reporting on the alleged sterilisation operations conducted by a Muslim doctor revealed three pre-existing narratives about how Sri Lanka's Muslim community poses a threat to the Sinhala Buddhist majority. These narratives are based on: (1) population rebalancing, (2) Muslim extremism, and (3) land acquisition. The first and second narratives were revealed through the Sinhala mainstream press' criticism of the doctor. The third narrative was alluded to in the Sinhala alternative press' account of the doctor's arrest and in its criticism of the mainstream press' reporting on the issue. Notably, the English press also alluded to the above narratives in its criticism of the racially biased reporting in some segments of the media on the issue. Additionally, the predominant framing of the doctor's arrest in the Sinhala mainstream press was misleading. Accordingly, the nature of the reporting indicated that even before the findings of an investigation had been produced, the press had established his culpability for the alleged sterilisations based on his Muslim identity.



## RELATED REPORTING

**The story of Ahamed** (by Nirmala Kothalawala) – The column focuses on the solutions for destroying the extremist Islamist terrorism by implementing population control laws, enforcing the law equally and harmonising people without religious or ethnic differences. The writer draws connections between the current global situation and events related to extremist attacks worldwide. The writer pens it as a discussion between the writer and a person named Ahamed. Ahamed stressed that innocent Muslims has nothing to do with the Islamist extremism and they also feel ashamed for the attacks that happened.<sup>87</sup>

**3 foreigners were involved in terror attacks - says the Police** (by Srinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) – Three foreigners had reportedly helped and had connections with the Thowheed Jama'ath suicide bombers, who were held responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks, according to the information released by a senior police officer. It was revealed that these foreigners who are of Afghan, Indian and Maldivian nationalities were in connection with Zaharan through social media. Additionally, the Police reported that the wife of the suicide attacker, who blasted a bomb in Cinnamon Grand, is an Islamist extremist with hatred towards people from other religions. She was also reported to have helped in the terrorist attacks.<sup>88</sup>

**People who suffer for the faults of high ranks - A discussion with the former secretary of the foreign ministry Bernard Gunathilake** (by Gunasinghe Herath) – The lengthy discussion focuses on the 21st April Muslim extremists' attack, their war with the security forces and what can we do to escape from that situation. The discussion mainly focused on analysing the failure to prevent the Easter Sunday attack, the responsibility and accountability. Also, it discusses the future implications and decisions to solidify national security. Further, it discusses the history of Muslim politics, how Rishard Bathiudeen came to power, how the minority political parties are vital to the existence of major political parties and the history and the events related to Thowheed Jama'ath.<sup>89</sup>

**We won't escape from the responsibility of the attack, we will disclose to the country how extremist organisations formed** - Rajitha (Anjula Mahika Chirantha) – Member of Parliament Rajitha Senaratne said that before the month end, they will reveal that who create and sustained the extremist organisations including of Thowheed Jama'ath. He mentioned that Dallas Allahaperuma and Hizbulla signed the agreement to start the Sharia University in Batticaloa. Also he claimed that the Sharia law was gazetted in 2013 and it was passed in the parliament. He says that there are many Muslim religious places were started in the Rajapakse era, that there were 200 mosques legalised in that era.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Lankadeepa, May 1, p. 2

<sup>88</sup> Lankadeepa, May 1, p. 2

<sup>89</sup> Lankadeepa, May 1, p. 4

<sup>90</sup> Lankadeepa, May 1, p. 8.



**No new acts to crush the terrorists: do something tangible with the existing act - says the archbishop** (Nimala Kodithuwakku) - His eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith expressed that instead of presenting a new act to prevent terrorism, it's better to introduce reforms to the existing act if it has defects and act swiftly to uproot the terrorism, in a media conference held in Archbishop House. The pictures of the event say that there were Buddhist monks including venerable Dr. Omalpe Sobhitha thero in the media conference. Among the matters his eminence Malcolm Cardinal expressed, he mentioned the dissatisfaction on the process after the Easter attack by the government, extracting intelligence and proper house searching - especially in Negombo area. Also, he requested the youth to not to publish or propaganda the hate speech. He also urged that the program against the terrorist should not be interpreted as an anti-Muslim program and that we are not blaming the Muslims. He mentioned that all the schools should be open for children from other ethnicities and religious beliefs in Sri Lanka and at least 20% of them should be admitted to every school of the country. Also, the venerable Dr. Omalpe Sobhitha thero made a speech and mentioned that a conference of all religious leaders should be held to save the country from terrorism. Also, he mentioned that the inconsistencies on registering Muslim mosques and the issue of weapons in mosques should be addressed as well.<sup>91</sup>

**Politicians should let the security forces to crush the religious extremism and stand aside - Bodhu Bala Sena chief organiser Witharandeniye Nanda thero** (by Ariyaratne Ranabahu) - To protect the country from the religious extremist, it should be taken from the politicians hand and place in the hands of the security forces, said Bodhu Bala Sena chief organiser Witharandeniye Nanda thero in a media conference. Thero claimed that they have requested to ban the burka a long time ago and it's good at least now it was banned under the emergency regulations. But they request it to be banned permanently. "Under what power Minister Bathiudeen destroy the Wilpattu and colonise it? We have suspicions about it. There are protests under this minister's orders to remove the navy camp nearby. The Tamil Nadu Thowheed Jama'ath organisation had support from Jayalalithaa and they even have the weapons training. They can bring 50000, 100000 from Tamil Nadu to Silawathura within two hours. And this organisation is not like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. This is an extremism infused with religious beliefs. It's very dangerous. They have a process to kill other religious believers. Hence if to see an end to this problem, all the Muslim politicians who are connected to this should be arrested. The political authority should stand aside and let the security forces precede with the task" said the Thera.<sup>92</sup>

**Acting Inspector-General of Police stops the meditation practice of police** (Hemantha Randunu) - The acting Inspector-General of Police C. D. Wikramaratne decided to stop the mandatory religious practices including meditation and pirith

<sup>91</sup> Lankadeepa, May 1, p. 9.

<sup>92</sup> Lankadeepa, May 1, p. 13.





chanting before police officers start their work in the morning immediately. Those mandatory religious practices before start working were introduced by the ex-inspector-general of police Pujith Jayasundara who is on mandatory leave now.<sup>93</sup>

**The leader who nurtured Buddhism while respecting other religions** (by Amal Wikramathunga-assistant treasurer of Sri Sucharitha movement limited) - The article covered the former president Ranasinghe Premadasa's life, memories about him particularly tied to the Dhamma School, his connection with the temple and the form of Sucharitha movement which is a social services organisation. It explicitly mentioned how he respected other religions and nurtured Buddhism. Placing a Buddhist statue in each model village he created, building a Stupa in every annual 'Gam Uda' program and creating a scheme to grant marks to the Dhamma school final certificate in job interviews were mentioned as examples.<sup>94</sup>

**If there are explosives found from Muslim religious places, there won't be any more talks with those religious leaders - says Shiva Sena in North** (by Dinaseena Rathugamage). - If there are explosives and suspicious items found in coming days from Muslim worshipping places in north, there won't be any collaboration with Muslim religious leaders in any discussion or a religious event, says Shiva Sena organisation from the North. They further stated that although other religious leaders have united with Muslim religious leaders under the situation, certain Muslim religious leaders have helped the extremists and hence they are getting arrested daily.<sup>95</sup>

**Introduce amendments if cannot punish the Muslim extremists under the existing laws - His eminent Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith** (by Inoka Perera Bandara) - His eminent Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith expressed that the more practical step is strengthening the existing acts to punish the culprits of Easter attack rather than introducing new acts. And he also said that the way the government preceded after the tragedy is dissatisfactory. His eminent expressed these ideas at a media conference held in Archbishop House with the venerable Buddhist monks including Ven. Omalpe Sobhitha thero. Also Ven. Omalpe Sobhitha thero questioned the accountability regarding the weapons uncovered from Muslim mosques and questioned the fact that there are four hundred extremists' mosques registered under the ministry of Muslim affairs according to Minister Dayasiri Jayasekara.<sup>96</sup>

**Some bring up fictitious accusations to slid mud, there are only 94 mosques registered after 2015 - says Minister Abdul Haleem** (by Rakshana Sriyantha) - He expressed that there are only 94 mosques were registered under the Postal and Muslim affairs ministry after 2015. He furthermore mentioned that there are 2599 mosques, 1775 Koran centers and 317 Arab schools around the country registered under the

<sup>93</sup> Divaina, May 1, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Divaina, May 1, p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> Divaina, May 1, p. 13.

<sup>96</sup> Dinamina, May 1, p. 12.

ministry of Muslim affairs. He also mentioned that the need of preparing new laws regarding the Islam religious schools (Madrassa) was emphasised by the Prime Minister Wickremesinghe and although there are no authority over madrasas to the department of Muslim religious and Cultural Affairs, there are 278 such intuitions are registered for the purpose of supervision under that department, the minister added. He furthermore mentioned about the structure of Madrasa education and how there is a process to implicate regulations over the curriculum of Madrasa education.<sup>97</sup>

**Bail for 9 who went inside a mosque and started commotions** (by D. Mihindukula) - Several people came inside the premises of the main Muslim mosque in Periyamulla, Negambo at night and acted violently were released on bail<sup>98</sup>

**Religious leaders call for those with extremist links to surrender** (by Irangika Range) – Religious leaders of different faiths requested that people with extremist links surrender, and that the public cooperate with the security forces. They emphasised the incompatibility of any religion, human or moral value with terrorism. The religious leaders also appreciated the manner in which the Catholic clergy, including Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, responded to the brutal attacks and also thanked the Muslim community for providing crucial information.<sup>99</sup>

**‘Strive to build one family of one nation’** - Bishop of the diocese of Colombo, the Rt. Rev. Dhiloraj R. Canagasabey called upon people of every faith and belief in the country to strive towards building one family of one nation. The bishop urged people to embrace the Muslim community, as everyone has lived in this nation for many hundred of years in peaceful coexistence. He expressed disappointment at the fact that some individuals have given themselves the right to commit mass murder in the name of God Almighty, the giver of life. The bishop says that “Jesus Christ our lord fought against the dark forces of death on the cross, died and rose again empowering us with his resurrection power. This is the resilience of the Christian community. We cannot and must not act on the basis of ‘an eye for an eye’, or a ‘tooth for a tooth’”. He also blames the heads of the executive and legislative branches of the government because their overriding focus lately has been on consolidating their own positions at the expense of neglecting the security of the people of this nation.<sup>100</sup>

**Teaching at Madrasas – Deport the 800 foreign Islamic clerics: Patali** (by Kelum Bandara) - Megapolis and Western Development Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka yesterday called for the deportation of 800 foreign Islamic clerics who were engaged in religious education at various madrasas.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Dinamina, May 1, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Dinamina, May 1, p. 23.

<sup>99</sup> Daily News, May 1, p. 2.

<sup>100</sup> Daily News, May 1, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Daily Mirror, May 1, p. A1.



Muslim youth arrested with army type uniforms (by Buddhika Kumarasiri) – A 28- year-old Muslim youth who had in his possession five uniforms similar to those of the army and eight cellular phones was arrested by the Padukka police.<sup>102</sup>

**The veil and the ‘Arabianisation’ of Lankan Muslims** (by Hafeel Farisz) - Girls too young to understand the essence of religion adorn the niqab. Some forced due to cultural imposition, and others too young to know why. Madrasas spread across the island ignore the history, art, culture, literature and theology which form the core of religious education. The writer believes that the many who adorn the face veil and those who justify the wearing of such have based their reasoning on a practice that goes beyond the realms of logic. The face veil was used to counter the harsh conditions of an often unwelcoming desert. The writer is of the view that Islam was the first religion to have founded a state and religion in quick succession and adhering to this cultural norm (wearing the face veil) was not seen as a threat of any sort. Rather, it was the costume of the day, and it blended with the culture of the time. According to the writer, the face veil is a cultural phenomenon. The free market and governance structures of the west that commenced in the 17th Century threatened the very existence of the states which were under Islamic rule. Moreover, it had a massive economic impact on Muslim territories. Therefore, the niqab evolved, from being cultural attire to a symbol against the expanding European forces and was encouraged by religious and political authorities. He notes that Islam is spiritual, and religion is a personal relationship between the adherent and the creator. Prayer is not simply a ritual but is meditation. Fasting is not only confined to staying hungry from dawn to dusk. Instead, it includes the fasting of the mind, from anything that could impede the mind's meditative state.<sup>103</sup>

**Ban on full face cover and the spread of extremism** (by A.R.A. Fareel) - President Maithripala Sirisena has issued a regulation stating that no person shall engage in the preaching of any religious, extremist or radical ideology which glorifies, promotes or espouses terrorism, or any specific terrorist activity. Further, the regulation states that no person shall employ or engage the services of any non-citizen as an instructor, teacher or lecturer or any other profession involved in instructing, teaching or lecturing on the above. The regulations made under Section 5 of the Public Security Ordinance were issued under the Gazette Extraordinary 2121/1 on April 29, which in turn amended the Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions and Powers) Regulations, No. 1 of 2019 published in the Gazette Extraordinary 2120/5 of April 22. One regulation thus issued on April 29 concerns the prohibition of wearing, in any public place (including public roads, buildings, enclosed or open areas and vehicles or other modes of transport), any garment, clothing, or other material fully concealing the face (including the ears) in a manner which would hinder the identification of the person.<sup>104</sup>

102 Daily Mirror, May 1, p. A5.

103 Daily Mirror, May 1, p. A7.

104 Virakesari, May 1, p. 1.



**Muslim traders temporarily prohibited in Thirukkovil** - Thirukkovil Pradeshiya Sabha Chairman, R.W. Kamalarajan stated that Muslim traders have been prohibited from Thirukkovil due to the prevalent situation. This decision has been taken with the safety of Muslim traders in mind, he said.<sup>105</sup>

**More than hundred people were lying down and there was a headless corpse among them - Katana Police Inspector in Charge testifies.** (by Hubert Fernando) - The article extensively covers the magistrate case on the Katuapitiya church bomb blast. 110 people were killed from the suicide blast and two are missing. Three people are unidentified. The Katana police station officer in charge inspector testified in front of the magistrate and the article has extensively covered the testimony. It covers the events of 21st Easter Sunday morning, the bomb blast and the aftermath of the blast descriptively.<sup>106</sup>

**Birth of destruction. The future.** (by Kusal Perera) - The article extensively probe into the reasons behind the Easter Sunday attack and the background of the birth of religious extremism born in Sri Lanka. The article observes that the Islamic fundamentalism and the assembly of its extremist armed groups have roots in Eastern province according to the information revealed so far. Further, the article suggests that it was rooted in Eastern province not just with the strength of Islamic fundamentalism but with the strength of the competence of Sinhala Buddhist politics in the South as well. The writer finds fault with the extremist Sinhala Buddhist factions for Islamic fundamentalism. To keep the Sinhala Buddhist authority and authoritative governance, there should be something to replace the Tamil separatism and Tamil terrorism and hence they could show the Muslim extremism as a threat to the Sinhala Buddhist society. The article analyse how foreign countries such as America used Islamic fundamentalism for the political purposes and how terrorist groups such as Islamic State (IS) was born through those political needs. And the article comes back to the Sri Lankan political arena and analyses the future of Sri Lanka after the Easter Sunday attacks.<sup>107</sup>

**Investigations over the secret on Sinhala Buddhist Hospital assistant turned to Islam** (by Srinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) - The police say that a person who is a hospital assistant by the profession and who turned to Islam from Buddhism was arrested for investigations. He was turned to Islam after marrying a Muslim woman in 1997 says the police. He also worked to donate necessary equipment to the hospital with the patronage of some Muslim businessmen, say the police. The police are conducting investigations to know if he had connections with extremist Muslim organisations.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Thinakaran, May 1, p. 12.

<sup>106</sup> Lankadeepa, May 2, p. 2.

<sup>107</sup> Lankadeepa, May 2, p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Lankadeepa, May 2, p. 10.



**Easter Sunday extremists' carnage** (by Thisarani Jayasekara) - The article covers the harmony of Christians and Muslims maintained in Sri Lanka, the Easter Sunday attack, the example the Christians showed after the attack, who's to be blamed for the attack, the background of Islamic fundamentalism and how it leads to extremism and about the future after the Easter Sunday bomb attacks. The article juxtapose the aftermath of Easter Sunday attacks with the 1983 Black July retaliation by Sinhala people which ended up being a carnage against Tamils and how the government was inactive when it happened. Although the Easter Sunday attacks didn't pan out to be carnage between ethnic or religious groups, the article suggests that that was the intention of the masterminds behind the Easter attack. The article also discusses the Salafism and how it was imported to Sri Lanka from Middle East and how it created extremists while the government was inactive. The article mentions that the government has looked the other way and let the moderate Muslims deal with extremists. As examples for that claim, the article says that it was moderate Muslims who complained against the rooting extremist Islam sects in Sri Lanka over and over again.<sup>109</sup>

**Muslim Mavulavi who cheered the terrorist attack ask for political asylum** (by Dinasena Rathugamage) - The Muslim Maulavi from Vavuniya who released a video to the internet, justifying the Easter Sunday bomb attacks by Muslim extremists, ask for political asylum from an Arabic country. In his video he justified the attack and thanked the terrorists who participate to the attack for their step to make the whole world an Islamic state. According to the complaints against him, there are orders to arrest him when he comes back to the country after his Mecca tour and Maulavi is asking for political asylum to get away from getting arrested.<sup>110</sup>

**More than hundred people were lying down and there was pool of blood - Katana Police inspector in charge testify.** (by Wimal Keerthi) - The article extensively covers the magistrate case on the Katuapitiya church bomb blast. The Katana police station officer in charge inspector testified in front of the magistrate and the article has extensively covered the testimony. It covers the events of 21st Easter Sunday morning, the bomb blast and the aftermath of the blast descriptively.<sup>111</sup>

**Peace TV which propagates Islamic extremism within the country is no more** (by Sirimantha Rathnasekare) - Peace TV which was accused for propagating extremist Islamic teachings and Wahhabism was stopped from broadcasting within the country by a private and a government cable TV broadcasters. The owner of Peace TV Dr .Zakir Abdul Naik is known around the world as an extremist preacher.<sup>112</sup>

**Former president Premadasa has done a massive service to the Buddhism and to the people - Ven. Galigamuwe Gnanadeepa thero** (by Upali Karunarathne) - The

<sup>109</sup> Lankadeepa, May 2, p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> Divaina, May 2, p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Divaina, May 2, p. 6.

<sup>112</sup> Divaina, May 2, p. 7.



sermon which was held in Gangarama temple with parallel to the 26th commemoration of former president Ranasinghe Premadasa, was delivered by venerable Galigamuwe Gnanadeepa thero. The reverend mentioned that the former president has done a massive service to Buddhism as well as people in the country. Also the venerable mentioned that the former president was very close with the incumbent of Gangarama temple, Ven. Galaboda Gnanissara thero.<sup>113</sup>

**Take all the religious universities under the supervision of University Grant Commission - MP Thilanga Sumathipala** (by Buddhi Karunarathne, Dharma Sri Abeyratne) –UPFA MP Thilanga Sumathipala requested the government to place all the religious universities including the Muslim universities which is a topic for discussion these days under the supervision of university grant commission. He further added that any university which is for education should not propagate extremism. And he claimed that the permission for establishing the said Muslim university was granted six years ago under the previous government's term.<sup>114</sup>

CWF calls for a united SL based on socialist democratic values – The Christian Workers' Fellowship (CWF) condemned the inhumane attacks on Easter Sunday. They said that these attacks were not only on the Christian community but on all of humanity. They also mentioned the extremely difficult situation that the Muslim community is in due to these heinous attacks by terrorists.<sup>115</sup>

**Sri Lanka's Christians and Muslims weren't enemies** (by Neil Devotta) – The writer is of the opinion that the country's real divide has been between Buddhists and Muslims, but the Easter attacks may change all that. Due to the relationship among the country's Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims, the writer finds the targets the attackers picked somewhat strange. After all, why would the Islamic State (IS), or those allied with it, go after the Christian minority when it is the radical Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists who have perpetrated violence against the island's Muslims in recent times? In this opinion piece, the writer questions why the IS took responsibility for the Easter Sunday attacks, and notes the reputation the IS has for taking credit for terrorist acts it had nothing to do with. The writer also seems to answer some of these questions. As far as the IS and its affiliates are concerned, Sri Lankan Christians fit into the crusader bracket and qualify for being attacked. A second reason Sri Lanka was picked is perhaps because, post-civil war, it represents a soft target. A third reason for picking Sri Lanka was the availability of a newly radicalised cohort of Muslims.<sup>116</sup>

**Risk of Muslim women being disrespected due to ban on burqa, South Asian representative of amnesty international says** – Deputy Director, South Asia of amnesty international, Dinushika Dissanayake stated that banning the burqa ran the risk

<sup>113</sup> Dinamina, May 2, p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> Dinamina, May 2, p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> Daily News, May 2, p. 2.

<sup>116</sup> Daily News, May 2, p. 7.



of disrespecting Muslim women. Attire that covers the face has been banned through the Emergency Regulations brought in after the Easter bombings on April 21. Dissanayake stated that women who are used to covering their faces could feel uncomfortable revealing them now, adding that it might result in confining them indoors. She pointed out that authorities could conduct examinations to establish identity based on security reasons, but added that forcing all women to remove face covers disrespects them.<sup>117</sup>

**We are in the process of formulating legal framework to regulate madrasas** (by MRM Waseem) - Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs, A.H.M Haleem stated that the government was in the process of formulating a legal framework to regulate madrasas in the country. He stated that he had mentioned the necessity of regulating the teaching of Islamic religious subjects during a meeting with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, Minister of Internal and Home Affairs Vajira Abeywardena, and State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene.<sup>118</sup>

**Looking at all Islamic people with suspicion should be avoided - Mannar multi- religious council** - The Mannar multi-religious council has urged people not to look at the entire Islamic community with suspicion due to acts carried out by a few individuals. The head of the council, Rev. Tamil Nesan, stated that following the Easter bomb attacks, a situation has arisen where Muslim people are living in fear. He said the Muslim community is looked upon with anger and suspicion after the attack.<sup>119</sup>

**Security of places of worship strengthened** – Anuradhapura Division SP - Anuradhapura Division Superintendent of Police, Thilina Hewapathirana, stated that the security of all religious places of worship in Anuradhapura, including that of the historic Sri Maha Bodhi, has been strengthened following the tense situation in the country after the bomb attacks on April 21. <sup>120</sup>

**Nintavur Pradeshiya Sabha condemns Easter attacks** - The Nintavur Pradeshiya Sabha convened by Chairman M.A.M. Thahir condemned the attacks on churches and hotels, labelling them brutal. The members also expressed condolences to the families who had lost their loved ones in the bomb attacks.<sup>121</sup>

**This is not the time to argue with Jamiyyathul Ulama** - State Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government, H.M.M. Harees stated that Muslims should realise that this is not the time to debate whether Muslim women should wear the burqa, or whether it was a request made by the Jamiyyathul Ulama which contradicts the path of Islam. He stated that Muslims should unite to defeat international terrorism as well as the act of pointing fingers at Muslims. He said that some were trying to find warmth by blaming the

<sup>117</sup> Virakesari, May 2, p. 7.

<sup>118</sup> Virakesari, May 2, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> Virakesari, May 2, p. 9.

<sup>120</sup> Virakesari, May 2, p. 15.

<sup>121</sup> Virakesari, May 2, p. 19.





terrorist activities on Muslims. He pointed out that the Jamiyyathul Ulama had requested that Muslim women cooperate with the security forces by refraining from going to public places wearing burqas, urging them to adhere to the instructions without debating on the issue.<sup>122</sup> Due to attacks by a few Islamists, do not look at all with suspicion - The Mannar multi-religious council has urged people not to look at the entire Muslim community with suspicion based on the actions of a few Islamist individuals. While condemning the bomb attacks, the council stressed the importance of maintaining peace and coexistence among communities.<sup>123</sup>

**Religiously mad curse** (by Dr. Aminda Methsila Perera) - The article discuss and analyse the opinions on the Easter Sunday attack in a political backdrop. Especially he discuss the accountability of politicians regarding the attack, the weakened national security and the accusation leveled to the current government that they have arrested many intelligence officers and weakened the national security structure. The writer counter argues against that accusation and claim that that's a discussion based on political interests. He also mentions the rise of the Muslim extremists and the worldwide battle against this Muslim extremism. He claims that when some people foresaw the threat of Muslim extremism, they were branded as NGO people. Then he discusses the political background to pave the way into this Muslim extremism. He quoted the president and claim that the rise of the Muslim extremism has a history of 15 years and their growth was accelerated after 2013. He criticised extremist movements such as Bodu Bala Sena and he mention that people draw into such extremist movements simply because the government is not fulfilling its responsibilities.<sup>124</sup>

**The Arabic word 'Thowheed' means 'oneness of god' , do not look at all the Thowheed organisations and all the Muslims like they are terrorists** - an announcement from several Thowheed organisations - The meaning of the Arabic word 'Thowheed' is oneness of god and one can't look at all the Thowheed organisations and all the Muslims as they all are terrorists, several Thowheed propaganda organisations claim issuing a statement. "As there is a misunderstanding creating especially around the Thowheed organisations after the Easter attack and hence a self- explanation on Thowheed organisations became a necessity", the statement claim. The statement goes on explaining the oneness of god practices saying there are many Thowheed Jama'ath organisations since 1940 and that's just a name based on their religious observance and philosophy. The statement also mentions that those organisations work within the rule of the country and has come forward to help people in any religious beliefs in many disaster times. The statement condemns the Easter attack

122 Virakesari, May 2, p. 20.

123 Uthayan, May 2, p. 13.

124 Lankadeepa, May 3, p. 4.



and request the government to give the maximum punishment to those who are responsible.<sup>125</sup>

**Abdul Haleem's stupid speech and the responsibility of Muslims** - The shock of the Easter attacks are not yet blown away. To rebuild the country and the lives of people, all the people in every religious belief should work together with courage. As his eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith set a great example when the country faced a disaster, it must be a great example for all other religious leaders. Having said that we would like to get your attention on a illogical speech given by the minister of Muslim affairs. In a backdrop of arresting Muslim priests with swords and finding swords from a Slave Island mosque, the minister claimed in a press conference that those swords are in mosques to cut down the overgrown bushes as there are cemeteries attached to many mosques. Muslims are a group of people who lived in coexistence with other ethnic groups. But they are in a hard place after the Easter Sunday attacks. Now there is a responsibility to every Muslim political leader and every Islam leader to bring the country back to how it was before. And ministers like Haleem should be more responsible on what they say.<sup>126</sup>

**No need of an Arab in Sri Lanka, should create a Sri Lankan Muslim community** - Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka (by Sirimantha Rathnasekare) - According to the need of few extremists, there shouldn't be an Arab within Sri Lanka but create a Sri Lankan Muslim community, says Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka. He also said that we should move out from the process of putting burkas and masks on the enemy. He expressed his ideas in 'National way' scholarly discussion. He further said that Islamic terrorists launching an armed attack against Christians are just a superficial look. We should recognize the true enemy, he said. "The Muslim community worked peacefully in the country but there are several radical tendencies arose within that community. We should first identify those Jihadists and suppress them with an anti-terrorism movement. We do not know about the foreign teachers who teach in Islamic schools. We should deport them and place Sri Lankan Muslim scholar in that place. The extremist Muslim organisations created a rift within the society. The Muslims should protect their Muslim identity and live as Sri Lankans" the minister further claimed.<sup>127</sup>

**The rulers of the country are unaware but the extremists go to their targets** - venerable chief prelate of Malwathu sect (by Samanthi Weerasekare) - Venerable chief prelate of Malwatu sect Thibbatuwawe Sri Siddhartha Sumangala thero said and also claimed that the thero saw a statement in media by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) secretary general which stated that there are around fifty extremists' worshipping places built in Kandy district. Venerable chief prelate expressed those ideas in an event of presenting the anti-terrorism national policy for uprooting Islamic extremism and

<sup>125</sup> Lankadeepa, May 3, p.11.

<sup>126</sup> Divaina, May 3, p. 8.

<sup>127</sup> Divaina, May 3, p. 09.



terrorism from Sri Lanka composed by the 'National movement for protecting Sri Lanka' (Surakimu Lanka).<sup>128</sup>

**Shamed, Sad, Angry - Minister Mano Ganeshan** (by Duminda Sampath) - In an interview, Minister Mano Ganeshan expressed his ideas about the Easter Sunday attacks, the accusations leveled against the government and protecting the national reconciliation in the backdrop of the current situation. He claimed that although he would not agree with Rev. Gnanasara thero on the ideas against all the Muslims but people should be thankful Gnanasara thero for revealing the extremists. The interview continued towards the accusation that the rise of the extremists happened because the government acted to protect the Muslim voter base. The minister refused that accusation questioning whether the previous government didn't try to protect the Muslim voter base. He pointed out the incidents including the destruction of Mawanalla Buddha statues, Beruwala-Aluthgama riots, many arson incidents against Muslims were never truly solved and if we are to level accusations, we should do that against all the governments past and present.<sup>129</sup>

**We should create a Sri Lankan Muslim community without Arabic ideas and thoughts** - Minister Patali Champika (by Sithara Senani) - The article extensively covered the first media conference of the 'National way' movement which held in Sri Lanka foundation institute. The article covered the ideas expressed by Minister Patali Champika. He claimed that the Islamic universities should come under the University Grant Commission (UGC) and the Islamic schools should be controlled under the ministry of education. Also he claimed that the atmosphere which could lead children and youth to radicalisation should be controlled. He also said that we should move out from the process of putting burkas and masks on the enemy. He further said that extremists created a rift within the society but we can solve that problem if we work together as many Muslims in Sri Lanka are a peaceful community.<sup>130</sup>

**What's this Burka** (by Manajula Wijeratne) - This feature article covers extensive details about the history of burka, the practice of covering the face in Islam, the threat of burka and the banning of burka internationally. The writer says that the controversial burka and Niqab are Muslim attires for Muslim women and it should be discussed deeply. The writer explores the history of covering the face and claim that that history can be traced back to the pre-Islam era. The writer also draw the lines mentioned about women covering the face in holy Quran and showcase the ideas of many Muslim scholars which state that covering the face is not a necessary religious condition but many Muslim women wear the burka or Niqab to keep their privacy within the patriarchy or to protect their shame and fear or to keep their restrain. And finally the writer points out the

<sup>128</sup> Divaina, May 3, p. 10.

<sup>129</sup> Dinamina, May 3, p. 4.

<sup>130</sup> Dinamina, May 3, p. 7.



practical issues of wearing burka or Niqab as it became a social issue after many criminals used it as a disguise. Hence many countries had to ban the burka, says the writer.<sup>131</sup>

**Patali calls for deportation of 800 Islamic teachers** (by Disna Mudalige) - Megapolis and Western Development Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka called for the immediate deportation of about 800 foreign Islamic teachers employed at madrasas and various educational institutes. Ranawaka pointed out that some institutes that promote Islamic radicalisation are being operated in the guise of providing vocational training for the youth. He said the Sri Lankan Muslim community should reject the social alienation and radicalisation process promoted by Thowheed Jamaath and integrate with the rest of the population while retaining their Muslim identity.<sup>132</sup>

**The making of a deadly ideology** (by M.S.M Ayub) – The author states that Thowheed is the foundation of Islam - it is what Islam is all about. Thowheed is nothing but accepting the oneness of God, or monotheism. It means believing in Allah alone as God. The holy Qur'an stresses Thowheed. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught Thowheed. These terrorists and all other Muslims around the world accept it. Books on Thowheed can be found in the houses of these terrorists as well as those of all other Muslims. Then how can a non-Muslim identify a terrorist among Muslims? That is the difficulty the law enforcement authorities might be facing these days. That is the issue that haunts the ordinary Muslims. It is a problem that can also be exploited by extremist groups. It is the responsibility of Muslim religious and political leaders to take prompt action to weed out the bad apples among them and cleanse the community of corrupt ideologies and finally integrate with other communities.<sup>133</sup>

**Severe punishment for those who attempt to disrupt racial and religious harmony** (Sadique Hishan) - Police spokesperson, SP Ruwan Gunasekara has stated that those who spread false information or photographs that disrupt racial and religious harmony would be severely punished. <sup>134</sup>

**Plans to attack two locations** (M. Manochithra) - The archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, has stated that there will be no masses in churches due to information he received concerning plans to attack two Catholic churches that week. In addition, he has also requested that all Catholic schools be closed till further notice. He stated that he had received this information from foreign sources.<sup>135</sup>

**Muslims should face challenges bravely and not fear unnecessarily** - The head of the Muslim Council, N.M. Ameen has stated that Muslims in several parts of the country have been facing problems due to racial attacks following the Easter bombings. He stated that

<sup>131</sup> Dinamina, May 3, p. 9.

<sup>132</sup> Daily News, May 3, p. 8.

<sup>133</sup> Daily Mirror, May 3, p. A8.

<sup>134</sup> Thinakaran, May 3, p. 1

<sup>135</sup> Virakesari, May 3, p. 1.



Muslims had faced discrimination in public places, buses, trains, and workplaces. He also pointed out that Muslims were inconvenienced through search operations that were specifically carried out targeting Muslims. He urged the Muslim people not to fear, but to face the challenges bravely. Ameen pointed out that such issues have been brought to the notice of the president and prime minister, adding that they had pledged to address the issue.<sup>136</sup> Government should ensure the security of churches so they can conduct services – Sri Lanka Christian youth union (by R. Vithusha) – The Secretary of the Sri Lanka Christian youth union, S. Sivaneshraj, has urged the government to ensure the security of churches so that they can open and conduct services. He made this request at a time when churches islandwide have been closed and services cancelled, owing to security concerns following the Easter bombings.<sup>137</sup>

**St. Anthony's statue vandalised in church** - The statue of St. Anthony at the Pallakandal shrine within the Wilpattu sanctuary has been damaged by unidentified persons. The incident took place on April 30. The church holds importance for Tamil and Sinhala communities in the area who join together in celebrating St. Anthony's feast every year.<sup>138</sup>

**The people's movement to eradicate Islamic terrorism** (by N. Thanuja) - Minister Champika Ranawaka has presented eight proposals to eradicate Islamic fundamentalist terrorism from the country. The proposals included the establishment of a security unit inclusive of the president, prime minister, and opposition leader. In addition, a committee of intellectuals has been formed by the Ministry of Western Province Development. The committee will present proposals for a safe country.<sup>139</sup>

**Everyone should cooperate to eradicate terrorism labeled Islamic** - The Secretary General of the Eastern Liberation Movement, Wafa Farook has urged all the Muslims in the eastern region to unite to eradicate terrorism with the Islamic label. He pointed out that the Easter attacks were carried out by those who were brainwashed, and the attacks were carried out so that more than one individual would benefit out of it.<sup>140</sup>

**Do not enter with burqas – Sticker notices on buses** - Sticker notices have been pasted on private and government buses urging passengers not to enter the buses with burqas or dresses that conceal a person's identity. President Maithripala Sirisena had urged the public to refrain from wearing any types of face cover that conceals the identity of an individual. Following the request, steps had been taken to paste notices on buses urging passengers to refrain from wearing face covers.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Virakesari, May 3, p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> Virakesari, May 3, p. 3.

<sup>138</sup> Virakesari, May 3, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Virakesari, May 3, p. 6.

<sup>140</sup> Virakesari, May 3, p. 15.

<sup>141</sup> Virakesari, May 3, p. 18.



**Don't humiliate coexistence** - We have reported finding swords from mosques and arresting Muslim priests with swords. Also we have reported that a military jacket, bullets and firecrackers were found from a mosque in Jaffna. When a journalist asked a question about this situation of finding weapons from Muslim mosques, Minister Haleem said that those were collected for cutting down overgrowing bushes around the mosques. We should question if such statements can be made by a minister especially when there is a dangerous situation within the country. The country became a war zone after 21st April and there are reports about suspicions of another attack before starting the Ramadan month. What we should do now is understand the situation and face it wisely. If someone feed jokes to the people regarding the situation, it will be hard to control people who are already in pain and shock. His eminence Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith foresaw this threat. That's why that there should be attention diverted to the speech of Minister Haleem. Muslim community is a part of the problem created within the country. Hence he should have done a wiser role as a responsible minister.<sup>142</sup>

**Getting closer to the doom by being different** (by M.S.M. Ayub) - "The word Thowheed which is a very concerned word among Christian communities within Sri Lanka and worldwide, is not a new word for Muslims. Although it didn't mention frequently among Muslims, the concept of Thowheed is the basis of Islam. It's not a harmful word. The direct translation of the word is 'one'. That means there is one god in the whole universe and in that sense Thowheed means the 'oneness of god'. The writer further explain the meaning and the concept of the word Thowheed with holy Quran. And the writer mention that since Thowheed is that, there can be books regarding the Thowheed concept in any Muslim household, not just with the terrorists from National Thowheed Jama'ath or Jama'athe Millathu Ibraahim organisations. The writer goes on about the difficulties the security forces face when it comes to investigations these days. One is that almost all the religious books in Muslim households are in Arabic and the other books and CDs are in Tamil. Security forces might have a hard time understanding and identifying those. The writer also dissects how the Muslim community became different from their practices, attire and beliefs over several decades. And the writer analyses the rifts and disagreements between different Islamic sects within the country as well.<sup>143</sup>

**Maulavi who teach Islam in Niravia mosque and another one arrested, extremist sermons in Maulavi's laptop** (by Percy Kuruneru) - The Muslim Maulavi who work as the principle of Islam school in Niravia mosque and another person was arrested under suspicions by Police. The Maulavi was arrested over recorded sermons of extremist Muslim organisation in a laptop and more than 50 CDs having in the possession. Also the investigations revealed that the Islam school in Niravia mosque was without proper permission from the authorities.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Lankadeepa, May 4, p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Lankadeepa, May 4, p. 4.

<sup>144</sup> Divaina, May 4, p. 5.



**The radicalism of heightened aggression** (by Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne) - It is clear that the attacks on Easter Sunday were carried out by local radicals, under the pressures of foreign fundamentalists. It is also clear that there is little support for this group from the wider Muslim community. While those involved could be swiftly identified and dealt with, the bigger question is how to check the spread of extremism. Some say violent extremism is a cult, not a religion. Then one can argue that all god believing religions are cults, except Buddhism. Hence treating violent extremism as a problem of religion or belief is a mistake. If that is correct, counter strategies based on empowering rational, liberal voices by preaching mercy, kindness and tolerance in more “extreme” mosques may not be effective, indeed even counterproductive. When confronted with evidence to the contrary, committed extremist individuals may become defensive and cling onto their initial beliefs more strongly, driving fence-sitters towards extremism.<sup>145</sup>

**For the attention of Muslims** - This editorial discusses the problems faced by Muslims in the aftermath of the bomb attacks, which have been linked to Islamic fundamentalists. The editorial points out that Muslims at large are against such extremist activities and that Islam does not preach violence. The editorial urges the authorities and the public to provide a suitable environment for Muslims to observe the holy month of Ramadan that is to commence shortly.<sup>146</sup>

**Suspicion over swords recovered from mosques** (by Rajadurai Hashan) - Parliamentarian Susil Premajayantha has stated that there was great suspicion over swords that have been recovered from mosques during search operations after the Easter bomb attacks. He stated that keeping swords in mosques was inappropriate and should be condemned. He also pointed out that all those connected to terrorism should be duly punished.<sup>147</sup>

**It is wrong to mete out step-motherly treatment** - This editorial states that a situation has arisen where the entire Muslim community is being blamed for the actions of a small group of people. The editorial points out that the entire Muslim community is being looked at in a suspicious manner because the masterminds of the bomb attacks were Muslim. The editorial states that such an approach is wrong. In addition, the editorial also points out that Muslims were also inconvenienced due to the search operations. The editorial, while condemning baseless suspicion against all Muslims, urged the government and the security forces to address the situation.<sup>148</sup>

**The importance of the role of religious leaders** (by Robert Antony) - This article discusses the importance of the role played by the archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, in the aftermath of the Easter bombings. The piece lauds him for

<sup>145</sup> Daily News, May 4, p. 5.

<sup>146</sup> Thinakaran, May 4, p. 4.

<sup>147</sup> Virakesari, May 4, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> Virakesari, May 4, p. 4.



ensuring that tensions were not aggravated. In this context, the article emphasises the importance of leaders of all religions joining together in order to submit proposals to the government to prevent religious fundamentalist issues from taking root in the country. The article places the responsibility of promoting reconciliation on the religious leaders.<sup>149</sup>

**Jihad in 2002, Thowheed in 2011** - How the country trapped while the intelligence revealing this (by Saman Gamage) - The article is covering a vast picture from the responsibility of the Easter Sunday attacks to how Muslim terrorists became a threat. The article start from defeating the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the role the security forces and intelligence acted in defeating LTTE. Also the article claim that the current government didn't have a need or a vision or a process to face the new found threat which is international. The article retraces the events of Easter Sunday attack and probe into how the situation couldn't be contained. Then the article discuss Sri Lankan Muslims and how they became being different from the Sri Lankan society. The article mentions the Thablig Jama'ath organisation which formed in 1980s and question whether it was the beginning of Muslims drifting away from the Sri Lankan society. The articles quotes a statement made by Azath Sally in 2013. "Now the time for Sri Lankan Muslims to get ready for an armed struggle is here". Quoting that statement, the article directly keeps the Muslim politicians accountable for the Easter Sunday disaster and also the article keeps the government and its politicians accountable for their inaction.<sup>150</sup>

**The training school of extremism in a disguise of a university** - Biggest Sharia University of the South Asia (by Manoj Abeydeera) - The article start by accusing former governor of Eastern province Hizbullah for making the country a firework. The article says that it's about the biggest Islamic university which is building in Punani, Batticaloa. The article claims that even for Islamic states such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan or Maldives doesn't have such a university. The article then probe back in history and discuss the Hira foundation, how the Hira foundation and Hisbullah foundation were cooperated. The article claim that Sharia University which currently under construction will train 1500 Ulama priests per year and grant the Sharia Law degree free so it seems. The article also probe into the Arab money which flow in millions for this project.<sup>151</sup>

**We planned to blast 20 places** - says the leader of the team who destroyed Buddhist statues (by Srinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) - The two main followers of Easter bomb attack mastermind Zaharan were arrested by the Police. The feature article cover the mission of capturing them and the beliefs of the extremists as the suspects revealed. As the National Thowheed Jama'ath organisation believes, there's only one god in the universe and there shouldn't be other religious believers, says the article. Going by that philosophy, they have destroyed Buddhist, Hindu and Catholic statues, the article also reports. "We were

<sup>149</sup> Virakesari, May 4, p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> Divaina, May 5, p. 15.

<sup>151</sup> Divaina, May 5, p. 19.





taught that those who are ready to kill people from other religions will go to the heaven. Our organisation has a deep hatred for Sinhala people" the article further report as the words of those suspects.<sup>152</sup>

**What are the Madrasa schools that spread extremism** (by Upul Wikramasinghe) - The article covers extensively about the Islamic education system and the accusation that leveled on the Islamic education centers saying they propagate extremism. This accusation directed mainly to Madrasas. The article quotes the former president Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and claim "Madrasa centers teach Islamic extremism and hence they should be banned". In this backdrop, the article reveals the structure and history of Islamic education in Sri Lanka and Madrasas. The article point out the main issues related to Madrasas as the lack of supervision from proper authorities. Also the article record a statement from Numan Omar Maulavi who claimed that Madrasas were there in Sri Lanka for 200 years. According to him the first Madrasa was started in Ridigama Buddhist temple as a mean to teach the Quran to Muslim kids. He added that Madrasa education is about the Quran and the Quran never advocate violence.<sup>153</sup>

**The previous government gazetted the Sharia law** - Minister Rajitha Senaratne (by Amila Malawisooriya) - The article is an interview with Minister Rajitha Senaratne. It probes the allegations that the minister interfered the search operation in his seat (Beruwala) and followed up on the accountability of the terror attacks. Then the interview shifted towards the lack of investigations on extremism in the current government and the Sharia University in Batticaloa. The minister said that the permission for building that university was granted by Dallas Allahaperuma who acted as the minister of vocational training back then. Also the minister claimed that the Sharia law was gazetted in Sri Lanka in 19th April 2013 when the previous government was in power. And he added that there were many Muslim institutional acts were passed during the previous government's term and two of those institutes accepted the Sharia law.<sup>154</sup>

**To avoid such a disaster in future** (by Sumedha Jayabahu) - The article covers the Easter Sunday attack, the measures taken after the attack and the accountability of the attack. It criticised the political actors who try to spin the situation for political gains. Then the article probe through the Muslim leadership and the accusations leveled against them regarding the association of extremists. The article paints a clean image of the president and his swift action on the aftermath of the attack and his diplomatic maneuvers. The article moves into the burka ban and state that the Muslim mullahs themselves suggested that the burka should be banned temporarily to support the

<sup>152</sup> Lankadeepa, May 5, p. 6.

<sup>153</sup> Lankadeepa, May 5, p. 14.

<sup>154</sup> Silumina, May 5, p. 10.





investigations and operations. And the article was sympathetic on the pressure the Muslim community is facing right now after Easter Sunday attacks.<sup>155</sup>

**What are these Madrasas?** (by Amila Malawisooriya) - As Madrasas became one of the hot topics the whole country talks about in the aftermath of Easter bombings, the article tries explaining about Madrasa schools and the context of those schools in Sri Lanka. The article claim that the registering of Madrasas started after the establishment of the department of Muslim religious and cultural affairs. It also claims that there are 317 Madrasas around the country and most of them are located in Ampara district, which is 42; and also there are 583 Ahamadias (Islam Dhamma schools) around the country and 277 of them are operational. However, the article reveals that the ministry of education has no responsibility over Madrasas or Ahamadias. The article talks about the curriculum in a Madrasa and state that it is compulsory to learn in a madrasa to become a Muslim priest or a Maulavi. The article then probe into the issue of studying the books which are banned in most countries because of the extremist nature of them. "Most of the Madrasas teach in the correct way but there should be a government regulation on Madrasas. But the internet spread the seeds of extremism than the Madrasas" said Nusrath Maulavi from All Ceylon Jamiathul Ulama.<sup>156</sup>

**The church's almsgiving which was given in the temple** (by Inoka Samarawikrama) - The article elaborately pursue the story of opening the Buddhist temple for Catholic ritual of an almsgiving for the dead after the Easter attack. The article interviews the incumbent of Gampaha Madagama Siri Sunandarama Darmadutha Piriwena Ven. Thummodara Samithasoma thero and the Rev. Felix Nishantha. Reverend Father explains how the incumbent thero came for the moral support after the bombing incident and arranged an event of almsgiving for the dead and blessing event for the injured at the temple, as the church was closed due to the security reasons. The united venders' association of Gampaha urban has supported the event as well.<sup>157</sup>

**‘Only united efforts will eradicate fear and insecurity’** (by Anurangi Singh and Aanya Wipulasena) - People from all religions and ethnicities gathered at Independence Square yesterday morning in support of those who were affected by the Easter Sunday attacks, to let them know they were not alone and that Sri Lankans should stand tall in the face of terrorism. Religious leaders, political leaders and leaders of the forces were present bearing a rose and a lit candle in remembrance of the lives lost. The event, organised under the banner ‘Rise up for Solidarity – unity beyond religion’, sends out a strong message that Muslims hate terrorism, according to PC Ali Sabry. Speakers at the event called for solidarity, introspection in all communities, and the maintenance of human rights even as the country fights to regain national security.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>155</sup> Silumina, May 5, p. 12.

<sup>156</sup> Silumina, May 5, p. 14.

<sup>157</sup> Silumina, May 5, p. 25.

<sup>158</sup> Sunday Observer, May 5, p. 2.



**Counter-terror must shield all communities** - This editorial piece describes the unity and solidarity in the direct aftermath of the Easter Sunday bombings, and how this extended to the security forces, as they went in pursuit of the attackers right away, with three police officers even giving their lives to the effort. The speed of investigations were due in part to the Muslim community, who cooperated fully in rooting out the extremists that had been inhabiting their neighbourhoods. The piece commends the security forces for doing their job efficiently, despite the corruption that lurks beneath, and urges all political leaders to support them in their current endeavors, instead of aggravating inter- ethnic fears to promote party loyalties. The piece concludes that given the upcoming election season, the need for rational separation of electoral politics from the national security effort cannot be overemphasised.<sup>159</sup>

**What's this Batticaloa Sharia University? The head's chair from father to son** (by Asiri Fernando and Hasan Shasully) - The article was compiled from the Sunday Times article which was published under the title 'Mystery grounds of Batticaloa Sharia Campus'. According to the article, the one who's behind the project is the Eastern province governor Hizbullah. "How can we teach Sharia law without the permission of the ministry of higher studies?" asked the minister. Yet the Sunday Times claim that they have seen the letters sent to the ministry of Higher Education and they are about the recruitment of Sharia and Islamic teachers for teaching Sharia law and Islamic studies. The matter about the curriculum of the said university is probed furthermore by the article with interviews of Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe who claimed that he didn't pass any decision when he was the education minister and the secretary of the ministry of higher education M.M.P.K. Mayadunne who claimed that the university asked for the permission for only Information Technology (IT) related courses.<sup>160</sup>

**Muslim civil society activists decry Easter attacks, express solidarity** - A joint federation of several Muslim organisations, the Sri Lanka Muslim Civil Society (SLMCS), together with a representative gathering of the Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu and Islamic clergy, security force chiefs, officers and leading civil activists, staged a three-hour long 'Solidarity Peace Vigil' at Independence Square, Colombo 7, on Saturday morning. The objective of the vigil was to vehemently and unequivocally condemn the brutal, barbaric killing and injuring of innocent people on Easter Sunday, and to vow to join hands with the security forces and other government authorities to bring back the peaceful co- existence of all communities. The occasion, themed 'Humanity Beyond Religion', was addressed by Ven. Madampagama Assaji Thera, Dr A.T. Ariyaratne of Sarvodaya, Hindu kurukkal and leading moulavis as well as Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leaders.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Sunday Observer, May 5, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> Lankadeepa, May 6, p. 12.

<sup>161</sup> Daily News, May 6, p. 2.



**Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith deserves Nobel Prize** (by T. L. Jauffer Khan and Lahiru Fernando) - Colombo Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith deserves to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year, State Minister M.S.S. Ameer Ali said. Issuing a media statement, he said the conduct of the archbishop during the Easter Sunday tragedy and its aftermath avoided further violence in the country.<sup>162</sup>

**Muslim community abhors violence** – Hakeem (by Amali Mallawaarachchi) - Proper investigations should be conducted on any substantial number of firearms or other items recovered during search operations, irrespective of where they are found, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Leader and City Planning and Water Supply Minister Rauff Hakeem said yesterday. “The Muslim community is totally against violence,” he said. Hakeem further said that places of worship should not be used to instigate any kind of attack on anybody. Minister Hakeem also pointed out that it is important to properly investigate how such offensive items came into the possession of some mosques and those responsible for bringing such items in. “It would be important for those who are involved in the search operations to be mindful of the fact that whatever items that are seized and suspects taken into custody, should be properly investigated while paying attention to the sensitivities of the innocent people. However, we should not take anything for granted. We appreciate the services rendered by the Armed Forces to uproot terrorism,” Minister Hakeem said.<sup>163</sup>

**Clash leads to curfew in Negombo** (by Rukshana Rizwie) - Tensions flared in Poruthota in Negombo when a clash between two groups of three wheel drivers ensued into a full blown fight, prompting police to impose a curfew within the Negombo division. Negombo has been one of the most devastated areas following the deadly suicide attack at the St. Sebastian’s church in Katuwapitiya. Residents say tensions have been simmering for a while in the area.<sup>164</sup>

**Deadly delusion** (by Ishara Jayawardane) – In this opinion, Daily News speaks to Professor Kalinga Tudor Silva and Dr. Neil Fernando in an attempt to understand the mentality of the Easter Sunday terrorists and their actions. “All religions condemn violence and regarding suicide as a form of killing. Killing yourself is very similar to killing another person. You are taking away your life. Many religions believe that your life does not belong to you and it belongs to God. If you kill yourself you are going against God. Suicide is not condoned by religion. I do not believe that the bombers think they are going to heaven. This is driven by ideology. That is what is driving them. It is done for a cause or ideology they believe in. The same thing was seen in LTTE suicide bombers. They had a cause and they sacrificed their lives for that. They were trained to achieve a certain objective,” explained Dr. Fernando. Masterminds are good communicators. “They may be right or wrong but people follow them because they are so good at communication. It is a

<sup>162</sup> Daily News, May 6, p. 2.

<sup>163</sup> Daily News, May 6, p. 3, 8.

<sup>164</sup> Daily News, May 6, p. 3, 8.



very powerful way of communicating ideas. Of course, they may be using religion because religion is a very emotional subject. It is something very close to your heart and communicators may interpret it in a certain way to convince people,” said Fernando.<sup>165</sup>

**No need for Sharia Universities here – MP Musthapha** (by Lahiru Fernando and Dinuli Francisco) - The individuals involved in the Easter Sunday attacks are not extremists, but terrorists. Therefore, they cannot be recognised as Muslims, former Minister and United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Faiszer Musthapha said. He said Faizer Musthapha that banning the burqa worn by Muslim women was a timely decision and everyone should cope with it as it is a matter of national security. “Covering the face at public places is a huge threat to the country’s security,” he said. Musthapha also spoke against the Sharia University being constructed in the Eastern Province and said legal action should be taken against it. “There is no need of Sharia Universities for Sri Lanka.”<sup>166</sup>

**Ministries must come under one ministry – Amaraweera** (by Raja Waidyasdekeraa) - All these religions should come under one ministry, Hambantota District Parliamentarian Mahinda Amaraweera said. The MP said that the ban on wearing the burqa should be hailed. Even Muslim leaders and politicians approved it, the MP said.<sup>167</sup>

**Fear** (by Ahilan Kadirgamar) – This editorial discusses the state of double fear that the Muslim community lives in. In addition to the fear of bombings, they live in fear of mob attacks and arbitrary detentions with security checks. The author suggests that the first step towards addressing the fear of the Muslim community is dialogue, both within the Muslim communities, as well as between different ethnic and religious communities. The author believes that it is through such dialogue that bridges can be built.<sup>168</sup>

**Tension in Negombo: Houses stoned; vehicles, businesses damaged and burnt; attacks in front of tri-forces; curfew till 7 am today** - The violence which erupted in Negombo on May 5 resulted in severe tension in the area. Several houses, shops, and vehicles were damaged during the unrest. The damaged properties belonged to the Muslim community. The tension erupted after an argument between two trishaw drivers escalated into violence. The police imposed a curfew following the unrest.<sup>169</sup>

**Don’t take revenge** - Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that he had received information that the attacks targeting Muslims in Negombo were carried out as revenge for the Easter bomb attacks. Rajapaksa condemned the attacks and urged people to refrain from indulging in violence.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Daily News, May 6, p. 7.

<sup>166</sup> Daily News, May 6, p. 8.

<sup>167</sup> Daily News, May 6, p. 9.

<sup>168</sup> Daily Mirror, May 6, p. A8.

<sup>169</sup> Uthayan, May 6, p. 1.

<sup>170</sup> Uthayan, May 6, p. 1.



**There are only 2500 mosques in the country** (by Subramaniam Nishanthan) - Minister Rauff Hakeem denied claims that there were 9000 mosques in the country, claiming that there were only 2500 mosques, of which around 300 were not registered.<sup>171</sup>

**Islam never supports terrorism** - The head of the Kinniya Jamiyyathul Ulama, A.M. Hithayathullah stated that Islam never supports terrorism and that the Muslims of Trincomalee condemn the bomb attacks. He stated that the entire Muslim community has been humiliated due to the actions of a few individuals.<sup>172</sup>

**Muslim women should refrain from wearing the burqa** (by Rajadurai Hashan) - Parliamentarian Faiszer Musthapha has urged Muslim women to refrain from wearing the burqa due to the prevalent situation in the country, and to keep in mind the national security of the nation. He stated that those who do not comply with the government's decision would be punished according to the law. He pointed out that if Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith had not provided the appropriate guidance at the right time, the country would have faced another Black July. He therefore urged Muslims to respect the cardinal by following the law.<sup>173</sup>

**Principal of Islamic school arrested** - A moulavi who ran an Islamic school without approval has been arrested in Anuradhapura, and videos containing fundamentalist material have been taken into evidence. Another Muslim individual was arrested and Rs. 500,000 was taken into evidence.<sup>174</sup>

**No religion sows violence** – Akkaraipattu Catholic priest, Rev. Nikasthan - The priest of the Akkaraipattu Catholic church, Rev. Nikasthan, has stated that all religions preach love and no religion sows hatred in the heart of man. Speaking at a meeting promoting reconciliation in Akkaraipattu, he pointed out that fundamentalist ideas in a religion are unhealthy as it could be used to trigger others to destroy a particular religion.<sup>175</sup>

**We should act in a manner that does not harm communities** – Archdeacon Samuel Ponniah (by P. Akinthan) - The archdeacon of Jaffna, Ven. Fr. Samuel Ponniah has urged everyone to act in a manner that does not harm communities. Speaking at a media briefing in Jaffna, he stated that the Easter bomb attacks had affected the Christians. He further stated that investigations had revealed the involvement of Islamist fundamentalists in the attack. However, he urged people not to look at the entire Islamic community with suspicion, as not all of them are extremists. He added that not all of them are supportive of such acts.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Thinakaran, May 6, p. 2.

<sup>172</sup> Thinakaran, May 6, p. 9.

<sup>173</sup> Virakesari, May 6, p. 3.

<sup>174</sup> Virakesari, May 6, p. 6.

<sup>175</sup> Virakesari, May 6, p. 8.

<sup>176</sup> Virakesari, May 6, p. 16.



**Portraying the entire Muslim community as terrorists is unacceptable** – Akkaraipattu Municipal Council Opposition Leader Zulfiqar - Opposition Leader of the Akkaraipattu Municipal Council, A.M. Zulfiqar has stated that portraying the entire Muslim community as terrorists following the Easter attacks is unacceptable. He stated that the bomb attacks on Easter Sunday are unjustifiable in the eyes of all humane individuals. He further stated that the entire Muslim community condemned the terrorist attacks carried out by Zahran, and a group linked to him, on Easter Sunday. He stated that the entire Muslim community should not be perceived as terrorists based on the actions of a few individuals.<sup>177</sup>

**Damaging Buddhist statues in Mawanalla:** two of Zaharan's followers were named as suspects (by Nimanthi Ranasinghe and Saman Wijeya Bandara) - The criminal investigation department has informed the Mawanalla magistrate that two of the main followers of Mohamed Zaharan will be named as the chief suspects of the incident of damaging Buddhist statues in Mawanalla and nearby areas. The CID also informed that there is no way of finishing the investigations soon as the incident is very complicated itself.<sup>178</sup>

**Ramadan begins: a limit for the loudspeakers in mosques** - (by Ariyaratne Ranabahu) - Ramadan month has begun according to the Colombo main mosque. The director of the department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs M.R.M. Malik said that all the mosques were informed to not to use loudspeakers to carry the sound of religious practices outside the mosques. Also informed to limit the time for perform the religious affairs at night as much as possible, the director added.<sup>179</sup>

**I won't let Muslims to be harmed - His eminence Cardinal** (by Norman Palihawadane) - His eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith said in a press conference that he wouldn't let any harm to come to Muslim community on the issue of Easter Sunday attack as long as he is in the title.<sup>180</sup>

**Do not use the loudspeakers in sound** - Department of Muslim religious and cultural affairs notify (by Sirimantha Rathnasekara) - The department of Muslim Religious and Cultural affairs informed all the Muslim religious places to not to use loudspeakers to carry the sound of religious practices outside the mosques. Also the department informed to limit the time for perform the religious affairs at night as much as possible.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Virakesari, May 6, p. 17.

<sup>178</sup> Lankadeepa, May 7, p. 10.

<sup>179</sup> Lankadeepa, May 7, p. 10.

<sup>180</sup> Divaina, May 7, p. 1, p. 4.

<sup>181</sup> Divaina, May 7, p. 1, p. 4.



**No to racist politics** - This editorial condemns the bomb attacks, stating that the attacks specifically targeted Christians. The editorial also stated that certain politicians sowed the seeds of racial hatred in the minds of the people and the youth, who are misled by their propaganda. The editorial called for the end of such politics and urged leaders to encourage coexistence.<sup>182</sup>

**The Mullaitivu District Court judge ruled that Buddhist and Hindu devotees could continue to worship in Mullaitivu, Chemmalai, Neeraviyadi** - The court ruled that worship activities could be conducted without hindrance. The development activities could be carried out through the relevant local government authority since it has been confirmed that a Pillayar temple had been located for a long time within the premises of a Buddhist temple.<sup>183</sup>

**Don't raise your hands against Muslims, cardinal urges all visiting Negombo mosque (by Robert Antony)** - The archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, has urged people not to raise their hands against Muslims. He made this call when he visited Negombo following the clashes in Poruthota, Negombo on May 5. The cardinal urged people to refrain from obstructing the day to day lives of Muslims, while also calling for the Christians and Muslims to be united.<sup>184</sup> Several buildings including a mosque and houses attacked in Negombo - Several buildings, including a mosque and 10 houses, were damaged due to violence in Poruthota, Negombo on May 5. Mobs had entered houses and in addition to damaging the property, they had also looted valuables, including jewelry and money. Several vehicles were also damaged in the violence. The violence was the result of an argument between two groups. A curfew was imposed in the area soon afterwards. However, witnesses pointed out that the mobs continued to attack despite the curfew.<sup>185</sup>

**Muslim people have the greatest need to eradicate terrorism** - The Minister of City Planning, Water Supply and Higher Education, Rauff Hakeem stated that it is Muslims who need Islamic fundamentalism to be eradicated the most. He pointed out that the terrorist activities were carried out by a small number of people and it was unlikely that they had spread to other parts of the country. He said that more than other communities, the Muslim community was determined to eradicate this small group and cooperate with the police and security forces.<sup>186</sup> No one should encourage violence - This editorial states that the Easter Sunday attacks targeted Christians congregated in churches. Further, the editorial states that the government has taken several measures to prevent violence following the Easter

<sup>182</sup> Thinakaran, May 7, p. 4.

<sup>183</sup> Uthayan, May 7, p. 9.

<sup>184</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 1.

<sup>185</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 3.





bombings, adding that blocking social media was one such move. However, while discussing the violence in Negombo, in which several buildings including a mosque were attacked, the editorial emphasised that not all Muslims should be viewed in a suspicious manner. The piece also stressed the importance of not making the same mistakes that were made in the past, which led the country into war.<sup>187</sup>

**Is it possible to see an end to international terrorism?** (by P. Manikkavasagam) - This piece discusses the spread of international terrorism around the globe, and explains the type of terrorism that has entered Sri Lanka. The author states that the Islamic State aims to instill Islamic fundamentalism among Muslims worldwide, and kills those who do not subscribe to their views. The piece also states that the IS is more dangerous than Al-Qaeda and is using technology to its advantage. The article states that Sri Lanka is also a part of the international terrorism network and the only way out is for rulers, politicians, religious leaders, civil societies, student bodies, and the general public to unite.<sup>188</sup>

**Do not create confusion by spreading rumors among the people, cardinal requests after Negombo incident** (by M. Manochithra) - The archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, has urged the public to refrain from spreading false information and rumors regarding the incident in Negombo on social media without confirming the truth. He said the incident had taken place following an argument between two individuals. He urged people to avoid unnecessary conflicts with the Muslim community.<sup>189</sup>

**Religious activities can be carried out without any hindrance at the Pillayar temple, Mullaitivu District Judge rules** (by K. Kumanan) - The Mullaitivu District Court judge S. Lenin Kumar has ruled that devotees can continue to worship at the Pillayar temple situated in the Mullaitivu, Chemmalai, Neeraviyadi region. The court ruled that worship activities could be conducted without hindrance and the development activities could be carried out through the relevant local government authority since it has been confirmed that a Pillayar temple has been located within the premises of a Buddhist temple for a long time.<sup>190</sup>

**Mawanella statue vandalism: CID questions five including two aides of Zahran (M.F.M. Basher)** - The Criminal Investigation Department has named two individuals, Mohammed Ibrahim Shahid Abdullah and Mohammed Ibrahim Shadiq Abdullah, close aides of Easter bomb attack mastermind Zahran Hashim, in connection with vandalising Buddha statues in Mawanella. The two suspects have been taken into custody and are being questioned by the CID along with three other individuals.<sup>191</sup>

**Zahran preached that only Muslims should live in this world – Chief suspect Ibrahim Shadiq Abullah** - One of the main suspects arrested in connection with the

<sup>187</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 4.

<sup>188</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 4.

<sup>189</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 8.

<sup>190</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 8.

<sup>191</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 11.





Easter bombings, Ibrahim Shadiq Abdullah, has told the police that Zahran had been removed from the leadership of Thowheed Jamath, but had forcibly regained the position a few days before the Easter bomb attacks. Abdullah is one of the suspects arrested in connection with the bomb attacks. Reportedly, he has also been connected to the incident last year where Buddhist statues were vandalised in Mawanella. Abdullah had further stated that Zahran preached that only Muslims could live in this world, and those who volunteer to kill people of other religions would go to heaven.<sup>192</sup>

**Appointing committees for Madrasa schools is like giving the stolen good to the mother of the thief** - Ven. Omaple Sobhitha thero claim (by Nimala Kodithuwakku) - There is an attempt to hand over the administration of Madrasa schools to another party, says Ven. Omaple Sobhitha thero. The Venerable thero stated that the government should act swiftly to hand over the administration of Madrasas under the ministry of education instead of another party. "No need to appoint committees and probe through arguments regarding the Madrasas. What should be done is taking Madrasa schools under the Ministry of Education which take the responsibility of the education of citizens according to the constitution".<sup>193</sup>

**Arabic schools building everywhere** (by Namini Wijedasa) - This article is a translation of the article which was published in Sunday Times under the title of 'Unravelling growing Arabisation'. The article says that in the last decade in Sri Lanka, there are Madrasas and Arabic schools bloomed thousands and they are propagating a more 'holy' Islam that imported from the Western Asia which goes against the South Asian traditions. The feature article pursues this angle with statistics and numbers extracted from sources. The article claims that there are 1669 Madrasas and 317 Arabic schools according to a commentator from the department of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs. The article pursue on how the funds for those schools are pumped from foreign countries including Saudi Arabia and how there are many Madrasas under several Islamic sects and how they all compete with each other. And the article note that the Sri Lankan Muslim community started to change after many people started to leave for Gulf jobs and when they return, they contribute to propagate the Wahhabism and the ideas of Thowheed organisations, according to Muslim scholars. And those changes were first appeared in Eastern province according to the article.<sup>194</sup>

**Muslims attack to a propaganda work of Thowheed Jama'ath in a Matale mosque** - A clash between two Muslim groups: 6 arrested (by Sujith Hewajulige, Nalaka Sanjeewa Dahanayake and Harhsana Thushara Silva) - An unrest situation emerged as a group of Muslims broke-in to a religious place belong to Thowheed Jama'ath in Matale and try to attack. Then the group of Muslims informed about the Thowheed Jama'ath

<sup>192</sup> Virakesari, May 7, p. 11.

<sup>193</sup> Lankadeepa, May 8, p. 6.

<sup>194</sup> Lankadeepa, May 8, p. 8.



members to the police and the police arrested 6 Thowheed Jama'ath members with posters and name boards.<sup>195</sup>

**Radicalism has no place in Islam** - The entire Sri Lankan Muslim community condemns radicalism, which perpetrates violence and is not mentioned anywhere in Islam, City Planning, Water Supply and Higher Education Minister Rauf Hakeem said. The entire Muslim community is prepared to wipe out this radicalism by providing support and information to the armed forces and police, he said.<sup>196</sup>

**Religions should underpin unity and peace** (by Augustine Fernando) - One good thing that has come out of this historic evil (radicalism) is that the religious leaders have come together and collaborate with each other for mutual protection and the safety of the country. Leaders of all religions are appreciative of the guidance given to the Catholic people by the cardinal, who reminded them that they should follow the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Due to the forgiveness and the impressive restraint of Catholics, no retaliatory or vengeful actions of any sort took place and a peaceful calm prevailed. Though it is the Catholic churches that have been targeted, Buddhists and Muslims cannot think that they are immune from any attack. The ancient colossal Bamiyan figures of the Buddha, carved in the rocks in Afghanistan centuries ago, which were monumental religious, sculptural and artistic treasures, were destroyed by extremist fanatics of the same sort that attacked the Christians on Easter Sunday. All need to be circumspect.<sup>197</sup>

**Madrasas must be monitored** - There must be a comprehensive monitoring mechanism on the curriculum of madrasas and Muslim religious schools, as the brainwashing of Muslim youth for Muslim fundamentalism is done secretly in the guise of teaching the Arabic language and Islam, Mr. Dayasiri Jayasekara said.<sup>198</sup>

**Let's make the whole country a Vesak zone: Champika** (by Sheain Fernandopulle) - Let's celebrate Vesak in a more devotional manner, wishing those who died following the Easter Sunday terror attacks would attain nirvana. Megapolis and Western Development Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka invited the public to make the whole country a Vesak zone, instead of holding separate Vesak zones.<sup>199</sup>

**Do not push Muslims towards terrorists, all will be arrested in three days** (by R. Yasi and M.R.M. Waseem) - President Maithripala warned people not to push Muslims towards extremism due to unwarranted suspicion caused by Islamic terrorism. He stated that this was similar to the manner in which Tamils were pushed towards the wrong side by labelling them as LTTE. He pointed out that all suspects connected to the Easter bombings will be arrested in three days.<sup>200</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Lankadeepa, May 8, p. 11.

<sup>196</sup> Daily News, May 8, p. 3.

<sup>197</sup> Daily News, May 8, p. 7.

<sup>198</sup> Daily Mirror, May 8, p. A3.

<sup>199</sup> Daily Mirror, May 8, p. A6.

<sup>200</sup> Virakesari, May 8, p. 1.



**Some are trying to eradicate Muslim culture; Muslims will be pushed towards a different direction if this continues – Minister Rauff Hakeem** (by R. Yasi and M.R.M. Waseem) - Minister Rauff Hakeem in parliament stated that some were trying to use the current situation to destroy and eradicate Muslim culture. He stated that this was an unreasonable course of action based on the conduct of a small group of people. He pointed out that Muslims were cooperating with the police and security forces with the utmost patience despite challenges. He warned that if such discrimination continues, Muslims will be pushed towards a different direction.<sup>201</sup>

**Depicting an entire community as extremists is unacceptable** - State Minister Ali Zahir Moulana stated that an entire community cannot be held responsible for acts that were carried out by a few individuals. He pointed out that certain media institutions and social media platforms were attempting to blame an entire community for the acts of a few individuals and stated that this is unacceptable.<sup>202</sup>

**Batticaloa University is not an institute that grant Sharia degrees** - The creator of the university, the Eastern province governor Hisbulla (by A.At.M. Gunananda) - The Eastern province governor say that the yet to open Batticaloa university is not an institute that grant Sharia degrees and they haven't signed any agreement with any Arab Islamic university. This is in a statement issued by the governor. The statement also claim that mainly this university will enroll students for the degree programs in Information Technology (IT), , Management and Agriculture fields, and for student exchange programs the university has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Kingdom (UK) and Malaysia. The statement also claims that Punani area was selected for the University for the reason that it has easy access to students from all the ethnicities and religions including Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Christians.<sup>203</sup>

**Thowheed Jama'ath in a clash with Ukuwela Muslim people** - 5 terrorists arrested (by Wijeyani Edirisinghe) - The police say that the terrorists from National Thowheed Jama'ath have started having clashes with Muslim people. This clash happened in Matale Warakamulla area. The ordinary Muslims in the area have put up a board belong to their religious beliefs and several who allegedly connected with Thowheed Jama'ath have tried to remove this. That erupted to a clash and the security forces with the Police have suppressed the situation before it span out of control. The reports say that even before Thowheed Jama'ath terrorists have had clashes with ordinary Muslims by using the Islam the ordinary Muslims practice in a wrong way.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Virakesari, May 8, p. 1.

<sup>202</sup> Virakesari, May 8, p. 15.

<sup>203</sup> Dinamina, May 9, p. 5.

<sup>204</sup> Dinamina, May 9, p. 6.



**Five held over NTJ, Muslim clash in Matale** (by Wijayani Edirisinghe and Lahiru Fernando) - Five suspects said to be members of the banned National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) were arrested subsequent to a clash between two groups in Wakaramura, Matale on Tuesday night. The incident had occurred between a group of Muslims and the said NTJ suspects when the members had attempted to remove a board fixed by the Muslim community in the area.<sup>205</sup>

**Muslims will help Security Forces defeat extremist terrorism** – Minister Kabir - Minister Hashim pointed out that the mainstream Muslim community has courageously come forward to pledge their full support to the security forces in battling extremist terrorism in the country.<sup>206</sup>

**“Muslims should voluntarily abandon face veil”** (by Yohan Perera and Ajith Siriwardana) - Muslims should take a voluntary decision to refrain from wearing the face veil and to do away with the Islamic law, MP Dilan Perera said. It is better if Islamic religious leaders and Muslim parliamentarians discuss giving up certain garments such as the face veil and abolishing Muslim courts without waiting for the government to do so. This country should only have one judicial system.<sup>207</sup>

**Muslim community under pressure for de-radicalisation** (by Kelum Bandara) - De-radicalisation is a topic that surfaced in the immediate aftermath of the serial bombings. In what appeared to be a response to the call for de-radicalisation of local Muslims, the federation of civil society organisations in Kattankudy called for a meeting of the Muslim moulavis assigned to various mosques in the area and requested them to preach against the dangers of radicalisation during the month of Ramadan. The civil society leaders asked the clerics to devote their sermons after jumma prayers every Friday to wean away people, particularly youth, from their radical views. Likewise, the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) requested Muslim women to do away with their niqab voluntarily as a gesture of goodwill for ongoing moves to de-radicalise. The federation of civil society organisations in Kattankudy has also passed on some information to the security authorities about a preacher with radical views, affiliated to the organisation called ‘Dharul Athaar Adh Dhaviyyah’.<sup>208</sup>

**Muslims have been severely affected** – **All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama** (by N. Thanuja)- The All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama stated that Muslims have been severely affected due to the mistrust of Muslims that has evolved following the bomb attacks. Media Secretary of the ACJU, Sheikh Fazil Farook stated that Islam does not condone violence and that Muslims had continuously warned authorities of those involved in the attacks for a long time.<sup>209</sup>

**Muslims who cooperate against terrorism are under pressure** - This article is a compilation of comments made by Minister Rauff Hakeem during a press conference.

<sup>205</sup> Daily News, May 9, p. 6.

<sup>206</sup> Daily News, May 9, p. 12.

<sup>207</sup> Daily Mirror, May 9, p. A3.

<sup>208</sup> Daily Mirror, May 9, p. A9.

<sup>209</sup> Virakesari, May 9. p. 1.



Hakeem points out that the Easter bombings were carried out by a group of individuals who did not have any support from the Muslim people or Muslim politicians. However, he pointed out that the Muslim people were being portrayed as criminals due to the acts carried out by a small group. In addition, he also pointed out that Muslims were cooperating with the police and security forces to eradicate terrorism by maintaining law and order despite the pressures.<sup>210</sup>

**The involvement of religious leaders is responsible for controlling religious and racial tension -** The independent art union has stated that the involvement of religious leaders is responsible for controlling religious and racial tension. The union said that while the religious leaders were at the forefront to douse the situation, the political leaders were occupied with blaming each other.<sup>211</sup>

**The purpose of Muslims having large amount of weapons is serious by (Rajadurai Hashan) -** Parliamentarian Vasudeva Nanayakkara has stated that the purpose of Muslims having large amounts of weapons has to be taken seriously. He stated that a large amount of weapons had been recovered during search operations in the east and several parts of the country.<sup>212</sup>

**Fear of Islam should never be allowed to take root in Sri Lanka -** Former Ambassador of the United States to Sri Lanka Robert Blake has stated that an environment where Islamophobia is able to take root should not be fostered in Sri Lanka. He pointed out that such a fear was prevalent in India and the US, but should not be allowed in Sri Lanka. He further pointed out that instead of politicians, faith should be put in democratic institutions.<sup>213</sup>

**Legal action should be taken against Al-Mustafa university (by N. Thanuja) -** The head of the Hindu Council, Nara D. Arunkanth has claimed that 500 Tamil students from the Uva Province who had sat for their GCE Ordinary Level examinations were being taught the Quran, the Arabic language, and Iranian history at the Al-Mustafa university and urged authorities to take legal action against the institution. He claimed that the university, which is a branch of Al-Mustafa University in Iran, had been brainwashing students and teaching them the above subjects.<sup>214</sup> Ensure the safety of Muslims, MP Imran urges government - Parliamentarian Imran has urged President Maithripala Sirisena to ensure the safety of Muslim people. He made this request in a letter to the president following the violence in Negombo which targeted

<sup>210</sup> Virakesari, May 9, p. 4.

<sup>211</sup> Virakesari, May 9, p. 5.

<sup>212</sup> Virakesari, May 9, p. 5.

<sup>213</sup> Virakesari, May 9, p. 8.

<sup>214</sup> Virakesari, May 9, p. 15.



Muslims. He pointed out that Muslims would indulge in prayers in the evenings due to the Ramadan period and therefore, their safety should be ensured at this time.<sup>215</sup>

**Special meeting at the Mayilangarachchai Vihara** - A special meeting was held at the Mayilangarachchai Vihara with the participation of Buddhist monks, Muslim religious leaders and members of the police. The meeting focused on building racial harmony among communities following the Easter bombings.<sup>216</sup>

**Sri Lankan identity enshrined in every religion** – PM - The Sri Lankan identity is enshrined in every religion in the country and we will not allow extremism to destroy this national identity, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said. He said that measures should be taken to protect the national identity enshrined in every religion.<sup>217</sup>

**We wouldn't let the extremists to suppress the Sri Lankan features in religions** - PM says in Kandy (by Anjula Mahitha Weeraratne, Chamil Rupasinghe and J.A.L.Jayasinghe) "The Sri Lankan features in all the Sri Lankan religions should be protected and if the extremism try to suppress those, the government will take all the necessary action against it" said the Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe in Kandy. The prime minister expressed those ideas to media after seeing the most venerable chief prelates.<sup>218</sup>

**Work in a disciplined way when searching the Muslim mosques - orders to the security forces from the government** (by Saman Gamage) - Work in disciplined way when searching the Muslim mosques, the government issued an order and with that a list of conditions have issued to the forces, the police and all the security chiefs. This decision has been made due to the idea carried by Muslims in all the social layers including in politics, that the Islamic culture is getting harmed when the searching of Islamic mosques are happening. The security forces found edged weapons such as swords and knives and other equipment related to violence from the mosques which were searched recently.<sup>219</sup>

**Can't let extremism to destroy the identity of religions** - PM says after seeing the chief prelates (by Asela Kuruluwansa, Indika Polkotuwa) - All the religions in Sri Lanka have the Sri Lankan identity and we should protect it without letting the extremism to destroy it, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe claimed after seeing the chief prelates. Prime Minister also claimed that the government will take every step to uproot extremism.<sup>220</sup>

**Country must have one legal system – Thalatha** - The government will have to bring in common laws that will have to be followed by all the people of this country, irrespective of their race or religion very soon, Justice and Prison Reforms Minister Thalatha

<sup>215</sup> Virakesari, May 9, p. 18.

<sup>216</sup> Virakesari, May 9, p. 18.

<sup>217</sup> Daily News, May 10, p. 1, 8.

<sup>218</sup> Lankadeepa, May 10, p. 8.

<sup>219</sup> Divaina, May 10, p. 1, p. 4.

<sup>220</sup> Dinamina, May 10, p. 1, p. 6.



Athukorale said in parliament. “All women have lost their freedom and are inconvenienced because of the attire of Muslim women. It poses a grave threat to national security. It cannot be stopped by imposing laws. Muslim religious leaders themselves must take measures to implement a suitable mechanism,” said Athukorale.<sup>221</sup>

**Muslim community is being harassed after terror attack** (by Chaturange Samarawickrama) - While vehemently condemning the Easter terror attack, the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) said that it is unfortunate that the Muslim community is being harassed and targeted because of the actions of a few individuals. “We Muslims, as responsible citizens extended our full support to the security forces to identify the culprits who were involved in this attack. We have claimed previously that those who were engaged in terror attack on innocent civilians in the name of Islam do not belong to us and we consider them to be people who have committed crimes against humanity. We even did not accept their bodies for burial in our grave yard,” moulavi Rizwe said. “We take this opportunity to thank the Muslim community for conducting themselves as responsible citizens by supporting the security measures of the defence mechanism,” he said.<sup>222</sup>

**Security checks in 356 Muslim villages in the Kurunegala District** (by M.F.M. Basheer) - Search operations and security checks were carried out in 356 Muslim villages in the Kurunegala District alone. 152 individuals were arrested in these operations, with 44 being detained and 108 being remanded. In addition, search operations were carried out in several parts of the country during which several individuals were arrested, and knives were recovered. <sup>223</sup>

**All forms of extremism should be eradicated** (by Rajadurai Hashan) - Minister Rauff Hakeem has stated that all forms of terrorism should be eradicated from the country. He pointed out that the intervention of religious leaders had prevented conflicts between communities. He further stressed that Muslims never supported extremism.<sup>224</sup>

**Why weren't calls to boycott Muslim shops given attention – JVP MP** (by R. Yasi and M.R.M. Waseem) - JVP MP Sunil Handunnetti questioned why adequate attention was not given to calls made to boycott Muslim shops. Addressing parliament, Handunnetti stated that there were rumors circulated to boycott Muslim owned shops, and that people were avoiding these shops. He pointed out that such a trend was not healthy for the country. He stated that a single community should not be connected to the attacks.<sup>225</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Daily News, May 10, p. 10.

<sup>222</sup> Daily Mirror, May 10, p. A1, A4.

<sup>223</sup> Virakesari, May 10, p. 1.

<sup>224</sup> Virakesari, May 10, p. 1.

<sup>225</sup> Virakesari, May 10, p. 2.





**We called for Zahran's arrest in 2017 - Abdul Jawath Valiullah Trust organisation** - The Secretary of the Abdul Jawath Valiullah Trust organisation, K.R.M. Zahlan stated that they had called for the arrest of Zahran, the mastermind behind the Easter attacks, in 2017. He pointed out that they realised that his preachings could trigger tensions between Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists and would be a threat to the sovereignty of Sri Lanka.<sup>226</sup>

**Muslim civil organisations meet president (by ARA Fareel)** - President Maithripala Sirisena has stated that a circular will be issued to allow Muslim women in the public sector to wear the hijab. He made this assurance at a meeting with representatives of Muslim civil organisations.<sup>227</sup>

Uva Provincial Council Minister, Senthil Thondaman has stated that it was unacceptable to permit the Iranian Al Mustafa International University to teach the Arabic language to Uva Province students. He said that their main objective is to spread the religion of Islam and the Arabic language all over the world. They also aim to defend the religion of Islam, and its traditions and culture.<sup>228</sup>

**The swords recovered from mosques are all alike!** - Parliamentarian Shehan Semasinghe told parliament that the swords recovered from mosques during search operations are all alike. He pointed out that therefore, it was important to probe whether there was a bigger plan behind having these swords. The police and security forces recovered many swords during search operations carried out in mosques following the Easter bomb attacks.<sup>229</sup>

**A sign of an ideological danger** (by M.S.M. Ayub) - The article offers an analysis on how the religiously extremist group rose within the Sri Lankan Muslim community. The article identifies a significant difference between the war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the extremists' ideologies. As the extremists' ideology is not based on long term and collective goals but attaining heaven by killing everybody who are not them. And the most dangerous part is that there is no easy ways identify terrorists from the ordinary Muslims. Words like Thowheed Jama'ath can be used in day to day religious practices of ordinary Muslims. Even the terrorists go to the same mosques. Even a burka or a huge beard wouldn't be an indicator to identify terrorists. Even ordinary Muslims might have those. Interestingly, the photos that published as terrorists do not match above specifications as well. Even having education in a Madrasa is not an indicator to identify terrorists as all the Maulavis in the country have had Madrasa education. With this blurred line between terrorist and ordinary Muslims, the writer argue that the Muslim leaders and the community should come to the frontline to fight against the terrorism as terrorism is a ticking bomb that will harm Muslims as well. Then the article

<sup>226</sup> Virakesari, May 10, p. 8.

<sup>227</sup> Virakesari, May 10, p. 11.

<sup>228</sup> Virakesari, May 10, p. 11.

<sup>229</sup> Uthayan, May 10, p. 1.





explain how the ordinary Sri Lankan Muslim community separated from the Sri Lankan community slowly and how the seeds of extreme religious ideologies planted in the Sri Lankan soil. Having said that, throwing the ordinary Muslims into the pile of terrorists is also not the way to eradicate terrorism from the country, the writer argues. He claims that with time and enough pressure on the Muslim community, the victims of that pressure will tend to sympathise the cause of the terrorists. Hence he says that eradicating the terrorism is a national project and Muslim community should be in the frontline of that.<sup>230</sup>

**No religious programs that propagate hate and extremism** - a guideline to the custodians of mosques from Minister Haleem - Minister of Muslim affairs M.H.A. Haleem issued a guideline to the custodians of mosques and it says that there shouldn't be any program that propagate or promote hate or any kind of extremism and it also say that if such a thing happen, the custodian panel should be held responsible for that. Furthermore, the guideline advice to record Jumma or any sermon in a mosque and direct it to the Ministry of Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs.<sup>231</sup>

**Do not look at every Muslim as a terrorist; Give information about terrorists if want to live in a free country:** President says at Saindamaradu - In a meeting with Muslim youth at Saindamaradu, the President said that only the few who are connected to the Easter bombings will be called the terrorist but not the other Muslims. The article elaborately cover his speech compared the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) situation as well with the extremist group and ordinary Muslims. He further mentioned that the decision to ban the burka was taken after talking with the Islam religious leaders. He specifically mentioned in two occasions that ordinary Muslims should not be considered as terrorists.<sup>232</sup>

**Burka is banned in Matugama** (by Anura Jayasekara) - In Matugama Pradeshiya Sabha, a resolution to ban the burka tabled and passed with no votes against it. The chairman Meril Munasinghe proposed that considering the critical time of the country. "The government has banned the burka under the emergency regulations. We should ban the burka within the Matugama Pradeshiya Sabha domain to ensure the security of citizens" said the deputy chairman Lalith Ranasinghe.<sup>233</sup>

**All should learn to share the world** (Rev. Augustine Fernando, Badulla Diocese) - This article discusses the situation following the bomb attacks while stressing the importance of harmony and coexistence among all communities. However, the piece points out that

<sup>230</sup> Lankadeepa, May 11, p. 4.

<sup>231</sup> Lankadeepa, May 11, p. 14.

<sup>232</sup> Divaina, May 11, p. 9.

<sup>233</sup> Divaina, May 11, p. 13.



amidst the negativity, the unity among religious leaders and their encouragement for the people to maintain coexistence was a positive note.<sup>234</sup>

**Madrasa schools should come under the Education Ministry** - Harsha (by Camelia Nathaniel and Sandasen Marasinghe) - 'One country, one law' should be the policy of the country, said Economic Reforms and Public Distribution non-cabinet Minister Harsha De Silva in parliament. He stated that madrasa schools should come under the Education Ministry like all other education institutions in the country.<sup>235</sup>

**GSLF requests govt. to ban Wahabi teaching** - The Global Sri Lankan Forum (GSLF), an organisation of Sri Lankans domiciled in different parts of the world, requested that the government ban Wahhabi teachings, among other activities, in responding to the present security crisis confronting the country.<sup>236</sup>

**The urgent need today is to alleviate the fear among Muslims** - Minister Rauff Hakeem has stated that the Muslim community has been targeted after the Easter bombings. During a meeting with US Ambassador Aleya Teplita, Hakeem stated that the immediate need is to alleviate the fear which is prevalent among Muslims.<sup>237</sup>

**Madhu church, Nallur Kandaswamy, and Vattapalai Amman temple could be targeted** (by R. Yasi and M.R.M. Waseem) - TNA MP Selvam Adaikkalanathan has stated that the Madhu church in Mannar, the Nallur kovil in Jaffna and the Vattapalai Amman temple could be targeted, and asked for protection to be provided for the three places of worship.<sup>238</sup>

**Do not ignore** (by Robert Antony) - This piece discusses the violence that was reported in Negombo where several Muslims were affected. The article states that an entire community cannot be held responsible for acts that were carried out by a few individuals with fundamentalist ideologies. The commentary highlights President Maithripala Sirisena's statement in parliament where he urged that all Muslims should not be identified as terrorists because of a few individuals. Likewise, the archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, has also urged people not to raise their hands against Muslims. The piece urges people to accommodate Muslims and make them feel accepted at this time.<sup>239</sup>

**The cardinal who prevented grave danger** (by M.D. Lucias) - The piece discusses the violence in Negombo during which several Muslims were injured and Muslim owned buildings were damaged. The article discusses the role played by the archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, in controlling the situation. The archbishop, who had

<sup>234</sup> Thinakaran, May 10, p. 6.

<sup>235</sup> Daily News, May 11, p. 1, 6.

<sup>236</sup> Daily Mirror, May 11, p. A6.

<sup>237</sup> Virakesari, May 11, p. 1.

<sup>238</sup> Virakesari, May 11, p. 1.

<sup>239</sup> Virakesari, May 11, p. 14.



visited the area as well as the mosque, met with Muslim religious representatives. While at the mosque, the cardinal urged people not to raise their hands against Muslims. The piece states that such an act had prevented chaos, of even bigger proportions, that could have stemmed from the unrest in Negombo.<sup>240</sup>

**Drilling the Belly** - The editorial focus on the aftermath of Easter bombing and Muslims' behavior with certain emergency law regulations. The editorial claims that Muslim women don't care about the ban of the face cover. It says that the Muslim women say that only their husbands should see their body. The editorial probes further into the many Thowheed Jama'ath organisations, many mosques in Kantankudy and the Sharia University. Then it questions the Muslim politicians and how they have earned that much money.<sup>241</sup>

**Sterile tablets found within swords, daggers and pistols games** (by Tharanga Rathnaweera) - The article observe the incident of arresting two drug paddling Muslims and finding a lot of birth control medicine, sex stimulant pills, abortion pills and recreational drug pills worth over four million rupees according to the report. Following up with this incident, the article interviews the president of all Ceylon Canteen Owners Association Asela Sampath and claim that most of the racketeers of the country are Muslim. Furthermore quoting him the article say that this is a plot to sterile the Sinhala community and the Ampara sterile pills incident is true. Then the article contacted Dr.H.M.H. Rumi, the chairman of the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation of Sri Lanka for a comment. He claimed that those allegations are attempts to slid mud at him and the government and there's no sterile pill according to medical science. He also claimed that there could be yet unknown methods that can sterile a person hence those so called sterile pills should test scientifically and see what are the constituents of those. As an end note the article claim that those sterile pills and recreational pills are imported to this country by Muslim racketeers and it's not for Muslim people but to destroy the Sinhala and Tamil people in the country.<sup>242</sup>

**Matale Muslim people come to war against Thowheed Jama'ath** (by Sarath Eraminigammana) - The article pursue the detailed incident of the clash between ordinary Muslims and members of Thowheed Jama'ath in Matale, Warakamura. According to the article, a praying center of Thowheed Jama'ath started in the upstairs of a house near the traditional Thablic Jama'ath mosque in 2014 and the traditional Muslims in the area were against it. With the time the Thowheed Jama'ath center started promotions and that also instigated the anger of other Muslims in the area. The article say that the clash happened recently was a culmination of that anger and antipathy. The

<sup>240</sup> Virakesari, May 11, p. 20.

<sup>241</sup> Sunday Divaina, May 12, p. 4.

<sup>242</sup> Sunday Divaina, May 12, p. 8.



article further explains the division within the Muslim sects and the history of those sects.<sup>243</sup> Why collected swords inside mosques? (by Nimala Kodituwakku) - The article pursue the news of finding swords and knives from several Muslim mosques and it showcase two interviews with Ven. Omalpe Sobhitha thero and the youth affairs secretary of All Ceylon Jamiathul Ulama Arkam Nuramith Maulavi. "Weapons are coming out of Muslim mosques and Islam leaders say that they are not ours but owned by Thowheed Jama'ath organisation. We don't know who Thowheed is and who is not. We are in a situation that having a dilemma about who to trust and not to trust. Muslim Maulavi and Jamiathul Ulama members say that they are peaceful and innocent. But unfortunately there is a situation that we cannot take their word on it" the Ven. Sobhitha thero claimed. The venerable also claimed that the Muslim community should identify the terrorism and reveal that. "Swords were found from mosques. Even we can't imagine why and how those swords came to those mosques or who's behind it. But the security forces found swords lots from two or three mosques. From other mosques they found small knives which used for kitchen works and stuff. But still even finding a lot of swords from the Slave Island mosque is a serious crime. But even we are not aware that who's behind that" claimed the Arkam Nuramith Maulavi.<sup>244</sup>

**Just like all the others, Muslims too live in fear** (by Rekha Nilukshi Herath) - The article cover the post Easter Sunday bombing situation around the country and focus on the isolated violent incidents that targeted Muslims and the widespread fear about the Muslims in general. The writer mentions that there are many incidents that people were harassed unfairly for being Muslims. To showcase those incidents, the writer share experiences of few people including N.M. Ameen, Maulavi Muneer, Aziz Nizardeen and Larina Abdul Huq. Those incidents expand from harassing woman by forcing them to remove their hijab, refusing receiving or granting services to Muslims, arresting Muslims based on misunderstandings and hate speech. One incident was preventing a teacher who wore hijab from entering the school in Puwakpitiya. Another incident was arresting and detaining of a Muslim from the educational department for criticising Islamic State (IS) in Tamil language because of a misunderstanding. Overall the article covers the widespread suspicions against Muslims and widespread fear of being discriminated among Muslims.<sup>245</sup>

**Islamophobia and the Muslim problem** (by Jayadeva Uyangoda) The article scrutinised the widespread Islamophobia within Sri Lanka, the Islamophobia worldwide and the background of it. The writer mention that Islamophobia or the Muslim phobia of Sri Lanka didn't arise right after the Easter bombings but it was already there. The writer pointed out how people react angrily if someone suggests that there should be moderate ideas about the Muslims and the issue of Muslims in Sri Lanka. The writer claims that

<sup>243</sup> Divaina, May 12, p. 11.

<sup>244</sup> Lankadeepa, May 12, p. 8.

<sup>245</sup> Anidda, May 12, p. 5.



Islamophobia in Sri Lanka started after 2009 slowly with Bodu Bala Sena who inspired by the anti-Muslim Buddhist extremism in Burma and anti-Muslim Christian extremism in America. The writer argues that there is a threat of radicalising the Sri Lankan Muslim community. The writer pointed out that it is necessary to understand the 'Muslim problem' in Sri Lanka with a very moderate view. And the writer claims that the solutions should be moderate too. He further added that this should need a political solution not a military solution. And the writer urge that we should separate the Sri Lankan 'Muslim problem' with the global Islamophobia and start managing the problem intellectually.<sup>246</sup>

**Is the Bhikkhu society under the common society state law?** (by Chandrasiri Seneviratne) - The article approach to the problem asked in the heading by describing the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and giving examples for to elaborate how Buddhism had a place above the state governance. However the writer claims with examples that there are no evidence to say that the civil status of a Bhikkus exceeded the law or the king. Then the article analysed the current situation and claim that incidents such as building Sharia universities, cutting down the Wilpattu and granting bail to suspects who allegedly damage Buddhist statues in Mawanalla are results of rulers going above the law to satiate extremists. Also the article challenge the incidents such as not letting cut down Bo trees for road constructions and insulting the court by a Buddhist monk. The article also challenges the request of releasing Galagodatte Gnanasara thero to the president by Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe. The article extracts examples from the history and mention the Theravada act which is an extension of purifying the Sasana.<sup>247</sup>

**Teachers transferred after protests against hijab at Puwakpitiya school** (by Aanya Wipulasena) - Western Province Governor Azath Salley took steps to transfer 12 hijab clad teachers when parents objected to their attire, citing security reasons. However, now the school, Tamil Maha Vidyalaya, is short of teachers to teach subjects such as mathematics, science and english. The parents were aggravated by a rumour claiming that the police were looking for four women wearing hijabs, believed to be involved with terrorists. There is no record of such a complaint with the police. A member of the school development society said a meeting was called this Monday to request that teachers wear sarees instead of hijabs till the security situation in the country is normalised. The government issued a statement banning face coverings, the burqa and niqab. Meanwhile, a hotline was introduced to report violent and hate incidents against Muslims following the Easter Sunday attacks.<sup>248</sup>

**Media dissuaded from covering search ops to curb fear and xenophobia** (by Rajitha Jagoda Arachchi) - The government last week moved to prohibit security forces from taking news media cameras on search operations around the country in the wake of the Easter Sunday bombings. Security force personnel acknowledge that the Muslim community has been strongly supportive of the sweeping searches. However, televising

<sup>246</sup> Anidda, May 12, p. 7.

<sup>247</sup> Anidda, May 12, p. 11.

<sup>248</sup> Sunday Observer, May 12, p. 5.



the constant seizure of swords and knives from homes and mosques was giving rise to xenophobia and increased suspicion between communities. Former Army Chief Daya Ratnayake disagrees. He believes transparency is important to avoid providing a platform for gossip and speculation. Meanwhile Matara District UPFA MP Wijesekera proposed the appointment of a media spokesman to communicate search operations.<sup>249</sup>

**Fight terrorism avoid Islamophobia** (by Jayadeva Uyangoda) - This opinion piece focuses on the spread of Islamophobia around the world, particularly in Sinhala society following the Easter Sunday bombings. The article speaks on the role the terror attacks and the media play in fear mongering, while acknowledging that anti-Muslim sentiments seem to go beyond this, and appears to be an organised effort towards a distinct political end. The goal being fostering public mistrust of the government and creating a condition of 'ungovernability' in the country. This brings with it the dangerous possibility of Sri Lankan society falling once again into the abyss of inter-community conflict and violence. The gestures of reconciliation made by the president and PM have not been enough to stem Islamophobia in society, and more needs to be done to combat ISIS and ensure that a global terror war does not descend on South Asia.<sup>250</sup>

**Hating people of other religions, not Islamic - Mufti Haniffa** (by Stanley Samarasinghe) - In an interview with the Sunday Observer, the Vice President of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU), Mufti Yusuf Haniffa said that they had informed authorities of violent incidents carried out by certain Muslim youth two years ago, and even a week before the attacks. He further said that the ACJU does not acknowledge the terrorists as Islamists and cannot allow for their last rites to be performed according to Islam.<sup>251</sup>

**Only Gnanasara can speak against Islamic fundamentalism** (by N. Thanuja) - The Bodu Bala Sena and Sinhala Ravaya have stated that Tamil and Sinhala people were greatly disturbed by the activities of Islamic extremism, adding that only the leader of the Bodu Bala Sena, Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera, could speak up against such activities. Sudantha Thera stated that President Maithripala Sirisena should pardon the theras in order to tackle this situation.<sup>252</sup>

**Islam opposes terrorism; Do not blame Muslims unnecessarily** - The Chairman of the Akurana Pradeshiya Sabha, I.M. Istthikar has urged people not to place unnecessary blame on Muslims, and stated that Islam opposes terrorism. He pointed out that Muslims have never supported extremism or terrorism in the history of Sri Lanka. He also urged certain media outlets to refrain from publishing biased reports that create tension between communities.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Sunday Observer, May 12, p. 6.

<sup>250</sup> Sunday Observer, May 12, p. 12.

<sup>251</sup> Sunday Observer, May 12, p. 12.

<sup>252</sup> Virakesari, May 12, p. 4.

<sup>253</sup> Virakesari, May 12, p. 16.



Security checks targeting Muslims: Maithri's request not to differentiate ignored - Following the Easter bombings, the search operations by security forces have intensified. It has been pointed out that security forces conduct search operations on buses travelling between Jaffna and Colombo, specifically targeting Muslims. This is despite President Maithripala Sirisena's request to not to look at Muslims with suspicion. 254

**Burka and Niqab are banned; The Muslim councilor sustains the Moratuwa Mayor's resolution** (by Rekha Tharangani Fonseka) - Moratuwa Mayor Samanlal Fernando tabled a resolution to ban the burka and niqab within the domain of Moratuwa municipal council and the United National Party (UNP) counselor Maseena Bakkar sustained it. The Mayor said that this ban is proposed by taking the security of the country into consideration. The Muslim counselor said that the burka or niqab wasn't there in history and she wouldn't think it's necessary for Sri Lankan Muslims. 255

**Person who pressure Sinhala girls to not to go to work in Muslim shops got warned** (by Bhashana Sathyapriya) - A person who pressured the Sinhala girls to work in Muslim shops in padiyathalawa town got warned by the police. No Sinhala working girl has reported to duty because of this coercion. 256

**Terror stalks the pearl of the Indies** (by Leopold Ratnasekera) – The Easter Sunday attacks were all incredibly just a day's havoc, perpetrated by some radical Islamic group ideologically vowed to violence and destruction in the name of God, condemning all non- Muslims as pagans meant for annihilation. Terror and violence, hatred and spite, have no place in a hallowed land such as Sri Lanka which is, by contrast, an oasis of four of the greatest living religions of the world: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. They are all religions of peace, matched with a spirituality that empowers their devotees to foster loving kindness and compassion towards all human beings and nature, propelling them to live and work with mutual respect and solidarity. Christianity invites people to live loving God, as well as your neighbour. Buddhism teaches the path to inner discipline, a type of mental culture that leads to a clear vision and a disciplined mind. Hinduism sees divine presence and action, which is ubiquitous. Then comes Islam, which in itself means peace (shalom). It militates and is diametrically opposed to any form of violence, hatred and the spirit of divisiveness or dissension. The jihad that the Qur'an advocates refers to the inner war-fare that one has waged in one's life so that the heart remains pure, just and peaceful. 257

**Maintain relations with all, win back trust – Brogadier Izzadeen** (by Camelia Nathaniel) - A team of senior Muslim officers, on the instructions of the army commander, met members of the Dehiwala grand jumma masjid and highlighted the importance of maintaining good relations with all other communities without falling prey to groups of

254 Uthayan, May 12, p. 2.

255 Lankadeepa, May 13, p. 17.

256 Divaina, May 13, p. 2.

257 Daily News, May 13, p. 6.





extremists who had been misguided. Around 750 Muslims in the area had also attended the event.<sup>258</sup>

**Tension in Chilaw over hostile Facebook post** (by Darshana Sanjeewa Balasuriya, Lalith Nawarathne and Augustine Fernando) - A group of people stormed the Chilaw town yesterday following a Facebook post, which was allegedly a warning. The son of a Muslim businessman in Chilaw had reportedly published the post on social media. The tense situation arose when several youths gathered outside the Chilaw police station and urged them to arrest the individual responsible for sharing the post. Thereafter, the group started to behave in an aggressive manner while roaming the Chilaw town on motorcycles and trishaws. The angry crowds, who stormed into a shop at Chilaw town, allegedly attacked a person, who is said to be connected to the individual who posted the content on Facebook. Police said that they had arrested the individual who posted the content harmful to ethnic unity. Meanwhile, an office of the Sri Lanka Thowheed Jamath organisation in Chilaw and another house said to be a praying centre were also attacked.<sup>259</sup>

**Tension in Chilaw – Properties including mosque damaged** (by M.F.M. Basheer)- A tense situation arose in Chilaw yesterday over an argument between two individuals based on a Facebook post. A curfew has been imposed in the area, effective from the morning of May 12, following the unrest. 38-year-old Ahmed Hameed Hamzar was arrested following the unrest, which occurred due to his Facebook post which said ‘Don’t laugh more 1 day u will cry’.<sup>260</sup>

**Attack on four shops in Kuliypitiya - four arrested** (by M.F.M. Basheer)- Four Muslim owned shops along the Kuliypitiya-Hettipola road were attacked by individuals who had arrived in motorcycles and trishaws. The police said the incident had taken place on the night of May 12, and that four persons were taken into custody, along with a trishaw that was taken into evidence. The suspects are detained under the emergency regulations.<sup>261</sup>

**21 letters that instigate religious clashes caught in the central mail exchange - Sent from America** (by Indika Ramanayake) - 21 letters that sent from New York to several temples with the intention of instigating clashes between Buddhist and Catholic religions were taken into the police custody at the Central Mail exchange, says the Police. Those letters were addressed to several temples in Colombo and Negombo areas. The police suspect that an extremist group has sent those letters to clash the Catholic and Buddhist communities in Sri Lanka.<sup>262</sup>

<sup>258</sup> Daily News, May 13, p. 8.

<sup>259</sup> Daily Mirror, May 13, p. A1, A2.

<sup>260</sup> Virakesari, May 13, p. 1.

<sup>261</sup> Virakesari, May 13, p. 1.

<sup>262</sup> Lankadeepa, May 14, p. 1, p. 6.





**Sri Lanka is a country that belongs to Sinhala Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Islam all; Sinhala Buddhist being the majority is another thing** - Says Minister Samaraweera "Sri Lanka is not just Sinhala Buddhist's country but Sri Lankans country. In that Sri Lankan's country, the majority is Sinhala Buddhists. Also there are Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Islam and people from other religious beliefs in that country. All the rights we have as we are Sinhala Buddhists, are belong to those others as well. We cannot impose our idea because we are Buddhists" said Minister Mangala Samaraweera joining the event of establishing the peace committee of Matara. Minister also talked about the post Easter Sunday attack and how the situation was normalised by the security forces. He accepted that there were some short-comings government and in the intelligence units as well. He talked about the way of containing and defeating the terrorism as a country. Also he mentioned that some political parties and some media are trying to paint every Muslim as a terrorist. But the minister said that the Muslim also living with us in this country for more than 1100 years.<sup>263</sup>

**Halal certificate should be stopped** - Ven. Omalpe Sobhitha thero (by Kamal Bogoda) The securing Buddhist consumer rights collective has handed over a letter to the chairman of Consumer Affairs Authority, requesting to stop the Halal certificate which issued on the need of Muslims for food and drink items. They have requested saying that the Buddhist community which have no use of the certificate also have to pay extra for those goods.<sup>264</sup>

**All the Islamist extremist organisations should be banned** - President of 'Let's Protect Sri Lanka National movement', Pahiyangala Ananda Sagara Thero (by Udula Pieris) - The Venerable thero stated joining a media conference in Sri Kadireshan kovil that all the organisations identified as Islamist extremist organisations should be banned. Furthermore thero said that they have submitted a national policy with 18 resolutions to the president and the prime minister. Some of those resolutions are as follows: clothes that hide the identity such as niqab and burka should be banned, there should be one national uniform for all the students, The ability to create political parties based on ethnicity or religious bases should be prohibited, territories that divided based on ethnic lines should be abrogated, banning the political parties which based on separatist ideas, abrogating the Halal certificate process, there should be a common law and policy for building religious places, Islam refugees who stay in the country temporarily should be deported etc.<sup>265</sup>

**Special sermons take place in Muslim mosques will be in Sinhala language** - Minister A.H.M. Haleem (by Indrani Thoradeniye) - Special sermons in Muslim mosques on Fridays will not be held in Arabic language but in Sinhala language as anybody can understand, stated the Minister A.H.M. Haleem. "This is an open religion, there are many things that we should change after thinking about the country, there should be

<sup>263</sup> Lankadeepa, May 14, p. 16.

<sup>264</sup> Divaina, May 14, p. 3.

<sup>265</sup> Dinamina, May 14, p. 2.



transparency in things such as burka or Madrasas and we should gain the trust of other religions" Minister claimed. He also claimed that with the terrorist attacks in the name of Islam, all the Muslims are facing difficulties and the Islam has never approved terrorism in anywhere.<sup>266</sup>

**Think wisely** - The editorial focus on the overall situation within the country after Easter Sunday terror attack by Thowheed terrorists. The column mentions how the schools system took a hit with the bomb threat and compares the situation with the war time. Then the editorial mentioned the bladed weapons found from wells and many other places and emphasise that ensuring about the security for people is the most essential thing. Then the article move to the recent clash in Chilaw over a Facebook status and violence acts in Kurunagala, Bingiriya, Kuliypitiya, Kobeygane areas. Then the article state that these ethnic clashes shouldn't happen as it might leave a black mark in the history. The article urges the citizens to think wisely and act wisely. <sup>267</sup>

**Speaker decries communalism and religious extremism** - Speaker Karu Jayasuriya requested the public not to let the fire of communalism and religious extremism destroy the country and its future generations. The speaker, issuing a statement over the recent incidents, said that all Sri Lankans should strive to build peace and harmony among all ethnicities.<sup>268</sup>

**Catholic bishops call for peaceful co-existence** (by Dinuli Francisco) - There should be only one law in the country irrespective of any religious or ethnic difference, and people will experience true peace and freedom only when truth and justice are restored, according to the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka (CBCSL). Issuing a statement, CBCSL said that this was a time to forget political differences and personal agendas and think about the security of the country and its people.<sup>269</sup>

**Harassed Muslim women complain to HRC** (by Amra Ismail) - Muslim women who have been asked to remove their head scarves and abayas (robe-like overgarment) by government officials met with Human Rights Commission (HRC) Chairperson Deepika Udagama and Commissioner Ambika Satkunanathan. The women said that the harassment stemmed from a lack of understanding about the differences between the niqab, burqa, abaya and hijab (head covering). However, they also said that most of the government officials were aware of the differences and the interpretation of regulations, but used the present situation to manifest their prejudices. "The government staff is not frightened of any disciplinary consequence when harassing us," they said.<sup>270</sup>

<sup>266</sup> Dinamina, May 14, p. 12.

<sup>267</sup> Divaina, May.14, p. 8.

<sup>268</sup> Daily News, May 14, p. 1.

<sup>269</sup> Daily News, May 14, p. 2.

<sup>270</sup> Daily Mirror, May 14, p. A2.



**SL isn't a Sinhala Buddhist country, a country of Sri Lankans: Mangala** - Sri Lanka is not a Sinhala Buddhist country but a country belonging to all those who had taken Sri Lanka as their motherland, Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera said. He said that the majority of Sri Lanka, which belongs to Sri Lankans, are Sinhala Buddhists. "There are also people belonging to Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Islamic and other religions in that country. All of them have the same rights which the Sinhala Buddhists have," he said. He said simply because Sinhala Buddhists are in the majority, they can't impose their opinion on others. "But Sri Lanka is not a Sinhala Buddhist country but a country belonging to all who have taken Sri Lanka as their motherland," he said.<sup>271</sup>

**Those who say SL not Sinhala Buddhist not fit to be here: Ittepane Dhamalankara Thera** (by K. Buddhika Kumarasiri) - If anyone claims that Sri Lanka is not a country of Sinhala Buddhists, such people should not be in the country, Mahanayake of Kotte Chapter the Most Ven. Ittepane Darmalankara Thera said. "During the history that I know of, no Buddhist or any non-Buddhist had ever said that Sri Lanka is not a Sinhala Buddhist country," he said. "Even Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, who is not a Buddhist, said that this is a Sinhala Buddhist country and that he is fortunate to live in this country. In this backdrop, if anyone says that Sri Lanka is not a country of Sinhala Buddhists, such people are not fit to be in the country," the prelate said.<sup>272</sup>

**Those who say that Sri Lanka is not a Sinhala Buddhist country do not deserve to live here** – Kotte Mahanayake Thera - Ven. Ittapana Dhammalankara Thera has stated that those who say Sri Lanka is not a Sinhala Buddhist country do not deserve to live here. He made this statement during a meeting with a delegation headed by MP Bandula Gunawardena while discussing Vesak events. Minister Mangala Samaraweera had earlier stated that Sri Lanka was not a Sinhala Buddhist country, but belongs to all who consider themselves Sri Lankan. However, the thera did not indicate that his words were a response to the minister's statement.<sup>273</sup>

**Kurunegala violence** - Attacks were carried out against Muslims in Kurunegala on May 13. Several houses, shops and properties were damaged during the attacks. The attacks were carried out targeting Muslims in Kuliypitiya, Bingiriya and Dummalasuriya. A police curfew was imposed in these areas till 6 a.m. the following day. People ran into the woods and fields for safety.<sup>274</sup>

**Violence in Nattandiya** - Incidents of violence were reported in Nattandiya, Puttalam where several shops belonging to Muslims were damaged.<sup>275</sup>

**Islandwide curfew to control tensions** (by Lakshmi Parasuraman, Sadique Shihan) - The police imposed an islandwide curfew following sporadic incidents of violence

<sup>271</sup> Daily Mirror, May 14, p. A3.

<sup>272</sup> Daily Mirror, May 14, p. A3.

<sup>273</sup> Uthayan, May 14, p. 1.

<sup>274</sup> Uthayan, May 14, p. 1.

<sup>275</sup> Uthayan, May 14, p. 1.



reported in several parts of the country. The curfew was to be lifted at 4 a.m. on May 14, except in the Gampaha Police Division and the North Western Province. The curfew imposed in the North Western Province will continue until further notice, while the curfew in the Gampaha Police Division was in force till 6 a.m. on May 14. Earlier, on the afternoon of May 13, a police curfew was imposed in the Kuliyaipitiya, Bingiriya, Dummalasuriya and Hettipola police areas after several shops in the Kuliyaipitiya area were stoned by mobs. Police Spokesman SP Ruwan Gunasekera said that a curfew had been imposed in the area on Sunday night after the police received reports of three shops being attacked in Kuliyaipitiya. He said that various rumors are being spread about these incidents, but no person had sustained injuries due to these incidents.<sup>276</sup>

**Tension in Kuliyaipitiya, Nikaweratiya:** Attacks on mosques, shops, and houses; Indefinite curfew in North Western Province (by M.F.M. Basheer) - Systematic attacks have been carried out by a group targeting Muslim villages in the Kurunegala, Kuliyaipitiya and Nikaweratiya areas. At least 30 Muslim villages were attacked in 48 hours, which ended at 7 p.m. on May 13. Nine mosques, houses, shops and several vehicles were damaged during the attacks. Police has imposed an indefinite curfew in the North Western Province. Additionally, an islandwide curfew had been imposed till 4 a.m. May 14. <sup>277</sup>

**Space should not be provided for racial violence** - This editorial discusses the attacks targeting Muslims in Kurunegala, Nikaweratiya and Kuliyaipitiya. It points out that these attacks had been carried out in Negombo as well, and raises suspicions as to whether they were systematically planned and carried out by the members of the majority. The editorial points out that these attacks had been carried out targeting Muslims in the aftermath of the Easter bombings, triggering fear among the Muslim community. The editorial also points out claims that the police and security forces had not acted promptly during the incidents, and urges the authorities to ensure such incidents do not recur.<sup>278</sup>

**Will Muslims be understood?** (by M.M.A. Samat) - This piece discusses the aftermath of the Easter bombings. The article points out that the people are currently living in fear due to potential future threats, and the frequent search operations carried out islandwide. In addition, the commentary states that the Muslims in the country now face problems since the suicide bombers had Muslim names. The piece states that the attack destroyed all efforts taken by Muslims for the benefit of the country.<sup>279</sup>

**Do not lead the future of country into darkness** - The article reported a statement made by the speaker Karu Jayasuriya regarding the attacks and arson against religious places, houses and shops and also attacking innocent people. He mentions the memories of Black July explicitly and compare it with the current situation as well. He also added

<sup>276</sup> Thinakaran, May 14, p. 1.

<sup>277</sup> Virakesari, May 14, p. 1.

<sup>278</sup> Virakesari, May 14, p. 4.

<sup>279</sup> Virakesari, May 14, p. 4.



that as there are agreements on traditional Islam women's attire, Madrasa schools and higher educational institutes, those will be resolved clearly as the majority Muslims don't want this country to be a fundamentalist country.<sup>280</sup>

**Fire and Hay** - The editorial focuses on two challenges the country will face. First one is ensuring the national reconciliation and peace by blocking disunity and spreading hatred. The editorial then focused on mob attacks and riots spread across the country recently. It stated that in several areas, the shops belong to Islam worshippers were stoned and several religious places were damaged. It also said that according to the news, those attacks were carried out by drunk groups break-in in motorcycles. The editorial questions this in a backdrop of the Black July and question who could be behind those. The editorial mentions about the letters of extreme religious beliefs which sent to Buddhist temples and question who could be behind all those incidents.<sup>281</sup>

**The backbone of this country's culture is Buddhism, the behaviour of Buddhism is an example for other religions** - Says His eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith (by Nimala Kodituwakku) - In a media conference at Archbishop House, the Cardinal said that it's a blessing to having a chance to live in a country which has a culture that nurtured from Buddhism. And other religions should act with an awareness of that, the Cardinal added. And he went on regarding the aftermath of Easter attacks, the support the citizens should give the security forces to control the situation and how political leaders should act. Then the chief prelate of Kotte Sri Kalyani Samagri Dharma maha Sanga sect most venerable Ittapana Dhammalankara thero also presented ideas in the media conference and they also quoted in the article. "Those search missions and raids should be done without harming or harassing the Islam believers. Not all the Islam believers are connected to this. Because of that we shouldn't include all the Islam believers into one category" the venerable thero claimed. And the thero mentioned about the political leaders as well, answering a question. The statement of Minister Mangala Samaraweera also came to light as a question. The Cardinal responded to that saying that Buddhism is as the backbone of the culture of this country and that the traits of Buddhist culture influence the Catholics as well. And the most venerable thero claimed that when the Cardinal says that this is a Sinhala Buddhist country, others shouldn't talk ignorantly.<sup>282</sup>

**We need a supreme advisory board to solve all the religious matters** - Minister Champika Ranawaka says in the national way conference (by Muditha Dayanande) - A supreme advisory board is needed for solving all the religious matters, said Minister Ranawaka in National Way inaugural conference. "There shouldn't be a chance to harm anyone in the name of a religion and there should be freedom to practice any religion one want. But that doesn't mean that one should disturb the freedom of other's religious practices for the sake of one's own religious belief. And except of maintaining ministries

<sup>280</sup> Dinamina, May 15, p. 3.

<sup>281</sup> Dinamina, May 15, p. 4.

<sup>282</sup> Lankadeepa, May 15, p. 12.

for each religion, there should be a supreme advisory board for all the religions" he added.<sup>283</sup> North Western-Minuangoda unrest; one died from the attacks (by Hemantha Randunu, Tony Karunanayake, Anthony Rose, Rex Harrison) - Organised groups have attacked targeting houses, shops and religious centers in North Western province and some other religions. From those attacks one killed and ten more having serious injuries. And there are more than 500 buildings including shops, houses, religious centers and institutes are destroyed, says the police. The one who was killed is a father of two and M.M.S. Amir is the name. The situation escalated after police finding weapons and stuff from the Hamilton canal behind Thummodara Muslim mosque. After that the angry mob attacked Muslim shops and a mosque. Then mob consist of Thummodara Muslims broke into a Morakale Sinhala village and damaged few houses, says the police. Then a mob consist of Sinhalese broke into Kottaramulla Muslim village and killed one Muslim and destroyed properties. Organised groups broke into many major cities in North western province and destroyed properties and a group more than 2000 who broke into Minuangoda also destroyed more than 60 shops and fled.<sup>284</sup>

**Stop violence against Muslims –** Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith (by Camelia Nathaniel) - The Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith urged those involved in violence against the Muslim community to immediately stop these attacks. He also urged the Muslims not to get intimidated by these sinister elements and to act patiently and remain calm. He also urged the Muslim community to make an effort to be part of the Sri Lankan culture and not to isolate themselves by their customs. "I am a person who wants to work in close relationship with all communities and that is why we did not allow the Easter Sunday incident to fester. At least as a respect for that effort, I urge all Muslims to try to shed their differences and stop isolating themselves and join all communities in this country in harmony and brotherhood. If we do that all communities in this country could live peacefully in this country" said the archbishop. He urged the groups engaged in causing riots in certain areas to stop. "We know that some of these groups are politically aligned. We ask all those political leaders to please control their members to ensure that they don't get out of hand and they don't take the law into their own hands," he said.<sup>285</sup>

**Namal Kumara, Amith Weerasinghe arrested** (by Camelia Nathaniel) - The Operation Director of the Anti-Corruption Front organisation, Namal Kumara was arrested when he arrived at the Warakapola police station to lodge a complaint. The police said that he was arrested for alleged links to the tense situations that occurred on Sunday and Monday.

<sup>283</sup> Lankadeepa, May 15, p. 14.

<sup>284</sup> Divaina, May 15, p. 1, p. 4.

<sup>285</sup> Daily News, May 15, p. 1, 8.



Meanwhile, the leader of the Mahasohon Balakaya, Amith Weerasinghe was arrested in the Teldeniya area.<sup>286</sup>

**Innocent Muslims should not suffer for acts of extremists** – Hakeem - Sri Lanka Muslim Congress Leader and City Planning, Water Supply and Higher Education Minister Rauff Hakeem in a statement said that it is dreadful and frightening to witness innocent men, women and children of the Muslim community being targetted in reprisal for the horrendous attacks by extremists on three churches and three hotels on April 21, 2019. "Attacks on innocent Muslim communities continue to take place while the security forces are striving hard to restore normalcy. Mobs attacked Muslim businesses, mosques and homes overnight on May 12 and May 13, killing one" he said.<sup>287</sup>

**Recent acts of violence politically motivated** – Rev. Asiri Perera (by Menaka Indrakumar) - The President of the Methodist church, Rev. Asiri Perera said that the recent acts of violence are politically motivated, carried out by those who want to gain votes at the upcoming elections. He further added that violence is being precipitated as they want to get the votes of the other parties. Why are the political leaders destroying the unity and understanding that people have irrespective of race or religion? The people know how to live together, but the politicians have brought so much dirty politics into society.<sup>288</sup>

**Stopping Islamophobia** (by Ravi Ratnsabapathy) - The senseless attacks on Easter Sunday shook the nation and sparked a wave of anti-Muslim hysteria that is in danger of getting out of control. There is a tangled jumble of emotions that need to be sifted through to understand the problem. The fears arise from the entirely unexpected nature of the attack, there being previously no Muslim-Christian animosity, and the unknown nature of the threat. Interested parties who seek to gain political advantage have cleverly exploited the situation by adding to the fears and spreading rumours of possible attacks, unfounded allegations against the Muslims and general messages of hate. The centre of the problem is, therefore, one of trust. People feel unable to trust the Muslim community who they view as a collective threat. Furthermore, they cannot trust the government to protect them from this threat. The Muslim community themselves have to deal with a different but equally complex set of emotions. The overwhelming majority of the Muslim community was as shocked and as horrified by the bombings as everyone else. The wider public needs to understand that Muslims who follow the austere form of Islam are not any different from Evangelical Christians. Neither is inherently more dangerous than the other. It is just that Muslims adopt a distinct style of dress that makes them easily identified. The Muslim community needs to redouble efforts to send a clear message that they were not a part of the attacks. Cool heads need to bring community leaders together and work out practical programmes to rebuild trust. In the long term, we need to bridge

<sup>286</sup> Daily News, May 15, p. 1, 8.

<sup>287</sup> Daily News, May 15, p. 2.

<sup>288</sup> Daily News, May 15, p. 2.





the social and cultural distance between the communities which must take place through education.<sup>289</sup>

**Dan Priyasad arrested** - The Colombo Crimes Division arrested Nawa Sinhale Director Suresh Priyasad, alias Dan Priyasad, when the latter surrendered to the CCD yesterday evening. Police sources said that he was arrested over the recent acts of violence in the country.<sup>290</sup>

**Dhammalankara Thera calls for sensible talk** (by Yohan Perera) - One must not speak in a foolish manner when even Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith has accepted that this is a Buddhist nation, said Ven. Ittapane Dhammalankara Thera. He said that Sri Lanka was a unique country with its Buddhist values. "Cardinal Ranjith has said Catholic and Christian priests are respected more in Sri Lanka, which is a Buddhist country, than in the so-called Catholic countries. It is only in Sri Lanka that you get seats reserved in buses and trains especially allocated to the clergy. You enjoy all these benefits because of Buddhist values," he said. "The cardinal has also said that a person could become the president and prime minister of this country, no matter what religious or ethnic group one belongs to," he said quoting the cardinal. "However, such a person should respect Buddhism," he said. "One must strive to bring all religions together rather than dividing them," he said.<sup>291</sup>

**60 arrested over recent violence** (by Darshana Sanjeeewa Balasuriya and Tony Karunanayake) - More than 60 people were arrested in connection with the violence in the North-Western Province and Minuwangoda, and 33 of them were remanded, Police Spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said. Meanwhile, three suspects were arrested in Matara on charges of inciting racism via social media platforms. They were also remanded till May 27. Several shops, houses and religious centres were damaged when mobs attacked them and set them ablaze in several areas in the North-Western Province and Minuwangoda. An individual was reported to have been killed during the violence.<sup>292</sup>

**Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country: Mano** (by Sheain Fernandopulle) - Referring to Minister Mangala Samaraweera's statement that Sri Lanka is not a Sinhala Buddhist country, National Integration, Official Languages, Social Progress and Hindu Religious Affairs Minister Mano Ganesan said that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country. He said that we were people of one nation, but it was a Sinhala Buddhist country.<sup>293</sup>

**Hakeem calls on PM, tri-forces commanders to control violence** - Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Leader and Minister Rauff Hakeem today called on the prime minister and tri-force commanders to control the violent incidents in the country in the absence of the president. In a statement, the minister requested Prime Minister Ranil

<sup>289</sup> Daily News, May 15, p. 6.

<sup>290</sup> Daily News, May 15, p. 10.

<sup>291</sup> Daily Mirror, May 15, p. A2.

<sup>292</sup> Daily Mirror, May 15, p. A2.

<sup>293</sup> Daily Mirror, May 15, p. A4.





Wickremesinghe and tri-force commanders to protect the “Muslims who are suffering for a dastardly crime committed by a few with whom the larger Muslim community has nothing to do with whatsoever”.<sup>294</sup>

**Violence against Muslims – TNA raises concerns** - The Tamil National Alliance has condemned violence targeting Muslims in the North Western Province. TNA MP M.A. Sumanthiran had stated that attacking Muslims, even during the curfew, was a matter of grave concern.<sup>295</sup>

**Tension continues due to violence: 15 mosques damaged; attacks on shops and houses as well** (by M.F.M. Basher) - One person was killed and many others were injured in attacks carried out on Muslim villages in the North Western Province on May 13. 45- year-old Fowzul Amirdeen was identified as the individual killed in the incident. He was reportedly slashed to death. His house was among the 25 houses damaged in the unrest in Kottaramulla.<sup>296</sup>

**27 shops attacked in Minuwangoda, 12 shops completely burnt and mosque severely damaged** (by A.R.A. Fareel) - 27 shops were damaged, 12 of which were completely burnt down in an attack carried out by mobs that had arrived in motorbikes and trishaws on May 13.<sup>297</sup>

**Take immediate steps to stop attacks on Muslims** - This editorial condemns the attacks targeting Muslims that were carried out in Kurunegala and Kuliapitiya in the North Western Province. The editorial describes the attacks in the context of the Easter bombings, stating that the current situation places Muslims in a vulnerable situation. The editorial also points out that the attacks were systematically carried out after imposing the curfew.<sup>298</sup>

**Attires that cover the whole face is banned: The gazette is out** (by Ranil Dharmasena) - The special gazette that prohibit attires that covers the full face, blocking the identification of someone in a public place was issued by the President. Full face is described here as from the top of the forehead to the end of the chin. Also it states that any member of security forces, police or civil security department can order someone to remove the cloth that covering the full face of that person.<sup>299</sup>

**Mistaking the heads and tails of the extremism** (by Kusal Perera) - The analysis probe into the violence released targeting Muslims in Negombo, North Western province and Minuwangoda area. One was killed in this incident. The article hints an underlying political agenda on this situation. The article line up everything from closing schools and poor

<sup>294</sup> Daily Mirror, May 15, p. A4.

<sup>295</sup> Thinakaran, May 15, p. 1.

<sup>296</sup> Virakesari, May 15, p. 1.

<sup>297</sup> Virakesari, May 15, p. 1.

<sup>298</sup> Virakesari, May 15, p. 4.

<sup>299</sup> Divaina, May 16, p. 1, p. 4.



attendance of the government sector as well as the anti-Muslim sentiments arose afterwards. Then the article blames social media for fuelling and propagating anti-Muslim sentiments which ultimately led to violence.<sup>300</sup>

**The state Wesak festival at Thelwatta today-tomorrow** (by Ariyaratne Ranabahu, Hasitha Ranga Gunathilake) - The state Vesak festival will be held at Hikkaduwa, Thelwatta, Thotagamuwa Ranpath Rajamaha Wihara with the participation of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wikremasinghe.<sup>301</sup>

**Namal, Amith further detained while Dan Priyasad gets bail** – Namal Kumara and Amith Weerasinghe – two of the three local organisation heads who were arrested on suspicion of breaching religious harmony – were further detained while the third, Dan Priyasad, was released on bail by the Colombo Additional Magistrate yesterday. Mahasohon Balakaya leader Amith Weerasinghe was remanded till May 28 by Colombo Additional Magistrate Shalani Perera yesterday. He was arrested on Monday at his residence in Teldeniya on charges of breaching religious reconciliation and public peace. Nawa Sinhale National Organisation Director Dan Priyasad was released on two sureties of Rs.500,000 each by Colombo Additional Magistrate Priyantha Liyanage yesterday. He was arrested by the Colombo Crime Division (CCD) on Tuesday over his alleged involvement in the recent acts of violence. Priyasad was also ordered to appear at the CCD between 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. each Sunday. Meanwhile, Anti-Corruption Front head Namal Kumara has been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for inquiry.<sup>302</sup>

**Reconciliation in Colombo a precedent to entire country:** Rosy (by Lahiru Pothmulla) – Colombo Mayor Rosy Senanayake said on May 15 that the way of life in Colombo, which includes ethnic and religious diversity, is a model for the rest of the country. In Colombo, people “live in harmony without any racial or religious difference”. While terrorism should be tackled, “we should note that not all Muslims are terrorists or extremists”.<sup>303</sup>

**Violence in the North Western Province: 78 arrested, remanded** (by Darshana Sanjeewa Balasuriya) – At least 78 suspects have been arrested and remanded in connection with the violence in the North-Western Province, Police Spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said yesterday (May 15). He said that the suspects were arrested in the Kurunegala, Kuliapitiya, Nikaweratiya and Chilaw police areas. He told a news conference that investigations were in progress to identify the other suspects using video clips. He said that 5500 police personnel had to be deployed to the North-Western Province on Monday and Tuesday to control the tense situation.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>300</sup> Lankadeepa, May 16, p. 4.

<sup>301</sup> Lankadeepa, May 16, p. 6.

<sup>302</sup> Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A1, A4.

<sup>303</sup> Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A3.

<sup>304</sup> Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A1, A4.



**Monks hand over petition to arrest Bathiudeen and Hizbullah** (by Yohan Perera) – A group of monks, who are members of various organisations, yesterday handed over a letter to acting IGP C. D. Wickramasinghe, calling on the police to arrest Minister Rishad Bathiudeen and Governor M. L. A. M. Hizbullah immediately. They said that the police and the security forces should take over the country if they were not allowed to take necessary action. The Ravana Balaya, Sinhala Ravaya and Sinhale Api organisations said that these two politicians should be arrested in order to bring back normalcy in the country. They requested that the recent violence in the North-Western Province not be blamed on the Sinhala people, and asked that Sinhalese youth not be arrested. They said certain politicians were behind this violence to divert the charges made against them.<sup>305</sup>

**Anti-Muslim attacks question security coordination** (by Piyumi Foneska) – Anti-Muslim mob attacks on Monday May 13 were reported mainly in the Kuliapitiya and Minuwangoda areas. In a brutal retaliation over the involvement of the ISIS terrorists and a group of local extremist Muslims in the Easter attacks, the mobs created havoc in Minuwangoda, where around 41 shops were vandalised. Apart from that, four houses and four vehicles owned by Muslims, along with the Minuwangoda jumma mosque, were also destroyed. According to eyewitnesses, the mobs who arrived on motorbikes were armed with rods and swords. “They have not only vandalised our shops and houses, but also looted money,” the villagers complained. The police arrested 23 people for inciting violence against Muslims. Yet, the affected people alleged that the authorities were doing little to disperse crowds while the mobs continued with the attacks, going from village to village. This news feature asks whether these mob attacks could have been prevented. The piece notes that the security forces have received heavy criticism due to their seeming inaction. The piece provides a descriptive narrative account of the incidents of violence. It also notes that some Sinhalese businesses were damaged, perhaps incidentally. One restaurant-owner stated that although many are blaming ‘outsiders’ he noticed several familiar faces amongst the mob that wrought violence upon his shop. He even recognised people who had previously frequented his establishment. Rev. Fr. Dudley Saparamadu from Burullapitiya stressed that there is nothing logical about condemning innocent Muslims for the actions of a few. “Everyone who is responsible for these attacks should stop using people’s lives to get their own political agendas and purposes fulfilled. All lives matter regardless of faith or race,” he said. Muslims in Sri Lanka are now finding themselves in limbo, distancing themselves from the terrorist attacks, while bracing for attacks against their own communities. Since the goal of the terrorists was to divide the country, it is incumbent on Sri Lankans of all faiths and backgrounds to frustrate that objective by standing united in the face of terror.<sup>306</sup>

**The sacrifice of the innocents! We demand accountability** (by Savitri de Alwis) – This feature piece takes the form of a letter addressed to both the head of state and the prime minister. The piece, at length, blames both political actors for the attacks and their failure

<sup>305</sup> Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A6.

<sup>306</sup> Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A8.



to prevent them. The author states: “The radical activities of jihadists in the east even though tipped off by civic conscious moderate Muslims who were alarmed, have gone unheeded for so long. It is in this de facto ‘Arabised’ state where a highly controversial billion dollar, privately owned, unregulated Sharia University is now taking shape! A thirty year bloody war had to be waged to rid the north of Eelamists, but it is alleged that Hizbullah and his cronies with dubious links and a billion dollars had a ‘cake walk’ into monopolising the east whilst our leaders turned a blind eye! Are we afraid to do what is right to safeguard its law abiding citizens sirs, or are we hand in glove and sleeping with the enemy for our own selfish gains? The writing on the wall is very clear and that is, by the actions and admissions of the leadership, they have already sealed their fate!” 307

**No need for Sharia University in Sri Lanka** – Faiszer Musthapha (by Sandun A. Jayasekara) – This piece is an interview with former Minister of Local Government and Provincial Councils, Faiszer Musthapha. The interviewee emphasises that those who committed the Easter Sunday attacks are “only namesake Muslims” and urges Sri Lankans to understand that. We must “live peacefully, with self-respect and intercommunal harmony as one nation, which is Sri Lankan”. He also states that Sri Lanka does not need a Sharia University. Regarding the covering of the face, he states that it is “not my right to comment on whether Muslims should cover their face”. However, in this “difficult time” it would be wise to not take measures to prevent the identification of the self.<sup>308</sup>

**Unrest in Wayamba and Western Provinces: An Island ‘hoping for the best’** (by Ravi Nagahawatte) – In this opinion piece, the author argues whether Sri Lankans have any desire for peace after violence in “certain areas in Wayamba and Western Provinces”. He sees this violence as beneficial to policymakers, who want to “divide and rule” and blames politicians directly for the violence. He states that the media should be allowed to publish everything, such as pictures of swords and weapons. This is because “the people should know what they are in for and with what weapons they would be attacked in the case of a worse [sic] case scenario.” He states that the government should follow the example of the clergy and the opposition and learn how to lead the country.<sup>309</sup>

**Wayamba unrest: 78 suspects remanded** (by Camelia Nathaniel) - Due to the violence of the past two days, the police have so far arrested 78 suspects, Police Spokesman SP Ruwan Gunasekara said. Among the 78 are employees of the state and private sector. The details of the suspects will be provided to their workplaces, so that the institutions can take appropriate actions. Gunasekara said that in order to bring the situation under control, the police had to deploy over 5,500 police personnel to the Wayamba Province. Of those arrested for the Easter Sunday attacks, 65 suspects are being held under the CID and interrogated, eight of whom are female. Another 20 suspects are being held by the TID, two of whom are female. Further, Abdul Carder Fathima Sadiya, the wife of suicide bomber Mohamed Zaharan is currently in CID custody. She is being provided medical

307 Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A9.

308 Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A10.

309 Daily Mirror, May 16, p. A14.

treatment and her child is with her. The suspect who is linked with purchasing and modifying the van that transported the suicide bomber to Kochchikade church was identified as Mohommed Adam Lebbe and arrested based on a police sketch. So far, the police have also discovered 17 safe houses used by the terror group. Further, the police have discovered seven locations used by the terror group for training, seminars and lectures in Wanathawilluwa, Hambantota, Nuwara Eliya, Nuwara Aruppola, Malwana, Kattankudy and Valaichchenai. Meanwhile, the operations director of the Anti- Corruption organisation, who was arrested for his connection with the riots on May 14, was handed over to the CID for questioning.<sup>310</sup>

**‘Madrasa Act to be introduced’** - Minister Navin Dissanayake yesterday stated that the government will bring in a madrasa act within the next two weeks to curtail the spreading of Islamic extremism via religious education centres. “We have taken some immediate measures such as banning the face cover and are planning to introduce the madrasa act. We have taken a series of measures for public security,” he added. The minister was also critical of the way in which some of the media institutions are operating regarding the communal violence that has taken place in the last few days.<sup>311</sup>

**Duty of all to live in peace and harmony** - Rosy (by Irangika Range) - Colombo Mayor Rosy Senanayake said that the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC), where people of different religions and races live in peace and harmony, is a prime example of reconciliation. She was addressing the gathering at a ceremony organised by the CMC to provide financial assistance of Rs. 50,000 each to 123 temples in the area to carry out development activities. She called upon religious leaders to quell hatred and extremism. She said that the role of social media in the violence cannot be overstated.<sup>312</sup>

**Sri Lanka to have dialogue to curb spread of extremism** - Sri Lanka is able to have a dialogue with certain countries in the Middle East to prevent Islamic extremist Wahhabism from spreading in the country, Minister Navin Dissanayake yesterday stated. He said that it is evident that many individuals who find employment in Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia end up becoming the victims of Wahhabism. Dissanayake pointed out that several East Asian countries are facing the same issue. He also observed that there is a very clear link between Wahhabism, the ISIS terrorist group and radicalisation in certain Middle Eastern countries.<sup>313</sup> Mahason Balakaya leader remanded till May 28 (by Shavini Madhara) - Mahason Balakaya leader Amith Weerasinghe, who was arrested in the Teldeniya area, was remanded till May 28 by Colombo Additional Magistrate Shalini Perera. He was arrested for allegedly posting content promoting racial and religious hatred on social media. Filing a ‘B’ report before court, the police also stated that several people had visited his

<sup>310</sup> Daily News, May 16, p. 1, 8.

<sup>311</sup> Daily News, May 16, p. 4.

<sup>312</sup> Daily News, May 16, p. 4.

<sup>313</sup> Daily News, May 16, p. 4.



residence. The police further told the court that they want to obtain details regarding the people who had visited his residence. The police also stated that they had seized the suspect's mobile phone and handed it over to the computer unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). The police also pleaded to issue an order directing the five mobile companies to submit phone call records related to the suspect's mobile phone. Counsel also pleaded to issue an order directing the Prisons Authority to provide special security for the suspect inside prison.<sup>314</sup>

**Probe the political hand** - Sightings of opposition politicians among the anti-Muslim mobs had been reported in some areas, adding to the widely held belief that the rioting was not a spontaneous affair fuelled by the Easter Sunday attacks but a well organised operation with political backing. According to intelligence reports, the jihadists were planning their second wave of attacks on May 13. According to Education Minister Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, when the attacks failed to materialise, the JO had incited the anti-Muslim attacks to derive maximum political mileage. The areas where the anti-Muslim riots took place had only meagre or zero Catholic presence, further corroborating the organised nature of this attack. It is possible that the Easter Sunday attacks were used as a dummy for a wider political project through the creation of anarchy, with the sole aim of making the government unpopular. Some JO MPs attribute the flare up to the bail granted to nine suspects in the Easter Sunday attacks, the government's alleged half hearted attempts to deal with the terrorists, and the anger of the Sinhalese that Muslim villagers were not properly checked for swords and weapons. However, given that the bail was granted about two weeks ago, and government actions against the attackers and those linked to them were frequently being reported in the media, this is unlikely.<sup>315</sup>

**To quench whose thirst?** (by Lakdev Liyanagama) - This week, anti-Muslim riots were reported mostly in the North-Western Province and Minuwangoda. One person is reported to have died in these incidents. At the time of writing, a nighttime police curfew is in place throughout the country. Almost 60 people have been arrested and 33 were detained for further questioning for inciting racial violence. Others have also been detained for inciting racial hatred through comments on social media. As the police and armed forces moved into the trouble spots to quell the rioting and restore law and order, the government again clamped a ban on social media. The attacks against the Muslim community have already caused concern internationally, with the UN calling for restraint. Social media reported claims that SLFP parliamentarian Jayasekara had intervened to secure the release of suspects arrested in connection with the violence. He said that he had only intervened to transfer the arrested suspects from the Hettipola police station to the Bingiriya police station. Among those arrested for alleged involvement in the violence were Namal Kumara, Amith Weerasinghe and Dan Priyasad. Kumara is the leader of the Anti-corruption movement. Weerasinghe is the leader of Mahason Balakaya, an ultra-nationalist group which has previously been implicated in allegedly inciting racial hatred.

<sup>314</sup> *Daily News*, May 16, p. 4.

<sup>315</sup> *Daily News*, May 16, p. 6.



Priyasad is the head of the Nawa Sinhale, an organisation which voices sentiments similar to the Mahason Balakaya. The fact that the attacks occurred weeks after the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks, in predominantly Sinhala Buddhist areas, suggests that the attacks may have been organised for political gain, such as embarrassing the government.<sup>316</sup>

**Dan Priyasad granted bail** (by Shavini Madhara) - Nawa Sinhale Director Suresh Priyasad, alias Dan Priyasad, who was arrested by the Colombo Crime Division (CCD) over his alleged involvement in the recent acts of violence, was granted bail by Colombo Additional Magistrate Priyantha Liyanage. He was released on two sureties of Rs. 500,000. The CCD initiated investigations following a complaint made by a Muslim national named Seiyath Ali, who said that the suspect threatened him at his residence in Meethotamulla on April 13. The police said that two others had also visited the complainant's residence with the suspect, and added that they had recorded two statements from the relatives of the complainant. They also said that they obtained CCTV footage from the housing complex. The magistrate fixed further inquiries for June 9.<sup>317</sup>

**'Batticaloa campus established to preach Islamic extremism'** (by Dinuli Francisco and Dilshan Tharaka) - Chairman of the Protect Sri Lanka National Movement, Ven. Pahiyangala Ananda Sagara Thera, alleged that the Batticaloa Campus had been established for the purpose of propagating Islamic Fundamentalism and creating Islamic extremist preachers. He urged the authorities to take the necessary steps to affiliate the controversial campus with the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka lest it becomes an ISIS training camp in the future. The thera said that political hands were behind the recent acts of violence in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. He also criticised the set of instructions given to the military by the police with regard to the conduct of search operations at Muslim places of worship. Meanwhile, Professor Channa Jayasumana pointed out that Rs. 14 billion had been provided by Middle Eastern countries to establish the Batticaloa Campus, although Minister Hizbullah and his son had stated that it had cost only around Rs. 7 billion. The Batticaloa campus had also focused on recruiting students from other countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Malaysia, and Indonesia to teach Islamic extremism, he said.<sup>318</sup>

**Government should take steps to protect Muslims – Amnesty International** (by N. Thanuja) - Amnesty International (AI) has urged the government to take steps to protect the Muslim community following recent attacks targeting them. AI urged the government to protect the Muslims from attackers and to bring the wrongdoers before the law.<sup>319</sup>

**Attacks on Muslim villages** - This piece states that the aim of Buddhist extremists is to destroy the wealth of the Muslims and to chase them away from their homes. The

316 Daily News, May 16, p. 6.

317 Daily News, May 16, p. 10.

318 Daily News, May 16, p. 10.

319 Virakesari, May 16, p. 1.





commentary claims that these extremist elements have functioned with the backing of the rulers. It states that these extremists had indulged in violence against Muslims and attempted to ban their religious values. The piece draws parallels with the attacks on Tamils in the past, namely the burning of the Jaffna Public Library in order to prevent Tamils from developing academically and economically.<sup>320</sup>

**An adversary board consist of religious leaders is needed to work for the benefit of the country**

- Minister Champika Ranawaka (by Upali Karunaratne, Chameera Alladeniya) The news feature extensively followed the speech given by Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka at the inaugural conference of 'National way' public movement. In his speech the minister elaborately covered the incidents from 1983 July to Easter Sunday and urge to analyse the terrorism and our Muslim society. He mentions that the two millions of Muslims live in Sri Lanka are not the terrorists and people who are connected to terrorism is a very small group. Then he talks about the future implementations to uproot the terrorism and the importance of everybody's dedication for that. Then the minister states that there should be a supreme religious advisory board to resolve issues related to religious affairs, instead of several ministries for each religion.<sup>321</sup>

**Will introduce a new act to supervise the Madrasa Schools around the country regularly; Islam never approve terrorism**

- Minister M.HA Haleem expressed his thoughts in a Ramadan event in Kandy. He mentioned that the Easter attack shocked all of the country and even though Muslims were accused of this attack, they (Muslims) see it as an attack by terrorists who were Muslim for the name. The minister also added that Islam never approve terrorism and he thanks the Cardinal, most venerable incumbents and chief prelates, Muslim and Hindu priests, president and prime minister for their statements which pacified the situation. Regarding the Madrasas the minister said that there are 317 Madrasas that gives higher education. He said that the pacifism is what taught in those Madrasas but some suspect that there are teachings of terrorism in Madrasas. And to resolve that, there will be an act to regulate and supervise Madrasas, he added.<sup>322</sup>

**Prominent Muslim leaders call for Sri Lankan identity**

- Addressing a media conference at which President's Counsel Ali Sabry and former Ministers Imthiaz Bakeer Marker and Ferial Ashraff were present, Minister Kabir Hashim said that the need of the hour is to "forge a Lankan identity." He said that the Muslim community has been, and are continuing to work against extremism. Ali Sabry PC expressed similar sentiments, claiming that he has always spoken against 'Arabisation'. He also claimed that he, along with other Muslim leaders, wanted madrasas to be regulated under the Ministry of Higher Education, in order to monitor what is taught and who is teaching them. Sabry PC noted, however, that "the overview of mosques and sermons, the steps to ban the niqab were all done by the Muslims themselves before intervention of the government." He condemned

<sup>320</sup> Virakesari, May 16, p. 4.

<sup>321</sup> Dinamina, May 16, p. 11.

<sup>322</sup> Lankadeepa, May 17, p. 8.





the anti-Muslim attacks and stated that there was a surge in recruitment for Zaharan's gang following the Digana attacks. Former Minister Imthiaz Bakeer Marker similarly advocated against extremism and retaliatory attacks, and said that the media had played a 'regressive' role following the violence, contributing to the fear psychosis. Sabry PC speaking to the Daily Mirror said that there were only two mosques at which swords were found.<sup>323</sup>

**Healing process essential to bring back nation to normalcy - FUTA** (by Yohan Perera) - The Federation of University Teachers Association (FUTA) yesterday called for a national programme to heal the minds of the people suffering from tension after the Easter Sunday bombings and the resultant violence. They also called for safety guidelines for educational institutions and stated that it was important that children are talked to in a way that does not perpetuate stereotypes of different communities. Regarding a question about Sharia University, Dr. Nirmal Ranjith Devasiri said that FUTA takes issue with the secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education abusing his power to establish the institution, not with the religion taught in the university. He also stated that Islamism is already taught at the University of Colombo.<sup>324</sup>

**EU urges govt. to uphold rule of law** - In a joint statement, the EU has called on the government to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that the law is applied equally to all instigators and perpetrators of communal violence.<sup>325</sup>

**SLFP submits proposals to counter terrorism and extremism** (by Sandun A. Jayasekara) - The SLFP has presented proposals to quell terrorism and extremism, and to promote interfaith and inter-ethnic harmony. The proposals include the close monitoring of social media and the prescribing of face coverings like the burqa and full-face helmets. They are ready to consider incorporating it into the proposed CTB after removing all clauses allegedly detrimental to national interests, media and trade unions, if the government or the UNP agrees. Senior VP of the SLFP, Nimal Sripala De Silva recently said that laws have to be enacted to educate Sri Lankan students returning from studying abroad on cultural, social, religious and traditional values. Furthermore, there should be a screening system for foreigners speaking on religion or culture in Sri Lanka. Registration of political parties on religious, caste or regional lines must be banned and there should be a common law on religious centres and places of worship. There must be only one Ministry of Religious Affairs to regulate all religions.<sup>326</sup>

<sup>323</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A1, A2.

<sup>324</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A4.

<sup>325</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A4.

<sup>326</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A4.



**Satyagraha against extremism, violence** – A 'satyagraha' organised by an organisation called 'Api Minissu' (We are humans) was held in front of the Viharamahadevi Park today demanding that the government establish unity among communities and put an end to extremism and violence in the country.<sup>327</sup>

**Temporary closure of Muslims' shops in Manmunaipattu** (by V. Krishna) - TMVP member Pon. Gunasegaram proposed a resolution to temporarily close down shops belonging to Muslims in Manmunai Pattu. The resolution was passed at the Manmunai Pattu Pradeshiya Sabha on Wednesday, along with other resolutions aimed at easing racial tensions. They were passed unanimously, although five Muslim members of the council walked out voicing dissatisfaction at the resolutions.<sup>328</sup>

**We must act wise and establish peace, harmony** - Patali – Participating at the vesting of the Sooriyawewa weekly fair, Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka said that terrorists aim to expand their numbers, and warned that anti-Muslim attacks will only work to their advantage. He also said that madrasas were a completely different world targeting the Muslim youth and leading them towards extremism.<sup>329</sup>

**Current security situation: MPs to urge govt. to bring in series of legislation** (by Kelum Bandara) – A group of MPs, from both the government and the opposition, are planning to urge the government to introduce a series of legislation aimed at de-radicalising Muslims holding extremist views, regulating madrasas. and amending the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a minister said yesterday. Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka told a function in Suriyawewa, Hambantota yesterday that the PTA should be amended to broaden the definition of terrorism given the current circumstances, and that a separate piece of legislation should be enacted to ensure de-radicalisation. Additionally, some MPs believe that madrasas should be regulated by the Education Ministry, not the Muslim Religious Affairs Ministry.<sup>330</sup>

**CDS assures Islamic nation envoys of security cover** (By Kelum Bandara) - The Organisation of Islamic Countries called on CDS Admiral Ravindra C. Wijegunaratne on Wednesday to discuss the outbreak of violence in some areas of the North-Western province and Minuwangoda. Among the organisation members that were represented were Iran, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bangladesh, Egypt and others. The CDS assured them that a team of eight army personnel had been stationed at each police station concerned to assist the police in the case of an emergency and likened the Easter Sunday bomb attack in Sri Lanka to the 9/11 attack in the United States.<sup>331</sup>

<sup>327</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A6.

<sup>328</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A6.

<sup>329</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A6.

<sup>330</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A6.

<sup>331</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A6.



**Burqa banned in Badulla district buses** (by Prasad Rukmal) – Private bus operators in the Badulla District have requested that Muslim women in burqas refrain from boarding the buses, citing security, difficulty in identifying individuals, and tension among the other passengers.<sup>332</sup>

**Riots in Minuwangoda:** Pasta company owner says ‘Yes to law and no to divisions’ (by Kalani Kumarasinghe) - This feature piece focuses on how the mob violence in Minuwangoda affected Diamond Pasta, the country’s largest pasta manufacturing facility. Management employed a lot of locals, with the majority of employees being Sinhala. Nevertheless, by 7.30 p.m. on May 13, a mob comprised of hard-line Buddhist groups attacked the facilities. According to employees, the mobs broke through the large aluminium gates and started damaging everything, even setting tyres on fire and throwing them into the factory. Ali Jisthy, the proprietor, noted that they knew it was a Muslim-owned building, and seemed to be aware of the entry points - it was an organised attack. Four employees were injured, including one who incurred a spinal injury. Two were Sinhala and the others were Muslim. Although the police arrived 15 minutes later, they were unable to manage the situation until the arrival of the armed forces. The management doesn’t blame them for being overwhelmed- police reports indicate a mob of around 500 people, while locals claim only 200 were present. Only 9 suspects were arrested in connection with the riots in Minuwangoda. The company estimates a loss of Rs. 700 million, but management said they did not want this story to cause a divide. Instead, it should open up the discussion of radicalisation.<sup>333</sup>

**Our thought: Is it safe, because they say so?** - This piece questions the government’s insistence that everything is under control in the wake of the Easter Sunday attacks. It claims that the government is keeping findings made during search operations under wraps, including requesting that media institutes not publish photographs of swords and weapons found during raids. The piece reports that a group of Buddhist monks have visited the IGP’s office and handed over a letter containing many demands, including the arrest of Minister Bathiudeen and Governor Hizbullah. Members of extremist Sinhala groups that resort to retaliatory violence are also a threat. While quick arrests were made following the Easter Sunday attacks, the same cannot be said for the mob violence, given the police inaction.<sup>334</sup>

**Wahhabism, Salafism: The good, the bad and the evil** (by Ameen Izzadeen) - This piece provides a brief history of Wahhabism and Salafism, in order for people to better comprehend exactly what they are labelling a terror ideology. In the wake of the Easter Sunday massacres, Kattankudy was sullied as the hotbed of Wahhabism, although a majority of its people call themselves Sunnath Jamath Muslims, who follow the guidelines of the Colombo-based All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama. Of Kattankudy’s nearly 70 mosques, only about 12 are identified as Thowheed mosques. But all Thowheed mosques do not

<sup>332</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A7.

<sup>333</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A8.

<sup>334</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A10.



follow Wahhabism. Wahhabism emerged as a reform movement in the late 18th century, founded by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. His reforms were aimed at reviving monotheism - Thowheed - and cleansing Islam from superstitions and new rituals introduced largely by Sufis and their blind followers. The problem with Abdul Wahhab is that he did not adopt intellectualism as a methodology to prove his point. Instead, he justified violence. Salafism emerged as a reform movement in the late 19th century. The adherents of jihadi Salafism form only a small minority and they include terror groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab. To combat the spread of violent Salafism or Wahhabism, the mainstream Salafis have at times been encouraged to play a part in countering terrorism in nations such as Britain. Perhaps, Sri Lanka can think about this.<sup>335</sup>

**Govt. must not fail in its duty to protect innocent people** - The anti-Muslim riots in different parts of the country have led to at least two deaths. The government was compelled to deploy the army and to declare a night-time curfew all over the country to contain the rioting due to the initial failure of the local police to control the mobs. People living in the vicinity of the riots have confirmed that outsiders led the attack, and victims have stated that some of the mob attacks were reported after curfew was imposed. The police have arrested many suspects. The National Peace Council condemns the rioters and those who organised them, oblivious of the larger national interest and humanitarian considerations.<sup>336</sup>

**Another pogrom totally unacceptable in Sri Lanka** (by Dr. N. Kumaraguruparan) - The entire Muslim community cannot be victimised because of a severe, dogmatic attack by a small fanatic Islamic faction on Easter Sunday. It is time for all Sri Lankan politicians to work towards a speedy recovery and the development of patriotic sentiments that go beyond religion, race and caste.<sup>337</sup>

**From Islamic extremism to marauding Sinhala-Buddhist violence** (by Kusal Perera) - In the wake of the Easter Sunday attacks, Sinhala-Buddhist extremism has appeared in the form of unconfirmed stories, an opposition to the burqa, gossip, and through some Sinhala media. May 5 saw the first direct attack on Muslim property and on a mosque from Negombo, starting in Pothupitiya and spreading to adjoining areas. A few Catholic priests were “behind the scenes” instigators. From Negombo, the anti-Muslim violence went over to Chilaw, again with a Catholic priest implicated. With far more organised attacks, Kuliyaipitiya and surrounding small towns were set on fire for three days. Concerning these attacks, widespread allegations are that the police either came too late or with inadequate numbers. Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith declaring that Catholic schools would remain closed despite public schools being opened, and making a statement to Al Jazeera TV about possible terror attacks did not help the situation. It drove the public into

<sup>335</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A10.

<sup>336</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A11.

<sup>337</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A11.



a further panic. Teachers were not allowed into schools wearing the hijab, officials were also requested to remove it, and three-wheelers and cabs refused Muslim customers.<sup>338</sup>

**Ethnic riots: A mix-up of friend and foe** (by M.S.M Ayub) - The anti-Muslim riots in Minuwangoda, Kuliyaipitiya, Hettipola, Bingiriya, Dummalasuriya, Rasnayakepura, Kobeigane and several other areas are the result of the same fanatic hatred that caused the Easter Sunday attacks. Christians sympathised with Muslims during the hate campaigns over the halal issue, the sterilisation allegations and other unfounded accusations. It was revealed after the Easter Sunday barbarity that some Muslim organisations, which had knowledge about danger within their community, had been continually providing information about it to the authorities since 2013. These riots cannot be considered a backlash against the terrorist attacks as they took place 21 days after the latter and the large majority of rioters did not seem to be Christians. Both mainstream and social media are to be blamed to some extent. The recent capture of swords, knives and various legal, as well as illegal items, were all jumbled with “Islamic” terrorism. The seizure of swords from mosques was generalised when they were recovered from only two out of 2,500 mosques in the country. Arrests were counted but the releases after questioning were ignored. In spite of the recent ban preventing only the donning of the face veil, Muslim women were forced to remove their head cover as well. The concern of the muslim community has shifted from rooting out extremism to security. They are worried over the reports that law enforcement authorities had not been so prompt in containing the rioters. They are puzzled as to how such vast damage was done in Muslim pockets when the state machinery had been put on high alert.<sup>339</sup>

**Introspection means looking in - not making excuses** (by Uditha Devapriya) - In this feature piece, a Sinhalese Buddhist analyses the Easter Sunday attacks and the resultant retaliatory violence, and how religion can get obscured by extremist ideology. This can happen as easily to Buddhists as to Muslims, and any other religion, as was demonstrated by events in the country. The growing animus against Muslims was partly a result of what was perceived to be a lack of response from them towards the radicalisation of their community. Of course, to be fair, non-Muslims were as much to blame for the resultant confusion here as were Muslims. Non-Muslims should understand that the niqab is a symbol of a Muslim woman’s autonomy, not a sign that they are terrorists. Similarly, it did not help matters that the Muslim community seemed apathetic to answering queries about the halal controversy or swords being found in mosques. Their answers were reasonable, but more or less equated to “it is a custom of ours”, which did not translate well given the tense state of the country. However, non-Muslims need to understand that one cannot simply and magically expect the Muslim community to adhere to a way of living in a state which has been alien to them. Introspection means looking in and figuring

<sup>338</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A12.

<sup>339</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A12.



out what went wrong, and recognising radicalisation on both sides, instead of making excuses for it and calling it retaliatory.<sup>340</sup>

**Bombers do not represent Muslims nor Islamic faith** - Muslim leaders say in one voice (by Rukshana Rizwie) - Minister Kabir Hashim together with civil society representatives PC Ali Sabry and former Ministers Ferial Ashraff and Imthiaz Bakeer Markar concurred that a close retrospection of their community, ranging from lifestyles, schooling, preaching and even clothing was pertinent to ensure that Muslims maintain a Sri Lankan identity. Minister Ferial Ashraff appealed to Buddhists and Christians not to cast innocent Muslims in the same light as the suicide bombers. PC Ali Sabry added that the role of madrasas is questionable, since it is unregulated. He added that many individuals were prompted by the violence unleashed in Digana and Aluthgama to retaliate against those perpetrators, which eventually led them to pursue extremist ideologies. Minister Kabir Hashim said that Muslims as a community have gone beyond the call of duty to ensure that extremism is rooted out, citing the search operations in Sainthamaruthu and Mawanella, where Muslims themselves tipped off police on the activities of extremist individuals.<sup>341</sup>

**Three held over burqa issue** (By Kapila Somaratne) - Panadura Additional Magistrate Chandana Kalansuriya yesterday remanded three suspects who had abused health unit officials and medical officers at a health clinic in Atulugama, Bandaragama, on Monday. The three suspects abused the officials when they refused to give treatment to Muslim women wearing burqas. Bandaragama Police SI Mohamed Mihilal inquired into the complaint of the health officials and arrested the suspects. The identification parade fixed for yesterday was cancelled by the magistrate and the case was postponed to May 29.<sup>342</sup>

**Salley urges Muslim women to complain against harassment** (By Menaka Indrakumar) - Western Province Governor Salley yesterday said that Muslim women were instructed to complain against harassment. "Several officials had harassed women at hospitals. I spoke to Minister Rajitha Seneratne about this, and a circular was issued on how search operations should be done, yet it has been neglected," he said. According to Salley, a principle had sent back a teacher dressed in certain attire, and 12 teachers had been verbally humiliated. Salley also requested Muslim women not to cover their faces and banned the burqa in Western Province schools before the president did.<sup>343</sup>

**Suspects arrested over recent violence: 'Background checks would reveal political motivation'** (By Lahiru Fernando) - Deputy Minister Karunaratne Paranawithana said that a gang backed by politicians was behind the violent incidents which recently occurred in several areas. He said that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) should look into the political background and history of those who were arrested in

<sup>340</sup> Daily Mirror, May 17, p. A13.

<sup>341</sup> Daily News, May 17 p. 1, 6.

<sup>342</sup> Daily News, May 17 p. 2.

<sup>343</sup> Daily News, May 17 p. 6.



connection with the attacks in order to reveal the real culprits. Highlighting the need for proper religious education in the country to prevent such issues in the future, the deputy minister also urged the authorities to set up an inter-religious advisory board to monitor the religious education in the country.<sup>344</sup>

**Sixty-two suspects arrested over Wayamba incidents** (by S.M. Wijayaratne) - Kurunegala and Puttalam police arrested 62 suspects in connection with incidents of racial violence that erupted in Wariyapola, Kuliypitiya, Nikaweratiya, Chilaw, and Kurunegala. Ten suspects arrested from Kuliypitiya and Hettipola were remanded till May 27, while 18 suspects apprehended in Nattandiya were remanded till May 28. The rest of the suspects were to be produced at courts on Wednesday. Investigations are continuing.<sup>345</sup>

**27 mosques damaged** (by ARA Fareel) - 27 mosques have been damaged due to the recent violence in the Puttalam and Gampaha districts. The list of damaged mosques has been compiled by the Muslim Cultural Affairs Department. 23 mosques and an Arabic school in Kurunegala, three mosques in Puttalam, and one mosque in Gampaha have been damaged.<sup>346</sup> Batti University will be open to students of all religions: PM (by Yohan Perera) – The new Islamic education institutions bill will provide provisions to set up degree awarding institutes. This bill will allow those of all religions and races to attend the now-famous Batticaloa University according to the prime minister. He added that Sri Lanka does not need Sharia Universities.<sup>347</sup> Protest staged against lady teachers wearing Abaya (by J.A.L. Jayasinghe) – Past pupils of Kandy St. Anthony's Girls School, parents and the residents of the area yesterday staged a protest in front of the school requesting the Muslim female teachers of the school to refrain from wearing the abaya, given the prevailing security situation. More than 400 protesters participated. Kandy Police and the security forces had stepped up security in the area during the protest.<sup>348</sup>

**Magistrate asks for a report on Minuangoda crimes** (by Tony Karunanayake) -s Minuangoda magistrate ordered the government analyst to check the crime scenes in Minuangoda which destroyed by arson and give a report. With the mob attacks in Minuangoda recently, the shops belong to Mohamad Riyar Mohamad Azlam, Mohamad Hamsim Usain, Oshan Chanaka de Silva, Mohamad Kalim and Mohamad Hussain.<sup>349</sup>

**Vesak: A turning point for inter-religious unity** – This editorial noted that people, including Christians, Hindus and Muslims are expected to take part in temple ceremonies

<sup>344</sup> Daily News, May 17 p. 8.

<sup>345</sup> Daily News, May 17 p. 13.

<sup>346</sup> Virakesari, May 17, p. 1.

<sup>347</sup> Daily Mirror, May 18, p. A1, A2.

<sup>348</sup> Daily Mirror, May 18, p. A7.

<sup>349</sup> Divaina, May 18, p. 6.





this Vesak. Since the Easter Sunday attack, the “highest level religious leaders have been meeting regularly to consolidate the movement for inter-religious and inter-racial unity in diversity”. The editorial notes that this unity is “vital” for Sri Lanka to progress and prosper. The editorial calls for selfless and sincere unity and deep respect for those of other faiths and beliefs, but also claims that answers and justice must be found in the aftermath of the recent attacks. “As all religions say, while love and mercy are essential, equally important are justice and righteousness”.<sup>350</sup>

**Terrorism can’t be managed, has to be eliminated** (by D.J. Wijesinghe) – This short opinion piece states that the government could not have “pursued an intelligence-based anti-terrorist drive to combat the ISIS-linked terrorist groups without the bomb blasts happening” as the government would have been “pounced on” by local and international human rights groups, powerful nations and even the stakeholders of the bomb blast. It notes that if a bomb goes off anywhere, there is a 90% chance that it is the work of a Muslim terror group – but that does not mean that all Muslims are terrorists. Instead, “the silent and informal Muslim majority is full of colour, joy and happiness just like you and me”. The author goes on to praise Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith for the way he handled himself in the aftermath of the attacks, stating that we must all learn from him. The government is doing well to “rid the country of the terrorist” and therefore a “military- biased government” is not required and must, critically, be avoided.<sup>351</sup>

**Speaker visits riot-affected Minuwangoda** –Speaker Karu Jayasooriya is seen speaking to the public during a visit to riot-affected Minuwangoda Town and saw for himself the damage caused to shops and mosques. The article contains three pictures of his visit.<sup>352</sup>

**Don’t be divided on communal lines: All measures taken to ensure national security** - President - The president opined that the April 21 attacks were an international issue more than a domestic issue. He pointed out the dire consequences the country might face if the people turn it into a domestic issue, and give way to the ulterior motives of terrorists. The president was addressing the state Vesak festival held at the Thotagamuwa Purana Ranpath Raja Maha Viharaya in Hikkaduwa yesterday. The president, dismissing criticism against him, said that he took every possible measure to ensure national security and to restore normalcy in the country following the Easter Sunday attacks. He also unveiled the plaque to declare the Thotagamuwa Purana Ranpath Raja Maha Viharaya a sacred city.<sup>353</sup>

**No need for Sharia universities – PM:** Bill to regulate Madrasas soon - An amended draft bill on the regulation of Islamic institutes, including madrasas, will be presented to the cabinet after consultations with the AG’s Department and the Muslim Religious Affairs Ministry, PM Ranil Wickremesinghe said. He said that the country does not need Sharia

<sup>350</sup> Daily Mirror, May 18, p. A8.

<sup>351</sup> Daily Mirror, May 18, p. A8.

<sup>352</sup> Daily Mirror, May 18, p. A13.

<sup>353</sup> Daily News, May 18, p. 1.





universities, and that degree awarding institutions should be open to all under the Universities Act. 354

**None but terrorists benefit from clashes - Sajith** (By Raja Waidyasekera) - Beneficiaries of the clashes in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks are none but the Thowheed Jamath organisation and its members, said Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Minister Sajith Premadasa. The minister said that if we are to eradicate terrorism, we must find the motive behind these attacks. He said that the ISIS terrorists may attack several countries in this zone, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and India.355

**Vesak reflections** - This editorial discusses the more spiritual nature of Vesak this year, due to commercialised aspects being cancelled due to the Easter Sunday attacks. The article discusses the value of religion in everyday life, and labels the Easter Sunday attacks an example of what can happen when people move away from the main tenets of a given religion and embrace hate and extremism. The piece states that these events should not be used as an opportunity to spread more hate, as this simply falls in line with the ulterior motives of terrorists and opportunistic politicians. The article stresses the peaceful values of Buddhism and urges people to use this Vesak as a time of reflection. The piece also calls for children to be educated on all religions, regardless of what they themselves believe, and condemns ethnic and religious segregation in schools.356

**Allegations against the Police and the Army that they abetted the attacks** (by Tharindu Uduwaragedara and Rekha Nilukshi Herath) – There are allegations that the Police and the Armed-forces actually abetted the attacks as opposed to preventing those attacks that were leashed targeting the Muslim community in several areas of the island such as Minuwangoda, Kuliypitiya, Bingiriya and Hettipola. CCTV footage that depicts as to how the security forces stayed in the areas of attacks while assisting them have gone viral; some attacks have taken place while the curfew is on and security forces have not taken steps to prevent such attacks or to arrest those who are responsible for the attacks. Residents in Minuwangoda complain that six army officials adopted a passive behaviour without preventing the attack that was launched by a mob at a Muslim Mosque in Minuwangoda. It is also reported that the perpetrators of violence during the anti-Muslim that erupted in various areas are generally granted bail as the Police had made the charges against such perpetrators under the general law as opposed to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act of 2007.357

**An organised attack** (by Tharindu Uduwaragedara and Rekha Nilukshi Herath) – It is reported that the attacks leashed on the Muslim community in Nattandiya had been carried out by the local government members of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) IN Nattandiya and Wennappuwa Pradeshiya Sabhas. It has been reported that the

354 Daily News, May 18, p. FP.

355 Daily News, May 18, p. 2.

356 Daily News, May 18, p. 6.

357 Anidda, May 19, p. 1, 2.

Head of the SLPP in Wennappuwa Pradeshiya Sabha had directed a group of 100 motorcyclists and that the relevant group had attacked the Muslim village in Thummodara, Kottaramulla and Buthgampola.<sup>358</sup>

**What are the banned clothes?** – There is a wrong opinion within the society about the clothes that were banned citing security reasons in the country recently. The order issued by President Maithripala Sirisena states that “no one should wear any accessory, cloth or any other material that conceals the entire face of that particular individual that would hinder the recognition of the identity of that person in a particular place”. The term “entire face” has been explained as the part that extends from the top of the forehead to the end of the chin and between the ears (but excluding ears). But there is an exception in this gazette. That states that a member of the Army, Navy, Air-Force, Police and the Civil Defence forces can order a particular person to remove the accessory, cloth or any other material that conceals the entire face of that particular person. Accordingly, the hijab worn by the Muslim women is not a banned cloth.<sup>359</sup>

**Thugs in Opposition created mayhem in Minuwangoda and Panduwasnuwara** (by K. Sanjeewa) – Days and weeks passed since the Easter Sunday attacks. Rumours were circulating that there is a risk of a suicidal attack to five regions in the city of Colombo. When people were terrified of another wave of attack, a rumour spread in the Chillaw region that a son of a leading Muslim businessman had posted in Facebook that Sinhalese masses in Chilaw would have to cry in the subsequent day. The Police have dismissed a complaint made in this regard stating it as a petty issue. But the residents, who panicked with this response, had attacked the person who made the post. Meanwhile, a wave of attacks was leashed against Muslim community in Kuliyaipitiya; it does not take much time to spreading of these disturbances to other areas like Bingiriya, Hettipola and Panduwasnuwara. When the disturbances in the Panduwasnuwara were returning back to normal, it had already caused a huge devastation to Mosques, Muslim-owned shops and houses. Muslims who were victims of these ruthless attacks might be living with the fear as to when their lives would be taken by Sinhalese. Sinhala community who are behind these attacks should realise that not all Muslims are responsible for Islamic extremism.<sup>360</sup>

**Genesis of the Easter bomb attackers lies in the religion** (by Gamini Viyangoda) – The Easter bomb attackers might have gone to “paradise” according to their belief. The majority of the remaining of the extremists who aided the attackers has been arrested at present. There is hardly any evidence to suggest that these two groups along with the anonymous groups that align with them in terms of the ideology, constitutes at least one per cent of the entire Muslim population in the country. But if at least one per cent of a particular community represents destruction, that brings destruction not only to that

<sup>358</sup> Anidda, May 19, p. 1, 2.

<sup>359</sup> Anidda, May 19, p. 1, 2.

<sup>360</sup> Anidda, May 19, p. 3.



particular community but also to the entire country. Some trace the origins of the Easter Sunday terror attack to the “Wahabbism” that was recently imported to this country from Saudi Arabia. It is stated that Wahabbism came to Sri Lanka due to the fact that Sri Lanka maintained extensive links with the international Muslim community as never before.<sup>361</sup>

**Implement law on isolated incidents as well** (by Rekha Nilukshi Herath) – It seems that some people in the communities that were terrified due to the Easter Sunday attacks had a need to punish the entire Muslim community. Thus, there have been instances where the Muslim people were unable to carry out their activities freely. A group of parents who were there at the gate of the Viharamahadevi Girls School and the St. Anthony’s Girls School in Kandy had compelled a group of Muslim teachers of that school to remove the Abaya. Abaya is not a garment that covers the face and it is a garment that is generally worn by Muslim women and is akin to a gown. Those teachers had come to the school with that attire plus a hijab that covers only the hair. When those teachers attempted to enter the school, the parents had stopped them. Throughout the history, Muslim teachers have been coming to schools wearing the abaya and the hijab. There was also an incident where a doctor had asked a patient who had come to the hospital wearing a hijab, to come after removing it.<sup>362</sup>

**The dark side of the Cardinal** – Some opine that Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith deserve the Nobel peace prize this time. It is true. That is because his intervention to avert a possible turbulence in the society in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attack was really honourable. The ideas emphasised by the Cardinal pinpointing the religious ideals of harmlessness in Catholic faith, particularly at a time when the Buddhist Bhikkhus who are supposed to sermon on the Buddhist ideal of “not killing any living being” are tying pirith threads in the hands of assassins.<sup>363</sup>

**An invitation for soul-searching on politics and religion** (by Jayadeva Uyangoda) – A soul-searching process generated within the Muslim community after the Easter Sunday attack on 21st of April. That originated in the very moment the religious and ethnic identities of the attackers were revealed. The moderate Muslim leaders who were hitherto scared of fringes of extremists have already started a soul-searching process within the Muslim community. There is a direct responsibility on the Buddhist, Christian, Catholic and Hindu masses as well as on the secular, moderate persons to nurture the soul-searching process of Muslims, without leaving it alone. The first step to a harmonious inter-faith dialogue should be set upon. In such a novel dialogue, each religion should get rid of the post-modernist, monotheistic idea that “the eternal truth is only there in our religion and the accurate religious leader is our religious leader”. As per the information that has been revealed hitherto, the religions that reckon that the monopoly of spiritual and after-death emancipation lies only within their religions, can

361 Anidda, May 19, p. 4.

362 Anidda, May 19, p. 5.

363 Anidda, May 19, p. 6.



direct the youth who blindly practice such religions to vicious acts. No religion can say that this observation is not relevant to their particular religion. 364

**Put Buddhist flags in every house – Minister of Buddha Sasana** (by Akitha Perera)- Minister of Buddha Sasana and Wayamba Development Gamini Jayawickrama Perera urged all Sri Lankans to have Vesak decorations by exhibiting Buddhist flags at every house regardless of the religious differences. He also urged the masses to have Vesak decorations in temples, famous places and on either side of roads.365

**The message of the Muslim youth that provoked the masses who endured bombs, swords and daggers** (by Hemantha Randunu)- Terrorist group of National Thowheed Jama'ath launched a series of suicidal bomb attacks on last 21st of April. Everyone thought that there would be racial conflicts in the country with this series of attacks. That is because even at that time, many Sinhalese were rejecting Muslim to a certain extent. There was a wave of provoking Muslims at that time. But racial conflicts did not emerge in the country after the Easter Sunday attacks. Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith did an immense job in this regard and there were no ethnic and religious disturbances as the Cardinal took steps to calm down the Catholics asking them to act peacefully. The recent turbulence was created due to a post of a Muslim youth. The Police could discover a bag containing T-56 live bullets with 251 live bullets. It was difficult to find as to who dumped this bag into the Kinigama tank in Bingiriya. But the residents of the area suspected that the bag might have been dumped by the Muslim Mosque adjacent to the Kinigama tank. Residents attacked the Kinigama Mosque without waiting for any further investigation. A pile of sharp weapons including swords, daggers was found in the Hamilton Canal that flows behind the Thummodara Muslim Mosque. Residents thought that this might have been dumped by the Muslim Mosque. Thus, the rioters attacked the Thummodara Mosque. Sri Lankans who toiled hard under a 30-year war lived peacefully for 10 years. A group of extremist Muslim sinners destroyed this country again. The expectation of the extremist Muslim terrorists is being materialised in the very same manner they wanted. They created conflicts between religions by attacking Catholic Churches.366

**The way of wisdom** - Mohammed Ameen who lived in Kottaramulla, Nattandiya was killed by a shot of the cleaver. Islamic terrorist Mohammed Zaharan killed 300 innocent weapon-less civilians in a few Churches without any valid reason. Mohammed Ameen was attacked by a cleaver without a valid reason. This is neither Muslims killing Sinhalese nor the Sinhalese killing Muslims; but this is Sri Lankans killing Sri Lankans. Vesak festival is celebrated in this month. The extent to which the Government has taken precautions to avert a possible racist turbulence is explained by the fact that every pandol has been banned. It is a good act as if a second Zaharan who comes to see a pandol blows himself, both the pandol and the masses watching it would be destroyed. The intervention made

364 Anidda, May 19, p. 7.

365 Divaina, May 19, p. 1, 6.

366 Divaina, May 19, p. 3.



by the Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith in the averting possible social- mayhem must be the best and the greatest intervention made in this regard.<sup>367</sup>

**The SLFP proposal on the national security presented to all-religious dignitaries** (by Aruna Bogahawatte) - Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) has decided to brief the religious dignitaries of all faiths on the series of proposals by the SLFP. The particular series of proposals is on the defeating of terrorism and extremism and further aims to guarantee the national security. This would happen in the next week. Among the 11 proposals that has been presented there are suggestions to frame new laws to counter the arousal of the hatred, violence and suspicion among different ethnic groups and religious groups, the promulgation of common laws on the establishment of places of religious worship and prayer centres.<sup>368</sup>

**Yeah that's true. Muslim community in this country is getting accustomed to an Arabic identity** – Imtiyaz Bakir Makar (By Akitha Perera) - Former Minister Imtiyaz Bakir Makar noted that we have been discussing about schools as Buddhist, Hindu, Catholic and Muslim schools. When a child comes out of a Muslim school that particular child does not know what the robe is; he also stated that that particular child does not know what the pottu is and neither is he aware of Virgin Mary. On the other hand, if it is an exclusive Buddhist school that child does not know what the hijab is and what the pottu is. He made these remarks during an interview with Divaina newspaper.<sup>369</sup>

**ISIS software engineer who supported the bombers arrested** (by Keerthi Warnakulasuriya) - Sri Lankan government that kept vigilance on the former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadres, allowed the building of 190 Muslim Mosques, 1600 Madrasa religious places in 2015. In 2016 the permission of the government was granted to 50 more Muslim Mosques. This gradually increased up to 80 Mosques in 2017. At present the number of Madrasas has increased up to 1675. According to high-level sources, in the Kattankudy area where 47125 Muslims live, there are 63 Muslim mosques and 7 Madrasa religious places. It was Saudi Arabia which provided funds to build these mosques. There are no 63 mosques in this manner in a single area even in India and the government adopted a passive behaviour until 63 mosques were built. The consequence of this passive behaviour adopted by the government is the Arabisation of the Kattankudy area. Simultaneously, burqa and niqab spread in Kattankudy area. The officials of the Government did not think that these are ominous signs of a future catastrophe, when these clothes spread to many areas including Puttalam- Beruwala- Galle- Hambantota- Aluthgama. There were threats to Pakistan after the emergence of Taliban terrorists from the Madrasa schools there. The former President of the Pakistan Pervez Musharraf is a foolish act done by Pakistan to allow the emergence of Madrasa religious schools. When the Madrasa schools were emerging in our country, the government did not realise that one day those schools would be a threat to the national security of the country. Muslim

<sup>367</sup> Divaina, May 19, p. 7.

<sup>368</sup> Divaina, May 19, p. 6.

<sup>369</sup> Divaina, May 19, p. 9.



Religious Affairs Department has issued letters of recommendations for the foreign Islamic teachers and clergy to obtain visas to come to Sri Lanka and then teach religion in those religious schools. The intelligence service did not attempt to discover more information as to who these clergy or the religious leaders who come from abroad are and it was due to the influence of the powerful Muslim politicians who had links with the government.<sup>370</sup>

**Celebrating Vesak is a right of Buddhists. Can it be disrupted?** (by Chathura Pamunuwa) - Sinhala Buddhists get ready to celebrate Vesak with great enthusiasm. But due to the suicidal attacks launched by Wahab extremists on Easter Sunday, the celebration of Vesak has been a problem for the first time in the history. But the celebration of Vesak should be done regardless of the risky atmosphere of any kind. That is a Buddhist right. Sinhala Buddhists should not refrain from exercising their religious rights voluntarily in the face of the Muslim extremism. Should we live in terror every day? It is Muslim extremists who want to bury the Buddhist civilisation. Buddhists celebrated Vesak as much as they can even amidst the terrorist violence of Prabhakaran. Thus, the country should not be kept in dark this time. Thousands of oil lamps should be burnt in every house and office in the country against the Wahabbist extremism. The entire country should be made a Vesak zone in order to convey the message that we do not succumb to extremism. The grandness of the Vesak should not be lost due to the influence of Zaharan Hashim. If the Vesak is not celebrated that would be a victory for Wahabbists. Then the leader of the ISIS would come out of his den and would boast that his organisation sabotaged even the Vesak celebrations in Sri Lanka. It is the duty of every Sinhala Buddhist to not to allow such an eventuality.<sup>371</sup>

**A common Agreement to ban the Burqa- Religious schools and Sharia Universities** (by Ajantha Kumara Agalakada) – A number of main political parties had come to an agreement to create the conducive background needed for the implementation of a common legal system in the country and to defeat terrorism and extremism. As a first step of it, Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) had submitted a series of proposals including eleven facts to the Chairman of the Sectoral Oversight Committee on Security – Malith Jayathilake.<sup>372</sup>

**There is no compulsion in Islam for Burqa and Niqab** (By Mohammed Asiq) – Clothes worn by Muslim women that cover the face such as the burqa and the niqab have been banned at present. There have been objections to these garments for a long time and many Muslim intellectuals too opined that a decision should be taken on these garments. Many are of the opinion that despite the fact that Muslim community in Sri Lanka have been living safeguarding the Sri Lankan identity, conforming to the Sri Lankan culture, there have been certain changes in that habit for the past three decades. One of the most notable changes in that regard is the cloth of the Muslim women. What is mentioned in

<sup>370</sup> Divaina, May 19, p. 3(II).

<sup>371</sup> Divaina, May 19, p. 8(II).

<sup>372</sup> Lankadeepa, May 19, p. 1, 21.



the Islamic faith on the dress of the Muslim women is that a cloth that covers the body parts except the areas that are below the wrist of the hand, the ankle and except the face should be worn. There is no reference to burqa, niqab or their colours in it. With the open economy and the fact that our women migrated as housemaids to Middle East, there was an influx of new styles of those countries to Sri Lanka. Abaya was introduced as opposed to the traditional saree and salwar and gradually this transformation went up to the extent where garments that entirely cover the face were worn. There have been objections over the Burqa and Niqab for a long time. Muslims should wear all these garments after adjusting them to the country and the religion. All Muslims should work in order to live in harmony with all communities in the country. There are various programmes at the official level that aim to build the inter-religious harmony. There were reports of several incidents where disrespectful behaviour was depicted towards ancient religious places with archaeological value venerated by Buddhists. Among them the incidents of taking photographs on the top of the Kirilagala, Horowpathana archaeological chethiyas and on top of an ancient temple in Mihintale were the salient incidents. If the Muslim youth are unaware as to the national heritage of the country and are not respecting other religions, it is the responsibility of the Muslim society and schools to brief the Muslim youth on it.<sup>373</sup>

**Extremism can be defeated by following the middle-path noted by Lord Buddha** – It is a tradition that dates back to immemorial times to celebrate Vesak in grand style. It is a specialty that Buddhists and Non-Buddhists join in these celebrations with a united heart. But that grand Vesak celebration has been deprived of us today. A group of terrorists who possessed an extremist religious mania deprived our country of that Vesak celebration. When Buddhists were deprived of Vesak, the Catholics noted that “we are also lighting an oil lamp in our houses”. It is the way to materialise harmony while moving parallel to the predominant culture. We should walk in that middle path.<sup>374</sup>

**Conventional Muslims who were attacked after challenging Zaharan in Kattankudy** (by Wasantha Chandrapala) – It is worthy to note that it was the Muslims who protested initially against the terrorist campaign initiated by Zaharan. Sufi Muslims (conventional Muslims) living in Kattankudy raised their voices against Zaharan. At the inception of activities of Zaharan, his first target had been the Sufi Muslims. Zaharan has stated in public addresses that conventional Muslims do not observe the genuine Islamic faith. He had stated publicly that it is he who maintains the genuine Islamic faith. Leader of the Sufi Muslim community in Kattankudy had repeatedly propagated among the Muslim masses that what is stated by Zaharan is wrong and that the statements made by Zaharan is not the Islamic faith. Zaharan who was enraged at these statements had stated in return that Sufi Muslim leader is wrong. Zaharan had carried out an extensive propaganda against Sufi Muslims as the latter group continued to criticise him. Zaharan and the clan had made a public address in Kattankudy on 10.03.2017 criticising the Sufi Muslims. In

<sup>373</sup> Lankadeepa, May 19, p. 2.

<sup>374</sup> Lankadeepa, May 19, p. 4.





the aftermath of the address, the group of Zaharans had attacked Sufi Muslims and three of them had been injured. Kattankudy people state that had there been credible investigations as to the complaints made against Zaharan at that time, there would not have been a catastrophe like this to the country.<sup>375</sup>

**Context in which the Muslim youth went to carry out suicidal attacks** (by Priyantha Kodippili quoting Lecturer Mohammed Faizal) – Senior Lecturer Mohammed Faizal noted that the identity of the Muslims was determined throughout the history based on the Islamic faith. Noting that at the outset, Muslims went to India or Pakistan to learn the religion of Islam. He added that after 1960 and 1970, their destination was Middle East in this regard. Noting that the people who went to Middle East commenced setting-up separate religious sects in the country, Faizal added that those groups started to say that the genuine Islam is not in Sri Lanka but in Middle East. Faizal noted that this was the starting point of the conflicts between Muslims and added that conventional Sufi Muslims who lived here started to raise voices against the ideas of people who came from Middle East. Faizal attributed the suicidal tendency of the Muslim youth to the global Islamic trend. He also mentioned that there were local incidents that further boosted the conduct of these extremist groups. He pointed out that after 2010, there were attacks against Muslims and presented the disturbances that happened in Aluthgama as examples for such attacks. Delving further, he noted that the terrorists in the world used it for their advantage. He posited the view that the extremists utilised the idea that Non-Muslims in Sri Lanka attack the Muslim community in Sri Lanka to brainwash the Muslim youth. He moreover noted that it was due to the mistake of the Muslim society itself that these extremist groups emerged in the country.<sup>376</sup>

**Who created Mayhem in Minuwnagoda?** (by Amila Malawisuriya) – Whatever the source of the extremism is, it is a parasite that affects not only the respective country but also the entire world. Masses in the country had to experience terror and violence again due to the misbehaviour of another group of extremists. Though the first incident of this kind was reported from Porutota on 05th May, that incident did not exacerbate due to the direct intervention of the Cardinal and the proactive involvement of the Government and the security forces. But after the lapse of a week since the Porutota incident, a conflict arose between the Muslims and the Sinhalese in Chilaw based on a set of words circulated on social media. The tense situation that erupted was curbed by imposition of curfew. But several violent incidents that took the form of communal-religious disturbances erupted in Kuliypitiya, Bingiriya, Hettipola, Kobeigane and Rasnayakapura on the same day. The Police had to impose curfew throughout the North-Western province until further notice due to the intensity of the violence; a Muslim Mosque in Kinyama area and a number of Muslim-owned shops were destroyed. This communal disturbance spread to Minuwangoda town by 13th of May. The residents complain that this emerged when a group of outsiders numbering up to 1000 suddenly stormed into the Minuwangoda town.

<sup>375</sup> Lankadeepa, May 19, p. 6.

<sup>376</sup> Lankadeepa, May 19, p. 16.





The Muslim Mosque in the centre of the Minuwangoda town and several Muslim-owned shops were destroyed as a result. Some Muslims in Minuwangoda claim that Muslim shops have been aptly identified before destroying them. The destruction of property of masses by engaging in extremist, terrorist act is a ruthless crime regardless of the community that does so. The only way to avert incidents like these is the imposition of maximum punishments to perpetrators of such violence.<sup>377</sup>

**The country should be rescued from the Muslim extremism with compassion** – Professor Muwatagama Gnananda thero (by Asela Kuruluwansha) – Professor Muwatagama Gnananda Thero noted that Islamic religious leaders should have a duty to rescue Muslim youth from extremist groups. Delving further, thero noted Muslims definitely go to Mosques and that has been made mandatory for them and they pray five times a day. Thero noted that they constantly maintain links with the Mosque. Thus, Thero noted, that when someone doesn't come to the Mosque, it is the Muslim society that notices it first. Thero noted that therefore it is the responsibility of the Islamic religious leaders to inquire on that issue. Thero opined that rather than insisting on clothes and whether the Muslims pray for five times a day, the due attention should be paid to ascertain whether the Muslims actually live according to their religious beliefs. Unlike a Buddhist Bhikkhu, Thero noted, that Islamic religious leaders get more room to take the Muslim youth to the correct path. Thero attributed this to the fact that it has not been mandatory for Buddhist youth to come to the temple and whereas the Muslims are under an obligation to do so. Thero posited the view that under such a context, there is opportunity within the Islamic faith itself to recognise in advance if a Muslim youth is misled. In this backdrop, Thero noted, the Muslim religious leaders cannot evade the responsibility on extremist tendencies of Muslim youth by stating that the religious leaders were not aware of these issues.<sup>378</sup>

**The betting centre in Kuliyaipitiya** (by K. G. Philip Shantha) – At about 4.00 p.m. on the 12th of May, a butcher's stall in Kuliyaipitiya was attacked suddenly. Muslim businessmen who sensed a danger immediately closed all their shops and the Police could control the situation quickly. Meanwhile a tense situation arose in Kinyama Muslim village in Bingiriya due to the news that a number of cartridges were discovered in a tank in the village. Several violent incidents erupted as a result and simultaneously violence spread to areas like Dummalasuriya, Rasnayakapura and Hettipola. The active contributors to anti-Muslim violence in Hettipola have been several youths in the area and it is said that a number of Buddhist Bhikkhus also played a role there. Several mosques were attacked with the escalation of violence in addition to the destruction caused to Muslim-owned shops.<sup>379</sup>

<sup>377</sup> Silumina, May 19, p. 4.

<sup>378</sup> Silumina, May 19, p. 8.

<sup>379</sup> Silumina, May 19, p. 9.



**We have to contemplate on as to how we can get rid of this crisis as a country** – J.C. Alawathuwala (by Gamini Bandaranayake) - State Minister of Internal and Home Affairs and Provincial Councils and Local Government J. C. Alawathuwala stated that had the ordinary masses reacted to the Easter Sunday attacks in a violent way, that would have happened immediately after the attacks. He added that notwithstanding the loss of their next-of-kin, the Catholic masses did not go and attack the Muslims. He stressed that the eruption of violence after the passage of three months from the Easter Sunday attacks was due to the conduct of forces that operates behind the screen. He also posited that the provocations made by some political parties and hate speech caused the incidents in North-Western Province and Gampaha District.<sup>380</sup>

**The time has dawned for the ones who ought to give leadership to wake up** – Samantha Vidyaratne (by Tharaka Wickremasekera) – Member of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in UVA Provincial Council Samantha Vidyaratne stated that any religious place does not need weapons. He stressed that on the contrary, compassion, coexistence and kindness should be there in a religious place. He also added that if someone violates law in the country, that individual should be given due punishments under law regardless of the ethnic and religious origin of that person. He made these remarks when he was asked as to what the JVP thinks of the discovery of weapons including swords and daggers from Muslim Mosques. He gave this response during an interview with Silumina newspaper.<sup>381</sup>

**HRCSL urges public not to harass women in hijab** (by Aanya Wipulasena) - In a statement, Chairperson of the HRCSL Dr. N. D. Udagama said that the commission had received complaints from women alleging that they were stopped from entering public places and buildings. Women wearing the hijab and abaya (both not banned in Sri Lanka) were thus harassed, and in some instances asked to remove the clippings that hold the headscarf in place. The HRCSL stated that the prevention of people accessing public places who do not act against the state of emergency and the common law of the country goes against Article 12 and 14 (1) (h) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka. On Monday, May 7, 12 Muslim teachers clad in hijabs were prevented from entering the Church of Ceylon Tamil Maha Vidyalaya in Puwakpitiya, Avissawella, by protesting parents who wanted them to wear sarees. The teachers were transferred following the incident. There was a confusion following the government's move to ban the 'concealing of the full face not including the ears'. Subsequently, they had to issue clarifications.<sup>382</sup>

**Anti-Muslim riots connected to key political party** - Video footage has emerged on social media sites depicting UPFA MP and SLFP General Secretary, Dayasiri Jayasekara, attempt to bail out six suspects allegedly engaged in the riots in Kuliyaipitiya. In one clip, he is speaking on the phone about bailing someone out, reportedly at the Hettipola police station, and in another, he was seen in the same area with the Anti-Corruption Front's

380 Silumina, May 19, p. 10.

381 Silumina, May 19, p. 10.

382 Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 1, 2.



(ACF) leader Namal Kumara, who was questioned by the CID regarding his connection to the incidents. The MP said during a press conference at the SLFP headquarters on Tuesday, May 14 that he does not have any connections with those arrested and that he went to the scene to control the situation. Meanwhile, State Minister Ranjan Ramanayaka said that the National Intelligence Bureau report contradicted Kumara's statements to the media regarding his travel plans at the time of the incident. Further, Ramanayaka said that Kumara has confirmed that he wished to be an SLPP candidate at future elections, and had arrived at Hettipola at the time of the riots in a jeep owned by a Kurunegala Pradeshiya Sabha SLPP councillor. Additionally, video evidence shows a man who appeared to be Madumadawa Aravinda, deputy leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya, a supporting party of the SLPP, in the Minuwangoda area during the time of the attack. He denied any involvement in the riots. He was a key speaker at the riots in Aluthgama in 2014. Multiple anonymous sources said at least one bus carrying crowds was sent to the Minuwangoda area during the riots by a well known political figure of the SLPP. Further, UNP parliamentarian Edward Gunasekera said that a Minuwangoda Pradeshiya Sabha MP and Chairman of the Urban Council, Neil Jayasekara had connections to the attacks. Following last year's Digana riots, a Kundasale Pradeshiya Sabha SLPP councillor was arrested for his alleged connections to the clash. The case against him is pending. Mahason Balakaya's Amith Weerasinghe, who has ties with Kumara, was remanded till May 28 after being arrested following the recent riots. He had been out on bail following his arrest last year for involvement in the Digana riots.<sup>383</sup>

**Zero tolerance if SLPP members involved in violence** - Namal (by Anurangi Singh) - Parliamentarian Namal Rajapaksa said that the SLPP will take stern action against its members if they are found to be involved in the communal violence that followed the Easter Sunday attacks. The MP claimed that these attacks were organised, and targeted all humans, as the vandals had also damaged Buddha statues and shops. He said that the violence that took place was unnecessary and investigations should be properly carried out to find out who was responsible, unlike during the Digana riots where he claimed authorities failed to continue investigations. Earlier last week, Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapaksa called on political parties to refrain from getting involved in inciting violence for political gain. After visiting many victims, Rajapaksa said that swift action should be taken not only to heal the physical wounds but its psychological impact as well. He said that the government collectively has been acting irresponsibly before as well as after the attacks, and called on them to make the right decision, even if it was not the popular one.<sup>384</sup>

**Act with patience and restraint** - Speaker - Speaker Karu Jayasuriya called upon everyone to act with patience and restraint at times like this. Addressing the nation in Minuwangoda, he said that the people had behaved in a more civilised, intelligent and patient manner following the Easter Sunday attacks. The speaker also thanked religious

<sup>383</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 2.

<sup>384</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 2.



leaders for guiding their followers on how to respond after the terror attacks. He talked about the incidents after the attack, condemning groups with narrow agendas that organise events to spread religious and ethnic hate. Speaker Jayasuriya requested that the president and PM address the public in a united voice, and that the security forces brief the people on the situation daily to avoid rumours. He said that agreements have been reached on several controversial areas, including traditional Muslim women's dress, madrasas and higher education institutes, and said that most Muslims do not wish to turn Sri Lanka into a "fundamentalist nation".<sup>385</sup>

**Anti-Muslim attacks: Mobs on the rampage in three districts** (by Aanya Wipulasena and Anuradha Kodagoda) - This news feature piece goes into detail regarding the attacks on Tuesday 14 in Nattandiya, when "an organised gang, of about 400 men, on motor-bikes armed with swords, poles, knives and axes wreaked havoc in the area, killing one". The piece interviews several Muslims and other residents affected by the violence and describes the final moments of fifty-year-old Mohammad Saleem F. Ameer, who was "hacked to death by the rioters". In riots in Minuwangoda, a total of 67 shops were damaged, while 27 of them were burnt to the ground. Five of them were owned by Buddhists. A three-wheeler driver from Minuwangoda town blamed Minister Samaraweera's comments about the country not being Sinhala Buddhist for aggravating the people. The fact that the attack seems to be politically fuelled, and that the authorities were slow to help, is stressed in the piece, and echoed by many who are interviewed. According to the piece, the reason for the riots could have emerged when a Muslim man in Chilaw posted a Facebook comment that was perceived as a threat and resulted in violence in the area. A large number of suspects were arrested in connection to the riots, including Mahason Balakaya leader Amith Weerasinghe, Nawa Sinhale National Organisation Director Dan Prasad, who was released on bail, and Anti-Corruption Force Operations Director Namal Kumara, who is in the custody of the CID. Several political figures were connected to the riots, including SLFP General Secretary Dayasiri Jayasekara, who allegedly attempted to get bail for six suspects according to video footage. In Minuwangoda, affected businessmen said they saw the Deputy Leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya, Madumadawa Aravinda, during the riots. Claims about army inaction and military connections to the mob are being probed, although Army Commander Mahesh Senanayake told a press conference that all Sri Lanka army personnel were innocent.<sup>386</sup>

**A long war against racism** - This editorial raised concern over the anti-Muslim attacks, which are being compared to the July 1983 riots that paved the way for the rise of the LTTE. The piece mentions that at least one person was killed and many homes and shops were vandalised and destroyed. The organised nature of the mobs suggested political involvement, just as there was in the pogrom of 1983, and the Mawanella, Aluthgama and Digana riots. One suspect, Namal Kumara, declared himself a SLPP parliamentary

<sup>385</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 3.

<sup>386</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 6.



candidate. His attorney, SLPP spokesman Ajith Prasanna, said that the CID fabricated evidence to arrest Kumara. “Persecuted communities become fertile recruiting ground for radicals,” the article states. The piece ends by quoting a TNA statement appealing to the government to protect the people, before they feel like they must protect themselves.<sup>387</sup>

**Secularism or Barbarism** (by Tisaranee Gunasekara) - This opinion piece condemns the anti-Muslim attacks, seemingly incited by a Facebook post made by a “Muslim trader with deficient English”, resulting in violence in Chilaw. The article describes the failure of authorities to jail suspects involved in previous riots, including Amith Weerasinghe, who was arrested and let out on bail. He was once again arrested and remanded for the latest mob attacks. “This week’s rioters are terrorists too and the government should treat them as such,” the article states. The editorial looks back at the first signs of extreme religious division in the country, during the 2002-2005 period, when Buddhists being converted to Christians was depicted as a horrific danger. Even the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) did not address Muslims specifically, until recently. Even though the larger Muslim community denounced the terrorists, Buddhist monks made no such statements in the wake of past anti-Muslim outbursts. Further, while the Muslim community has been labelled insular, Muslim progressives that tried to take a stand against issues such as child marriage were ignored by other communities and the government. The piece mentions that Sri Lanka had a secular constitution up until 1972, before it was changed to give a special place to Buddhism, although there was no strong demand for it at the time. The editorial concludes by expressing concern over the danger of religious segregation, which begins as early as primary school, and calls for secular politics.<sup>388</sup>

**The hidden hands behind the anti-Muslim riots** - This piece speculates which party is to blame for the Easter Sunday attacks, which could have been prevented given the right course of action. The opposition is blaming the government, while the government is blaming those within it. The defence secretary and the IGP have become convenient scapegoats for politicians looking for an easy way out of the mess, the piece states. Yet even after the attacks, despite assurances that authorities had secured safety, the anti-Muslim riots caused severe destruction. The timing and location of the riots suggest ulterior political motives for the attacks. The piece questions whether the security forces will be as efficient at arresting those responsible for the mob attacks as they were regarding the extremists who carried out the Easter Sunday bombings.<sup>389</sup>

**A trio under scrutiny following anti-Muslim attacks** (by Maneshka Borham) - Following the anti-Muslim riots that left one person dead, the police arrested Mahason Balakaya leader Amith Weerasinghe. This news feature notes that he has previously been arrested in connection with the Digana riots, before being let out on bail during the coup on October 26. Soon after being released, he attempted to hold a march against ‘Islamic

<sup>387</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 8.

<sup>388</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 8.

<sup>389</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 9.



terrorism', which the police obtained a court order against. While Weerasinghe was not physically present in Minuwangoda or Kuliyaipitiya at the time of the riots, the police suspect he mobilised groups through social media. His wife, Jayangani Kumari, maintained his innocence. She accused the police of harassment, claiming that they misled her regarding his whereabouts following the arrest, and described how their house was heavily guarded. Along with Weerasinghe, Namal Kumara and Dan Priyasad, both far-right Sinhala ideologists, were arrested in connection with the riots. Kumara was in the area when tensions flared, although he claims that he was there on other business. Jayangani claims that Kumara and her husband had a falling out and are no longer in contact. As for Priyasad, "They talk, but they are not close associates," she claimed. Priyasad is now out on bail. Kumara continues to be questioned by the CID, while Weerasinghe will appear before a court to face charges on May 28.<sup>390</sup>

**Sinhala Buddhists cannot be strengthened by isolating other ethnicities and religions** – Sajith Premadasa – Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa noted that all citizens in this Sinhala-Buddhist motherland should live together peacefully by following the pristine Buddhism of the Lord Buddha and by protecting all ethnic groups and religions in the country. Premadasa also stated that Sinhala-Buddhist state cannot be strengthened by isolating other ethnic groups and religions, by setting them aside and also by destroying the places of religious worship. Premadasa also noted that despite the fact that the Buddhism has been accorded the foremost place in the Constitution, Buddha sasana would not be strengthened unless the masses provide necessary pragmatic empowerment and the protection required for the upliftment of the Buddha sasana. He stressed that at every time those violent, oppressive acts occur based on ethnic groups and religions, the Buddha sasana deteriorates.<sup>391</sup>

**Sinhala race and the civilisation originated from the Theravada Buddhism** – Prime Minister (by Asela Liyanage) – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that there is no debate about the fact that Sri Lankan civilisation has its genesis in Buddhism. Wickremesinghe further noted that it had been acknowledged by not only Buddhists but also by the religious leaders of other religions. While noting that though the statues and buildings can be demolished, he stated that religion present inside an individual cannot be destroyed. He also added that Sri Lanka should be the centre for the Theravada Buddhism. Wickremesinghe noted that our society and the country was built on the Dhamma of Lord Buddha. Noting that the traditional customs and the traditions of other religions too influenced this, he noted that the essence of the social fabric lies in the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. Wickremesinghe noted that it is stated in the Constitution of our country that the Buddhism should be given the foremost place. Meanwhile, he added, all are given the freedom of religion. Wickremesinghe made these remarks

<sup>390</sup> Sunday Observer, May 19, p. 10.

<sup>391</sup> Dinamina, May 20, p. 6.



attending the national Vesak festival held in Ranpath Vihara in Thotagamuwa, Hikkaduwa recently (18).<sup>392</sup> A reconciliation walk in Mahiyanganaya (by Meegahakiuwla united) – A Reconciliation walk was organised recently (18) in Mahiyanganaya with the participation of Buddhist, Christian and Muslim people in the Mahiyanganaya and surrounding areas. The religious leaders of different communities in the area too participated in the walk.<sup>393</sup>

**An all-religious Vesak pageant in Passara** (by Passara United) – An all-religious procession was held for the first time in Passara town to further guarantee the national unity, reconciliation and harmony recently (18). The procession was attended by a large number of people including leaders of all religious faiths- Buddhist, Hindu, Catholic, Islam and masses belonging to different religious faiths.<sup>394</sup>

**The spiritual force that emerged on the Vesak day** – It was impossible to witness pandols and dansals parallel to the Vesak celebrations under the prevailing situation in the country. But Buddhist people came to temples with an enthusiasm that was visible in the past; they participated in religious observances. Truly speaking, temples were crowded with people this time. Moreover, it was a speciality to note that the Buddhist masses decorated their houses and roads in an enthusiasm that did not exist in the past. We notice this as an advanced stage of the spiritual progress of the Buddhist masses. When Buddhist were celebrating Vesak under certain limitations, Catholic community in some regions too were involved in those celebrations. When the Buddhist masses were decorating in various places in the country including Beruwala, Pannala and Kuliyaipitiya, Muslim people too got together in that. This religious harmony too should be further strengthened. Though this country is not a Sinhala Buddhist country according to Minister Mangala Samaraweera, the religious leaders of other faiths acknowledge that this is a Sinhala Buddhist country. In such a context, our blessings would be there for the people of other religious faiths that got together to enjoy the Vesak celebrations with Sinhala Buddhist people. At this moment, even the threat posed by the Thowheed Jama'ath clan too can be countered by strengthening the harmony between the Buddhism and other religious faiths.<sup>395</sup>

**A Muslim religious centre without an owner in Agalawatta in the guise of a “washroom”** – (by Mahilal Padmasuriya) – A proposal brought by the Leader of the Opposition of Agalawatta Pradeshiya Sabha to remove a Muslim religious centre maintained in the guise of a washroom in the Agalawatta town was passed unanimously. The Opposition Leader pointed out that this religious centre has no legal permission and there are no sufficient Muslims in Agalawatta to setup a Mosque. Therefore, he noted, this Mosque is an impediment to maintain peace in the area. Pointing out the fact that though

<sup>392</sup> Dinamina, May 20, p. 7.

<sup>393</sup> Dinamina, May 20, p. 11.

<sup>394</sup> Dinamina, May 20, p. 11.

<sup>395</sup> Divaina, May 20, p. 8.





he is a Buddhist, he respects all other religions. He added that the setting up of places of religious worship in a manner akin to setting up of small way-side boutiques cannot be approved. He opined that a part of this place maintained in the guise of a washroom, has been used as a place to pray.<sup>396</sup>

**Sinhala race and civilisation originated due to the influence of Theravada Buddhism** – Prime Minister– Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that there is no debate about the fact that Sri Lankan civilisation has its genesis in Buddhism. Wickremesinghe further noted that it had been acknowledged by not only Buddhists but also by the religious leaders of other religions. While noting that though the statues and buildings can be demolished, he stated that religion present inside an individual cannot be destroyed. He also added that Sri Lanka should be the centre for the Theravada Buddhism. Wickremesinghe noted that our society and the country is built on the Dhamma of Lord Buddha. Noting that the traditional customs and the traditions of other religions too influenced this, he noted that the essence of the social fabric lies in the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. Wickremesinghe noted that it is stated in the Constitution of our country that the Buddhism should be given the foremost place. He opined that the work on the society is conducted accordingly. Meanwhile, he added, all are given the freedom of religion. <sup>397</sup>

**A meeting between the Speaker- Muslim Affairs Minister today** (by Sujith Hewajulige) – A special meeting would be held between the Speaker Karu Jayasuriya and the Minister of Muslim Religious Affairs Abdul Haleem at the official residence of the Speaker. Parliamentary sources indicate that there would be discussions on burqa that has been subject to controversy and several other matters including the Madrasa schools. Meanwhile the Minister of Muslim Religious Affairs Abdul Haleem noted that a new Act would be presented to the Parliament to regulate Madrasa schools. He also added that a satisfactory response has been given by the Muslim society to the request made to refrain from wearing clothes that cover the face.<sup>398</sup>

**Minds of the Sri Lankan masses calmed by the Vesak Moon** – Oil lamps were burned in every house making religious harmony a reality. The fact that all got together with one mind to celebrate the Vesak festival is extremely crucial at this juncture. From immemorial times, the people in the country celebrated Vesak grandly. The entire country became a Vesak zone. Not only Buddhists but also people of other religions got together to celebrate the main religious festival in the country. But the opportunity to celebrate Vesak as one pleases was not present this time. That is because of the suicidal bomb attack of the sinful terrorists who possess a religious mania. This religious mania has become a serious threat not only to our country but also to the entire world.<sup>399</sup>

<sup>396</sup> Divaina, May 20, p. 12.

<sup>397</sup> Divaina, May 20, p. 13.

<sup>398</sup> Lankadeepa, May 20, p. 2.

<sup>399</sup> Lankadeepa, May 20, p. 4.





**Religious observances on the eve of Vesak amidst tight security** (by Aruna S. Kumara, J.L. Jayasinghe, Krishan Jeewaka Jayaruk, Upul Herath, K.G. Karunarathna and Thilkarathna Dissanayake) – The religious observances on behalf of the Vesak festival were held in every temple in the country amidst tight security. There were no observances of sil in some temples due to the fear that there would be a terrorist attack. In some places, when the Buddhist monks were walking in pindapatha, armed soldiers walked in-front of the Bhikkhus for the security of Bhikkhus. In some temples, there were bans to bring parcels and even the oil lamps brought were rigorously checked. There was a significant decrease of the number of devotees visiting the eight-sacred places in Anuradhapura. It was a special incident to note that Catholic Churches and the Muslim mosques too had various decorations to celebrate Vesak. There were Buddhist sermons in some Mosques.<sup>400</sup>

**There is no debate- The Sri Lankan civilisation originated based on Buddhism** – Prime Minister (By Anjula Mahika Weeraratna and Hemantha de Silva) – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that there is no debate about the fact that Sri Lankan civilisation has its genesis in Buddhism. Wickremesinghe further noted that it had been acknowledged by not only Buddhists but also by the religious leaders of other religions. While noting that though the statues and buildings can be demolished, he stated that religion present inside an individual cannot be destroyed. He also added that Sri Lanka should be the centre for the Theravada Buddhism. Wickremesinghe noted that our society and the country was built on the Dhamma of Lord Buddha. Noting that the traditional customs and the traditions of other religions too influenced this, he noted that the essence of the social fabric lies in the Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. Wickremesinghe noted that it is stated in the Constitution of our country that the Buddhism should be given the foremost place. He opined that the work on the society is conducted accordingly. Meanwhile, he added, all are given the freedom of religion. Wickremesinghe made these remarks attending the national Vesak festival held in Ranpath Vihara in Thotagamuwa, Hikkaduwa (18).<sup>401</sup>

**The woman who walked along the road wearing a Gown with the Dharmachakra image arrested** (by Ranjith Karunaweera) – Hasalaka Police arrested a woman who walked along the road wearing a gown with the Dharma-Chakra image. The arrest was made based on the complaints made by the residents in the area. Acting Magistrate of Mahiyanganaya Gamini Rambakenpura ordered to keep her in custody till the 27th of May. The Hasalaka Police stated that investigations would be conducted to ascertain whether this woman was directed by extremists to create disharmony within the communities in the Vesak week and to create turbulence that disrupt the peace.<sup>402</sup>

<sup>400</sup> Lankadeepa, May 20, p. 7.

<sup>401</sup> Lankadeepa, May 20, p. 8.

<sup>402</sup> Lankadeepa, May 20, p. 10.



**Our intelligence services are capable of tackling religious extremism: President** (by Sandun A. Jayasekera) – The president stated that “our own heroic soldiers” are fully capable of wiping out “religious extremism in the same manner” as they wiped out separatism. The president noted that the U.S., France, or any other European country could not say when and how they would come under attack from religious terrorism. Nonetheless, he has “no doubt that our war heroes can do it successfully”.<sup>403</sup>

**SLFP ready to talk on new act instead of CTA: Amaraweera** (by Sandun A. Jayasekera) – The SLFP have stated that they are ready to have a dialogue with the government in two months regarding a new act, instead of the proposed Counter-Terrorism Act (CTA). Mahinda Amaraweera stated that the law must “eliminate new terrorism, extremism and strengthen interfaith friendship and peace”. Amaraweera believes that the education system should be reformed to prevent any segregation on lines of race and religion. Laws should be brought for the “shaping” of Sri Lankan children who are studying abroad to suit the “cultural and social patterns of this country”. Those arriving in the country should get lectures on “national, religious and cultural matters”. In consultation with religious leaders and intellectuals, laws should be made to govern religious dresses and conduct that is “detrimental to national security and peaceful existence”. Laws should be formulated “preventing the registration of political parties based on the races, religions, caste and regions”. One principal ministry should deal with religious matters.<sup>404</sup>

**SL’s dominant political narrative and its tragic implications** (by Prof. Siri Hettige) – In this long opinion piece, the prevailing situation in the country is described as ‘precarious’. Even though the group responsible for the attack in Sri Lanka appears to be small, its members identified with the larger Islamic community living in all parts of the country. Since any breach of peace among communities has the potential to result in widespread communal violence, the prevailing situation in the country can also be described as dangerous. Given the country’s past experience with communal violence, this situation can result in a permanent state of ethno-religious tension, leading to intermittent localised violence that often feeds into persisting tension. The author sees Sri Lanka as “trapped in a vicious cycle” after political independence. It has been a ‘plural society’ for many centuries. But, political parties have exploited divisions and “prevented the rise of an overarching Sri Lankan citizenship that would have transcended subnational divisions”. Given the nature of the Sri Lankan polity that emerged at the time of independence, political regimes that came to power since then tended to be closely identified with the majority Sinhala-Buddhist community, giving the impression to other communities that they were at a disadvantage with regard to their relationship with the state. Some of the public policies adopted after independence not only reinforced the above impression but also contributed to the strengthening of sub-national identities built around ethnicity, religion and language. Though many social, political and economic

<sup>403</sup> Daily Mirror, May 20, p. 1, 2.

<sup>404</sup> Daily Mirror, May 20, p. A4.



changes have taken place over the last several decades, the dominant political narrative of the country built around ethno-nationalism, religion and language has not changed much to this day.<sup>405</sup>

**Minuwangoda clashes:** Police to arrest Opposition politician (by Gayan Kumara Weerasinghe and Dilshan Tharaka) - Police investigations have revealed that an opposition politician had been involved in a clash that occurred in the Minuwangoda town and the surrounding areas on May 13. According to a senior police officer, investigations have revealed that the politician had organised some rallies in the area since May 9. The officer said that the politician had been in Minuwangoda for more than three hours during the recent clashes and that information had been received that he was involved in the attack on shops and business establishments in these areas. Police said that they hope to arrest the politician who is alleged to have attacked the shops wearing a helmet and black jacket and riding a motorcycle. Police further asserted that they are collecting evidence in this regard.<sup>406</sup>

**Highest priority to enact new counter-terrorism laws: Speaker** - Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said the Muslim Religious Affairs Ministry, Justice Ministry, Higher Education Ministry, and the Law and Order Ministry, were currently engaged in formulating new laws to permanently solve the issues that have arisen in the country. The speaker added that Muslim religious leaders and community leaders had unanimously agreed to make the relevant laws for counter-terrorism. He said that it was a positive indicator that there was no room for extremism in this country. Further, he condemned the attacks against Muslims and commended the Vesak celebration and the participation of the non- Buddhist community.<sup>407</sup>

**Vesak lanterns create furore in Saliyawewa** (by Disna Mudalige) - Saliyawewa Police on Saturday told the organisers to remove Vesak lanterns carrying the symbols of the 'Dhamma chakra' and the 'Christian cross', following a complaint by a monk. The lanterns were made in memory of all those who died in the Easter Sunday attacks. It was an initiative by a Pradeshiya Sabha member. A complaint had been lodged by Aluthgama Sri Lumbini Viharaya Viharadhipathi Ven. Maanewe Pagnnarama Thera, who explained that the 'atapattama' has a specific Buddhist meaning and it is not acceptable to paste the Christian cross on it. As the lanterns were already made, they were asked to display them in their homes, to which they agreed. The director general of the Buddhist Affairs Department was contacted and he expressed similar sentiments to the monk. Police reported the situation was amicable.<sup>408</sup>

<sup>405</sup> Daily Mirror, May 20, p. A9.

<sup>406</sup> Daily News, May 20, p. 1.

<sup>407</sup> Daily News, May 20, p. 6.

<sup>408</sup> Daily News, May 20, p. 6.



**Let sanity prevail** (by Ravi Perera) - This feature piece begins with the author recounting the JVP insurrection in 1971, and the July 1983 riots. The piece compares the unsubstantiated rumours and fear mongering he experienced during these events with the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. Like many groups, Sri Lankan Muslims may not have seen the extremism being bred in certain sections of their community, but this does not make them all responsible for the attacks. Muslim citizens have contributed to the country as much as any other group - they have been soldiers, established profitable businesses, and provide many other services. The innocent shouldn't be punished for the crimes of the guilty.<sup>409</sup>

**Are they trying to portray Sri Lanka as a Buddhist country through violence?** (T. Sobithan) - The Former Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council, C.V. Wigneswaran stated that it was the Tamils who were affected by the recent bomb attacks. He claimed that Muslims were being targeted by certain Sinhala Buddhist groups and questioned whether they were trying to portray that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country by targeting Muslims.<sup>410</sup>

**People are rallying – Turn back to the two days of Vesak!** The deep silence that spread in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attack vanished immediately. The unbelievable terror that spread after these attacks too disappeared. The general public that disregarded the terror, false propaganda and the strategies rallied together. Buddhist flags flew in full mast in Catholic Churches. Buddhist sermons were initiated in Muslim Mosques. Cities- towns and villages in the country were beautified with decorations. Those decorations were done with the collaboration of Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu and Islamic followers. It is clear that the entire country is going from the darkness to the light. A rejuvenation that was not seen in last Vesak seasons has emerged this time. The reason for it is the fact that the entire country turned up to celebrate Vesak without religious and racial differences. In the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attack, the Catholics in Sri Lanka pointed out that a policy of compassion and peace as opposed to the malice and revenge. But this was sabotaged by a group of saboteurs. A number of attacks that stemmed from the racism and religious antagonism were reported from several areas in the country.<sup>411</sup>

**Muslim Neighbours** (By Pamudini Samaranayake quoting Dr. N. D. G. Jayantha)- Many organisations has been instrumental in disrupting the Sinhala- Muslim reconciliation in the country. But this was not the case in the past. Ridee Viharaya bears evidence for the Buddhist-Muslim reconciliation that existed in the past and the clergy in that vihara had settled down Muslims as official co-owners of the viharagam that belongs to that temple. A piece of land had been allocated to build a Mosque for the religious observances of those people. It was the Muslim singer Alhaj Mohideen-Bheg who sang songs for the Vesak festival so as to arouse the happiness of the Vesak festival. The humanisation of the man should be done from a small age. Only the religious leaders can do this job. Cardinal has

<sup>409</sup> Daily News, May 20, p. 8.

<sup>410</sup> Virakesari, May 20, p. 3.

<sup>411</sup> Dinamina, May 21, p. 1.



been able to direct the Catholic community peacefully by directing it amidst the Easter Sunday attacks. That should be applauded. As per the Buddhist and Catholic faiths killing others is not accepted at all. It is impossible to reach Nibbana or eternal peace by killing others. It is a question for us whether it is possible to attain eternal peace by killing others. As explained by the Islamic Maulavis, the terrorists that belong to the Thowheed Jama'ath Organisation are not Muslims.<sup>412</sup>

**We could witness a Vesak festival that gave priority to Buddhism over the trade activities this time** – Wickremesinghe- Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe mentioned that the Vesak festival that was held this time is an ideal Vesak festival that gave priority to policy and Dhamma of the Lord Buddha. He also added that this can be an example to the future. He noted that the Buddhist masses participated in the religious observances without any fear this time. He also remarked that Buddhist flags and Vesak lanterns were seen in many places around the country that was not visible at present<sup>413</sup>

**A programme to preserve ancient places of religious worship** - Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa noted that it is a national responsibility and a requirement of the era to safeguard the ancient temples in the country. He added that these ancient temples should be preserved and should be donated to the next generation. He also noted that some politicians are destroying religious places of other religions while exhibiting a spurious nationality and spurious patriotism.<sup>414</sup>

**Human rights that keep on vacillating** (by Nishantha Kamaladasa) - There should be the freedom to practice any religious faith that one desires. There should be the freedom to propagate any religious faith. That should be allowed based on the rationale that all those freedoms should be there for others. Thus, if any group impedes the freedom of another group, law should be implemented against them. Thus, law should be implemented against individuals who were involved in the Easter Sunday attacks and individuals who abetted it. That is not enough. All anti-human declarations contained in the all religions including Islamic faith should be analysed. That is to avoid the recurrence of a catastrophe like this. Allowance extended to criticise as such is also a human right. The masses should be given power to out rightly question the sanctity of a religion, when human rights are being violated in the religions. No leeway should be granted to acts that divide the masses in the name of religion and also to spread malice in the name of religion. Steps should be taken to avert instances where there are infringements of human rights within a religious community itself. The freedom to be free from religious extremism should also be included as well as the freedom to practice the faith one desires. Religion should be something that is followed voluntarily and not something that is imposed forcefully. <sup>415</sup>

<sup>412</sup> Dinamina, May 21, p. 4.

<sup>413</sup> Dinamina, May 21, p. 7.

<sup>414</sup> Dinamina, May 21, p. 8.

<sup>415</sup> Dinamina, May 21, p. 9.



**Sinhala-Muslim people lived in harmony from the past – Imthiyaas Bakeer Markar** (by A.M. Nilaam) – Former Minister Imtiyaz Bakir Makar noted that the school should be made a cross-section of the society. Delving further, he noted that when a Muslim child comes out of the Muslim school, he is not aware as to how to pay respect to the robe; neither is he aware of what the pottu is; and they are also oblivious as to how the Virgin Mary. When he was queried as to what he thinks of the issues that has emerged due to the dress culture of the Muslim women, he noted that there is a distinct culture to Sri Lanka. He added that it is a culture that is not confined to one ethnicity and added further that Muslims too should get involved in that. He also noted that Arabian culture is not needed in Sri Lanka.<sup>416</sup>

**Muslims who did the Vesak celebrations in Beruwala threatened** (by Vijayasiri Vidyasekera) – Beruwala Police has commenced investigations on a member of the Beruwala Urban Council representing the United National Party (UNP) who threatened the Muslims who got involved in the Vesak decorations in the Beruwala town. Investigations have also been commenced against a regional politician who made threats in relation to the same matter. Individuals who experienced the incident stated that the UNP member threatened and blamed them telling that the conduct of them (the ones who did the decorations) is a disgrace to the Islamic faith.<sup>417</sup>

**A special security to the Temple of Tooth relic and the Chief-Prelates** (by Srinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) – Police Headquarters state that an Assistant Superintendent of Police has been assigned to provide special security the Temple of the Tooth relic and Chief-Prelates in charge of those security activities. A senior Police officer stated that this measure was taken considering the prevailing situation in the country.<sup>418</sup>

**It was proved on the Vesak day that the harmony of the Sri Lankans and the religion in Sri Lanka cannot be undermined by any force – Prime Minister** (by Anjula Mahika Weeraratne) – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe noted that it was well proved in the Vesak ceremony this time that harmony of the Sri Lankans and the religion and faith of Sri Lankans cannot be undermined by any force. He also stated that the Vesak festival this time is an exemplary festival even for the future as priority was given for the policy of the Buddha, the Buddhist faith and there were less trade activities. He also stated that he noted that the Buddhist masses participated in the religious observances without any fear this time. He also remarked that Buddhist flags and Vesak lanterns were seen in many places around the country in a way that was not seen in other times.<sup>419</sup>

<sup>416</sup> Dinamina, May 21, p. 20.

<sup>417</sup> Divaina, May 21, p. 2.

<sup>418</sup> Lankadeepa, May 21, p. 7.

<sup>419</sup> Lankadeepa, May 21, p. 8.



**The law should be strictly imposed to the individuals who leash violence against the Muslim community as well as the terrorists – Mujibur Rahman** (by Nimala Kodituwakku) – United National Party (UNP) MP Mujibur Rahman noted that law should be strictly implemented against individuals who carry out organised attacks against the Muslim community throughout the island as well as the terrorists. He also noted that though the situation has been taken under control by the security forces, they are receiving reports that organised groups are repeatedly attempting to create disturbances. He posited the view that if the ordinary law were to be applied in respect of perpetrators of religious and racial disturbances, it would take a period of about ten years; he added that though six years have passed since the communal disturbances in Dhargac town, the cases filed in respect of it are still being heard. It was also noted by him that we cannot move forth as a country with groups that foment racism and religious fanaticism. Stressing that there should be a proper mechanism to implement law against these individuals.<sup>420</sup>

**Anti-Muslim riots and the absence of a government** (by Ranga Jayasuriya) – In this long opinion piece, the author argues that if the Easter Sunday attacks had targeted temples and bus stands in the south, people would be rationalising and ‘covertly justifying’ it. The author argues that “NGO captains would have had a field day cataloguing the “victimhood” of Muslims and blaming the Sinhalese for all the ‘evil’”. The author states that the foreign media are anti-Sri Lanka and the Sinhalese have an existential fear. The author discusses the “frenzied attacks” on Muslims in Puttalam, Minuwangoda, Kurunegala, etc. He sees a political hand behind these attacks, stating that they were not spontaneous but planned by political leaders. The police have arrested around 100 suspects over the violence, but the “acid test” would be in how the court has decided to treat them. He believes they should be detained indefinitely under the PTA in order to deter future rioting. He states that the government “looked the other way” as Islamic extremism “brewed” in order to not antagonise Muslim voters.<sup>421</sup>

**Easter Sunday Bombings and their impact: Who should be held responsible?** (by Deshakeerthi Lanka Puthra, Major General, Dr Boniface Perera PhD) – This article discusses the series of bombings that recently struck churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday. The piece questions who within the Sri Lankan power structure bears responsibility. The author determines that President Sirisena, PM Wickremesinghe and the IGP, defence secretary and army commander all deserve blame. The article goes on to provide a narrative account of events.<sup>422</sup>

**SF confident of handling ISIS threat if given law and order ministry and internal security** (Susitha Fernando) – This article is an interview given by former Army Commander Sarath Fonseka. He talks about politics and the war against the LTTE before discussing the current ISIS threat. Fonseka believes that the threat is very dangerous and

<sup>420</sup> Lankadeepa, May 21, p. 8.

<sup>421</sup> Daily Mirror, May 21, p. A8.

<sup>422</sup> Daily Mirror, May 21, p. A9.





will take a long time to contend with. He constantly juxtaposes the threat and solution with that of the LTTE. He states that relations between the Muslims and the Sinhalese are very good, but ultra-nationalist groups are very dangerous in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. He states that the terrorists wish to isolate the Muslim community from society as this helps them to survive. He states that he does not want to work with the Rajapaksa family – “If I work with them again, I might have to end up in jail again.”<sup>423</sup>

**Inter-religious peace foundation condemns attacks** - While condemning the Easter Sunday bomb attacks on churches and hotels, the inter-religious peace foundation said that the killing of hundreds of innocent people is not merely an attack on a specific religion, but strikes at the heart of the country’s pluralistic and multi-ethnic social fabric. Issuing a statement, its convener Latheef Farook said that there had been no history of animosity between Christians and Muslims in Sri Lanka. “The failure of the authorities to prevent the carnage despite the advance and prior information raises many questions and puzzles everyone. It is a very serious lapse on the part of the authorities, which is inexcusable. We also note that Sri Lanka’s Muslim community, which swiftly condemned and distanced itself from this barbarity of a handful of people who have nothing to do with the mainstream Muslim community, remains saddened and disturbed. We appeal to our fellow Sri Lankans to act with restraint and desist from taking the law into their own hands.”<sup>424</sup>

**One month on** - One month after the Easter Sunday terror attacks, fear still pervades the uneasy calm of civilians, despite the commendable job done by the tri-forces to all but dismantle the local jihadist terror network. It is the timely intervention and sober counselling of his flock by Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith that prevented a major backlash by the Catholics in the aftermath of the attacks. The support and solidarity extended by the Maha Sangha towards the stricken Catholic community too is commendable. A small country like Sri Lanka was not expecting an attack such as this, and now there is a new dimension to the country’s security preparedness, the piece adds. Addressing the 10th state memorial service of war heroes at the Parliament Grounds on Sunday, President Sirisena said that just like they wiped out 26 years of LTTE terrorism, he was supremely confident that the country’s heroic soldiers and intelligence officers would break the back of religious extremism. Still, it is important that we don’t let our guard down, the piece states. In addition to the state assistance, private contributions too are pouring in, mostly from the Buddhists and Muslim donors, to help the Easter Sunday victims.<sup>425</sup>

**Cardinal’s leadership averted pandemonium** (by Fr. Augustine Fernando) - The Easter Sunday attacks occurred when the head of state and the minister of defence were away and there was no acting minister of defence. This feature piece goes on to describe the surprise and incompetence of the government despite intelligence information about the attack having been provided since April 4. Even as state leadership floundered, Malcolm

<sup>423</sup> Daily Mirror, May 21, p. A10.

<sup>424</sup> Daily Mirror, May 21, p. A14.

<sup>425</sup> Daily News, May 21, p. 6.





Cardinal Ranjith provided firm guidance, and requested that people be calm and peaceful and not retaliate towards any members of the Muslim community because of the actions of a few extremists. According to the article, irrational, cowardly, racist and bankrupt politicians seem to be behind the troubles caused in Chilaw, Negombo, Minuwangoda and Kuliyaipitiya. These politicians are not thinking about the backlash to the Sri Lankan economy, expatriate workers in the Middle East, and certain communities in the country.<sup>426</sup>

**Attacks on places of worship and shops were systematically planned** - Parliamentarian, Dr. S.M.M. Ismail stated that the attacks targeting Muslims, their places of worship, and businesses were acts that were planned and carried out. He pointed out that Islam was a religion that preached peace, adding that other religions were constantly mentioning 'Islamic terrorism'.<sup>427</sup>

**Suspects arrested for the vandalism of Buddha statues further imprisoned till 13th of June** – Mawanella Magistrate Upul Rajakaruna ordered to further imprison the suspects who were arrested for the incident of vandalism of Buddha statues in Mawanella till June 3.<sup>428</sup>

**UNP would protect the Buddhism in the present and the future as it did in the past** – Thalatha Athukorale – Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms Thalatha Athukorale mentioned that the sacrifice made by the United National Party (UNP) to protect the Buddhism in Sri Lanka is immense. She also stated that it was under the UNP, the Central Cultural Fund was initiated to protect Buddhist culture that is practised by the majority of people in the country. She further added that the present Prime Minister too was involved in the initiation of Anuradhapura Buddha Disciples University and the initiation of the Gangarama Procession. Adding that under the Government of Sirimavo Bandaranayake, the Mahamaluwa was acquired by the Land Reform Commission, she noted that it was under the J.R. Jayawardena that those lands acquired were given to the Temple of the tooth relic. She made these remarks attending an inauguration of a road development ceremony in Ratnapura.<sup>429</sup>

**Terrorism would be eliminated come what may the challenges that arise in that regard** – President (by Rakshana Sriyantha) – President Maithripala Sirisena mentioned that everyone knows that the terrorist attack on April 21 is a particular religious belief. He added that but everyone knows that it is never a spiritual teaching. Delving further, he noted that that it is mentioned in that particular teaching that in order to materialise their ideals, everyone that goes against it should be killed and that the person who carries out such killings joins the god.<sup>430</sup>

<sup>426</sup> Daily News, May 21, p. 6.

<sup>427</sup> Thinakaran, May 21, p. 10.

<sup>428</sup> Dinamina, May 22, p. 3.

<sup>429</sup> Divaina, May 22, p. 10.

<sup>430</sup> Dinamina, May 22, p. 5.



**No one can act thuggishly condemning other religions** – We want a Sri Lankan Muslim community as opposed to a Muslim community that is Arabised – Champika Ranawaka (by Muditha Dayananda) – Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that we need a Sri Lankan Muslim community as opposed to a Muslim community that is Arabised. Ranawaka further stated that no religion can make statements condemning other religions. He also stated that the radical statements, different ideologies - especially the statements made condemning other religions and by misinterpreting Quran should be controlled. He posited the view that laws should be imposed against this. He also opined that no one has the right to harass other religions and to behave thuggishly using Buddhism. Ranawaka made these remarks when he attended the opening ceremony of the National Buddhist Centre in Madiwela.<sup>431</sup>

**NCM: Handle with care** – The NCM against Minister Bathiudeen accuses him of supporting the National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) terrorists. He does not deny some of the dealings certain people close to him are said to have had with the suspects of the Easter Sunday horror but argues that they had been normal business dealings. It is not clear whether the NCM would succeed. Parliament, in this case, seems to be divided into party lines and religious lines, with UNP Catholic MPs supporting the motion and the Muslim MPs of the party opposing it. Against this backdrop, there is a danger of anti-Muslim feelings flaring up once again, which could lead to anti-Muslim riots. It is very unlikely that Bathiudeen would be put behind bars, whatever the outcome of the NCM might be. If the proponents of the motion have strong evidence, the best course of action is to approach the CID with documentary proof, which would not lead to communal tensions and taking sides.<sup>432</sup>

**Vandals further remanded** (by Saman Wijaya Bandara) - Thirteen suspects remanded for vandalising Buddha statues in the Mawanella area were further remanded till June 3. The suspects were arrested last December and interrogations into them led to the seizure of a large haul of explosives in the Wanathawilluwa area. The two accomplices of Zahran Hashim, arrested from a footwear shop in Gampola and considered the main suspects in the damage caused to the Buddha statues, were not brought in yesterday as they were being detained and questioned by the CID. This was stated in submissions made to the magistrate by the state counsel and the CID official. They said that the two suspects will be produced in court on a future date.<sup>433</sup>

**Towards a Sri Lankan identity** - This editorial piece questions the reasoning behind the Easter Sunday bombing, stating that Muslims in Sri Lanka have never been persecuted for their religious beliefs and Sri Lanka has never done anything wrong to a Muslim majority nation. The piece surmises that the only conclusion is that the youths have been brainwashed and misguided to think of other communities in Sri Lanka as an enemy. Isolationism and extremism go hand in hand, the article states, referring to certain

<sup>431</sup> Lankadeepa, May 22, p. 8.

<sup>432</sup> Daily Mirror, May 22, p. A8.

<sup>433</sup> Daily News, May 22, p. 1, 8.



sections of the Muslim community that have alienated themselves. It also blames the attacks on a lack of assimilation between the three main communities in the country, and raises the importance of not vilifying the entire Muslim community. The piece commends Muslim leadership for calling for a unified Sri Lankan identity, and notes that the measures with regard to madrasas and the niqab were suggested by Muslims themselves, before government intervention. They have also backed the efforts of the government with regard to the “Sharia” University. Moreover, the Muslim community is now taking a strong stand against ideological terrorism at a grassroots level, as seen by a massive demonstration by Muslims in Puttalam against ISIS terror. The crux of the matter is that there should not be separate laws or regulations for any of the communities in Sri Lanka. Similarly, schools should not be segregated.<sup>434</sup>

**Requiem mass for Sri Lanka** (by Jeevan Thiagarajah) - This feature piece describes the ways in which ethnic political violence has played a role in the country since the 1950s, and how it is used to keep power in the hands of the elite. The article discusses how the post-1956 era saw the introduction of a new fundamentalist and militant Buddhism, and how Buddhism has effectively become the political and civil religion of the state. Racial violence was often sparked by business competition. Merchants employed the dispossessed proletarians of towns to eliminate business rivals, especially during periods of post-election political violence. It has been argued by many that it was the failure of the non-violent Tamil struggle to remedy prevailing political maladies that paved the way for an emerging, frustrated generation of Tamil youth to take to the gun. It is freely admitted that every major political party has its own rented or rentable thug contingent. Incrementally thugs have taken to politics and are found holding elected positions with an unimpressive history of police complaints and cases, past or ongoing. The radicalisation process has been assisted immeasurably by the sustained campaign of hate spewed at Muslims. For the radical ring masters behind the Easter Sunday attacks, it’s a windfall of immeasurable proportions that only the clicks of computer keyboards are required to invite the disheartened and dispirited to join their ranks.<sup>435</sup>

**The attack on Muslims in Kurunegala was a planned one** (by R Yasi, M.R.M. Waseem) - Deputy Minister Nalin Bandara stated in parliament that the attacks carried out on Muslims in Kurunegala were planned. <sup>436</sup>

**Islam preaches peace and coexistence** - The Chief Priest of the Kalmunai Buddhist Temple, Ranmuthugala Sangarathna Thera stated that like all religions, Islam too preaches peace and coexistence. He pointed out that an understanding could be built if the Sinhalese learn the Tamil language and Tamils and Muslims learn the Sinhala

<sup>434</sup> Daily News, May 22, p. 6.

<sup>435</sup> Daily News, May 22, p. 6.

<sup>436</sup> Virakesari, May 22, p. 2.



language. Further, he stated that people belonging to a particular religion should also read the holy scriptures of other religions in order to understand each other.<sup>437</sup>

**Ban 48 more Muslim extremist organisations** – Shantha Bandara (by Chandrika Perera) – United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Shantha Bandara noted that information has been uncovered about 48 more Muslim extremist organisations that resemble the three Muslim extremist organisation that had been already banned. He added that those 48 organisations too should be banned for national security. He stressed that the security of the country can only be guaranteed, if the saffron robe is secured. He also urged the people to make the entire country a Poson zone in the Poson Month in the same manner the entire country was made a Vesak zone during the Vesak month notwithstanding the disorganised nature of the state that prevailed due to Easter Sunday attacks. Bandara added that the clothes that hinder the recognition of the identity in the society should be banned and that there should be a common law on marriages without allowing laws based on religion. He also mentioned that there should be laws to counter various propagandas distorting the religions and to prevent the entry of groups engaged in such misinterpretations to the country.<sup>438</sup>

**Previous Government attempted to control the country by strengthening the extremists and by creating conflicts within them** – The members of the collective of civil-society groups and trade unions (by Upali Karunaratne) – Senior Lecturer of the Sri Jayewardenepura University Dambara Amila Thero noted that racism and religious antagonism are epiphytes that should be immediately removed. Thero added that there should be in-depth discussion on this. It was also opined by the Thero that religious teachings too can be used in this regard. <sup>439</sup>

**Islamophobia** (by Manjula Vijayaratne) – The people in the country were greatly shocked by the vicious attack that was launched on the Easter Sunday. This attack became instrumental in arousing the hysteria against the Muslim masses. Not only that this anti- Muslim hysteria moves forth without any control, but also it is leading to a dangerous situation. The phobia that has been created has arisen mainly due to two reasons. One is because this attack is totally unexpected as there was no Muslim-Christian objection before. The second reason is that there is no proper understanding about the nature of the threat. Everyone should realise the fact that there is no difference between the Muslims who strongly follow the Islamic model and the Evangelical Christians. The followers of both these groups are keener on their respective religious scriptures as opposed to their religious rituals. But they are not dangerous people. It is true that fundamentalist Mosques have been subject to violence. But it cannot be observed that the followers of them are living separately from other masses. Fundamentalists are people who act according to the original position of the religions; but they cannot be considered

<sup>437</sup> Virakesari, May 22, p. 15.

<sup>438</sup> Dinamina, May 23, p. 5.

<sup>439</sup> Dinamina, May 23, p. 8.

as terrorists and as a dangerous group. Several centuries had passed for the spreading of Islam of this type. But it was only once there was an attack. That too was launched by a group of Islamists who got inclined to radical ideas at foreign countries.<sup>440</sup>

**Compensation for Muslim Mosques that were damaged by conflicts** (by Buddhika Imbulana and Samanmali Priyashanthi) – Cabinet approval has been given to repair the Muslim Mosques that were damaged due to the disturbances that were reported in several areas of the island recently and also to pay compensation for them. The proposal was submitted by the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and it is stated that the compensation mechanism that was followed to pay compensation to victims of the Easter Sunday bombings would be used in this regard too.<sup>441</sup>

**Thowheed Jama'ath Doctor has sterilised 4,000 Sinhala Buddhist mothers after performing caesarean surgeries- Information divulged with evidence- extensive investigation to arrest the Doctor** (by Hemantha Randunu) – A special Police team has commenced extensive investigations to arrest a Doctor who is alleged to be a leading member of the Thowheed Jama'ath terrorist organisation and who is alleged to have sterilised more than 4,000 Sinhala Buddhist mothers. It has been revealed through investigations that the suspected Doctor had sterilised Sinhala Buddhist mothers who underwent a caesarean surgery for the first delivery of birth. The doctor is alleged to have tied the fallopian tube of the mothers who underwent the caesarean surgery in a very shrewd manner. It has also been revealed that the Doctor had allegedly done this such that the mothers who underwent the surgery are unaware of it. Doctor had been performing caesarean surgeries to more than 7,000 surgeries for years and 4,000 Sinhala Buddhist mothers had been sterilised in this manner. Police says that there is information supplemented by evidence that the Doctor had committed this crime.<sup>442</sup>

**Extremism cannot be prevented without banning the entire Wahabbist network that appears under various names** – The Association of trustees and Committee Members of Muslim Mosques in Galle - The Association of Trustees and Committee Members of Muslim Mosques in Galle stated that the spreading of extremism cannot be prevented without banning the entire Wahabbist network that appears under different names. They further stated that it is a hilarious fact, if one says that terrorism can be eliminated only by proscribing National Thowheed Organisation and Jama'ath Milathi Ibrahim. Noting that Islam never imposed their religion using force or compulsion on other religions, they noted that an endeavour to that effect is not Islam. Delving further, they noted that the advent of the Wahabbism was accompanied by killing Muslims in Arabia, demolishing the graveyards of the Islamic religious founders and by giving an extremist outlook to peaceful Islam. Noting that Wahabbism began to emerge in Sri Lanka about the beginning of the 20th century, they noted that Wahabbist influence was forcefully socialised amidst the objections of the conventional Muslims. They also

<sup>440</sup> Dinamina, May 23, p. 9.

<sup>441</sup> Dinamina, May 23, p. 10.

<sup>442</sup> Divaina, May 23, p. 1, 4.



pinpointed that the most prominent example to show that the conventional Muslims never accepted the Wahhabism was the conflict between the Mosques in Beruwala. Deliberating further, they noted that the conventional Muslims destroyed the place where the wahabbists congregate- Masjidur Rahman when they could no longer endure the violence and brutality of the Wahhabism. Adding that their plea as the conventional Muslims in Sri Lanka is to ban the Wahhabism that appears under different names, they noted that the institutions maintained as Madrasas are too places that inculcate extremism. They have stated this while vehemently criticising the Wahabbism.<sup>443</sup>

**Let's tread on to the genuine peaceful reconciliatory path** (by Naimbala Dhammadassi Thera) – Now the final hour of the reconciliation has dawned. The challenge at the moment is as to whether should we rise up united or should we perish without harmony. The great leadership given by Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith by depicting the genuine compassion and the noble patience really deserves a wide applause. The advices given by him to the Catholic followers not to make the entire Sri Lanka a blood bath would be subject to the high reputation of everyone who anticipates peaceful harmony. It is the sacred job of the religious leaders of all faiths in this country to prevent the recurrence of catastrophes like this in the future. It is clear that the majority in this country have kept faith in the religious leaders of their respective faiths as never before. Thus, both the clergy and laymen should make sure to refrain from making emotional, provoking statements.<sup>444</sup>

**We can't afford to let history repeat itself** - Anti-Muslim violence is a clear indicator that Sri Lankans have failed to learn the lessons that history has taught them, such as the dark days of July 1983, which led to a 30-year armed conflict that almost tore the country apart. The residents of the recently affected areas claimed that the mobs were from outside and they were helped by some miscreants in the village pointing out the Muslim homes and shops. Muslims have been attacked in the past in similar ways - in Aluthgama, Beruwala and Dharga Town in 2014 and in Teldeniya and Digana in 2018. Several suspects were taken into custody in all these aforementioned incidents but the point that begs answers is what happens thereafter. Clearly, no lessons have been learnt from the past.<sup>445</sup>

**Sri Lanka: At peace or in pieces?** (by Ravi Ratnasabapathy) - This feature piece analyses the country's response to conflict, both now and in the past, and how it must change in order to prevent Sri Lanka from repeating mistakes from the past. The riots on May 13 have many parallels in history, such as the violence during 2013-14, and 1983. A significant difference between the 1983 attacks and the anti-Muslim attacks, according to Dr. Dayan Jayatilaka, is the focus on the population growth rates - the solution would be seen as one of an ethnic cleansing or ethno-religious cleansing. When formulating responses to present crises, Sri Lanka needs to avoid knee-jerk reactions. The prime

<sup>443</sup> Divaina, May 23, p. 13.

<sup>444</sup> Lankadeepa, May 23, p. 6(II).

<sup>445</sup> Daily Mirror, May 23, p. A12.



minister has said that a new counter-terrorism act is necessary. However, The Prevention of Terrorism Act (of 1979) and a permanent 'state of emergency' existed between 1983- 2011, and it created an enabling environment for widespread police brutality and torture. It seems to have been the impetus for the LTTE to start their suicide missions. Did ISIS specifically target Sri Lanka for recruits, seeing incidents here in 2013, 2014 and 2018? What impact will the current wave of anti-Muslim violence have? Educating the youth of Sri Lanka is key, especially regarding values such as tolerance and non-violent conflict resolution. However, the school system now does not accomplish this, due to segregation in terms of language and religion. For example, the tendency of Sri Lankan schools to vilify the Tamil in the Sinhala-Tamil conflict. Instead of simply teaching one religion, it would be better to teach the history of religions in a comparative way, for example, emphasising the common elements between Hinduism and Buddhism, those between Christianity and Islam, and overall messages of peace.<sup>446</sup>

**Another 48 Muslim extremist groups identified** (By Dharma Sri Abeyratne) - Another 48 Muslim groups that have a similar extremist militant ideology to that of the three banned National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) organisations have been identified, said SLFP Youth Front Chairman MP Shantha Bandara. He said that a presidential pardon should be granted to Ven. Gnanasara Thera. He was hopeful that the theras will receive a presidential pardon before the Poson full moon poya day. "Attention should be drawn on certain dress codes including the burqa, laws relating to marriage," Bandara said, while discussing the president's decision to establish a 'National Security Evaluation Committee'. He added that no final decision has been taken on the SLFP's stance on the No-Confidence Motion (NCM) forwarded against the government by the JVP.<sup>447</sup>

**NCM against Bathiudeen is an NCM against Muslim community** - Deputy Minister - Deputy Minister Ameer Ali yesterday said that the NCM against Rishad Bathiudeen is a NCM against the entire Muslim community. He pointed out that the opposition was not so eager to bring in an NCM against IGP Pujith Jayasundara or Secretary of Defence Hemasiri Fernando. In response, opposition MPs said that the NCM was brought against those who supported Islamic extremism, not the Muslim community, and that they are not targeting all Muslim representatives in the government, such as Minister Kabir Hashim.<sup>448</sup>

**The rights of Hindu and Christian children have been seized alongside those of Muslim teachers** – Human Development Organisation - The leader of the Human Development Organisation, Perumal Sivaprakasam stated that while the rights of Muslim teachers have been affected, the rights of Tamil students are also being affected. He pointed out a recent incident where Muslim teachers had faced opposition from parents at the Avisawella Puwakpitiya Tamil Maha Vidyalaya for wearing the black purdah. They were transferred to another school by the governor of the Western Province.

<sup>446</sup> Daily News, May 23, p. 7.

<sup>447</sup> Daily News, May 23, p. 8.

<sup>448</sup> Daily News, May 23, p. 10.





Sivaprakasam said there were chances of similar issues occurring in other Tamil schools. He said that international agreements as well as the fundamental rights of the constitution of Sri Lanka assure female Muslim teachers the right to wear their cultural dress. It has been nationally and culturally approved that individuals or groups have the right to follow their religious beliefs, their culture and their heritage.<sup>449</sup>

**The individuals who were behind the Digana incident were there in Minuwangoda too** – Lawyer Javed Yusuf – (by Duminda Sampath) - Lawyer Javed Yusuf stated that what is viewed as extremism by some is not viewed as extremism by some others. He also noted that a middle path is taught in Islam. Delving further, he stated that the way some behave religiously is different and added that some view the face-cover as extremism and added that there are different opinions on it. This was his response when he was asked as to what kind of impact Muslim extremism has had on the Muslim society. He also noted that there was no discussion on the terrorist attack within the Muslim society. He added that the perpetrators of the terrorist attack made divisions in the Muslim society stating various religious ideologies. He noted that their religious ideas were rejected by the Muslim society. He opined that Jamiyyathul Ulama Organisation, Muslim intellectuals and Muslim Organisations complained to the government and the security forces since 2014. When he was pointed out that there are opinions that Muslim society needs reforms, he stated that various stories are circulating in the guise of this incident. He stressed that reforms should be done very carefully. Adding that Madrasa schools are something like international schools, he mentioned that even the Muslim society too had issues as to the teachings and the attire in Madrasa schools. He added even the Muslim society opined that there should be a regulation on it. Noting that burqa and the niqab were banned, he added that, but the hijab is not banned. Mentioning that this has not been understood properly by the masses, he noted that the Government must notify the masses in this regard. He added that otherwise the Muslim women can be subject to various difficulties. He also posited the view that after 08th of January 2015, there was a situation in the country where there was a programme to build reconciliation in the official level and religious leaders of all-faiths got together in it. He also added as the people in the country are religious, if the religious leaders show the correct path, the people in the country can be taken to the correct path. <sup>450</sup>

**Buddhist-Catholic and Islamic Vesak celebrations** (by Asela Kuruluwansha quoting Daya Amarasekera) – Although Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural country: the identity of the country is built on a Buddhist context. It is a truth accepted by everyone that Buddhism has deeply rooted itself in the social structure of the country than other religions. Therefore, our national tradition and the national thinking is modelled in conformity with Buddhism and there is room for other religions to freely grow in this space. Thus, Vesak can be deemed as the festival that moulds our identity in this context. We should view it in the perspective of a national festival as opposed to viewing it only in the religious

<sup>449</sup> Virakesari, May 23, p. 14.

<sup>450</sup> Dinamina, May 24, p. 8.



meaning. That sentiment was observed to some extent during this Vesak festival. It should be noted down albeit with a worrying gesture that a group of Buddhists took steps to celebrate Vesak in a grand manner to show off and make the Muslim community worried. We examined more instances than the past where Islamic, Hindu and Catholic masses got together with the Sinhala Buddhist masses to celebrate Vesak. Actually, it is a very virtuous situation and there are things that should be done from the side of Sinhala Buddhist masses to perpetuate this situation. Sinhala Buddhists should get together to celebrate religious festivals of people of other religions in the same manner in which the masses of other religions helped in the celebrations of Vesak.<sup>451</sup>

**CID was assigned the job of investigating the news item published by Divaina** – Speaker (by Akitha Perera and Ranil Dharmasena) – Speaker Karu Jayasuriya noted that he inquired as to the veracity of the news that was published in the Divaina newspaper on 23rd of May as its main news item – “Thowheed Jama’ath Doctor sterilised 4,000 Sinhala Buddhist mothers through caesarean operations” from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the Inspector General of Police (IGP). The Speaker noted that both the CID and the IGP told him that they are not informed about it. The Speaker also noted that he was informed by the security forces that the CID has been assigned the task of ascertaining the veracity of both news items. Jayasuriya expressed these ideas when he was inquired by the Leader of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) Anura Kumara Dissanayaka as to whether there is an investigation on this news item. Dissanayaka while referring to the news item published in Divaina also mentioned that, if the news were true, this is a serious condition and added that this might possibly trigger conflicts between the communities. He also added that there would be a situation where the Muslim Doctors are looked at with suspicion and demanded a full description about this incident in the Parliament on the next day. <sup>452</sup>

**Police Media Spokesperson briefs on the Divaina news article**– Media Spokesperson of the Police Superintendent Ruwan Gunasekera noted that no investigation has been done by the Criminal Investigation Department or a special Police Unit as reported in Divaina newspaper yesterday that “broad investigations are being conducted to arrest the Doctor” under the main news item published by the newspaper on 23rd of May. The title of the Main news item was that “The Thowheed Jama’ath Doctor had sterilised 4,000 Sinhala Buddhist mothers”. Gunasekera also emphasised that no Police station has received a complaint in this regard. But, he noted, that there is an investigation going on related to a Doctor in Kurunegala related to his ways of income.<sup>453</sup>

**Let’s listen to that voice** – More than 250 died due to the suicidal bomb attack that was launched by the Thowheed Jama’ath terror group on Easter Sunday and another group of people got injured. Many contemplated that there would be a calamity in the country with this series of attacks that was launched targeting Catholic adherents. But such an

<sup>451</sup> Dinamina, May 24, p. 9.

<sup>452</sup> Divaina, May 24, p. 1, 4.

<sup>453</sup> Divaina, May 24, p. 1, 4.



eventuality did not materialise due to the excellent intervention of the Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith. The Cardinal urged not to harass any ethnic group due to the Thowheed attack. Everyone respected the calm tone of the Cardinal and therefore there was no chaos. But after 21 days of the attack, there were a number of disturbances in a number of places in Kurunegala and Minuwangoda and several Muslim Mosques and shops were attacked. This is clearly an organised act of sabotage and we should be prudent to defeat the extremist terror clan by winning the Muslim brethren. Recently the Association of Trustees and Committee Members of Muslim Mosques in Galle District met the Speaker Karu Jayasuriya and they stressed the need to have a harmonious relationship with the Muslim majority who is innocent. These conventional Muslims state that Islamists never get inclined to teach their religion to people of other faiths using the weapons or by force. They also stress that Sri Lanka should take care from Wahabbists. There is no impediment for people of other ethnic groups and faiths to lead peaceful lives, though the majority in the country are Sinhala Buddhists. That freedom enjoyed by all communities is ruined by the extremists. All ethnic groups and religious groups should rally together against it.<sup>454</sup>

**There was no alert on the intelligence reports instead of being proud about the fact that the war was won – Vijitha Herath – (by Kapila Gunawardena) - Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)** MP Vijitha Herath stated that in the aftermath of the war, Sinhala- Buddhist organisations intervened in violent acts and added that on the other hand Islamic extremist groups too raised their heads. Instead of countering these extremisms, he noted, the Ministry of Defence began to assist these groups separately. He also noted that Saharan made a public address after a few days after the Digana incident by gathering Muslim masses in Kattankudy. Delving further, he noted that Saharan had stated in unequivocal terms there that there are only two groups in the world as Islamic and Non-Islamic. He further stated that Saharan had also stated that Non-Islamic cannot exist and they should be destroyed. He added that Kattankudy Muslim masses got onto the streets against Saharan and that it was the Muslims who first demanded the arrest of Saharan. He also noted that the Muslim religious leaders in the country did not brief the masses on this threat in a deep manner. Herath mentioned that the JVP conveyed to the Muslim leaders that there is a Muslim extremism like this. He added that the Muslim leaders did not acknowledge it. Herath also acknowledged the fact that although it is disconcerting to note, it should be stated that Muslim leaders and Muslim religious leaders in the country did not give an in-depth briefing to the Muslim masses on this threat. Herath entertained these views at a conference “It is our duty to defeat extremism, to build national peace and to guarantee public security” that was held in Badulla.<sup>455</sup>

**Penalise those who foment racism and religious antagonism irrespective of their portfolios – President’s Counsel Upul Jayasuriya (by Nimala Kodituwakku) - Senior Lecturer of the Jayewardenepura University Dambara Amila Thero** noted that the Easter Sunday attack targeting Catholic Churches and hotels under the guidance of ISIS

<sup>454</sup> Divaina, May 24, p. 13.

<sup>455</sup> Divaina, May 24, p. 8.



organisation was launched relevant to racism and religious-antagonism. Stressing that steps should not only be taken to remedy an accident in the aftermath of it, it is also important to prevent the recurrence of such accidents, Thero noted that the society should refrain from attacking each other by getting bewildered by extremism. Pointing out that racism and religious antagonism are epiphytes in the tree of humans, Thero noted that those epiphytes must be removed carefully. Thero noted this at a conference organised by the civil-society groups and trade unions under the theme “terrorism, extremism and responsibility of the citizens” at the Lakshman Kadirgamar Centre for International Relations and Strategic Development recently.<sup>456</sup>

**Education ministry issues directives to all schools** (by Sheain Fernandopulle) – The Education Ministry has informed heads of all schools in writing to abide by the gazette notification issued under Emergency Law which prohibited dresses and helmets preventing the identification of a person. Accordingly, entering school premises wearing burqas, niqabs, full face, modular and off-road helmets has been banned, while wearing the chador, hijab and other helmets has not been banned.<sup>457</sup>

**NTJ doctor performing sterilisation surgery: Police deny newspaper article** (Darshana Sanjeeewa Balasuriya) – Police yesterday denied a controversial article published on May 22 claiming a doctor linked to now proscribed National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) had performed 4,000 caesarean operations on 4,000 Sinhala Buddhist women, rendering them infertile in the process.<sup>458</sup>

**Speaker assures the CID will carry out the investigation** (by Ajith Siriwardana and Yohan Perera) – Speaker Karu Jayasuriya yesterday informed parliament that investigations into a news report claiming that a doctor linked to the Thowheed Jamath had performed cesarean operations ‘making 4,000 buddhist mothers barren’ have been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).<sup>459</sup>

**Country still at risk from evil forces** – Ven. Gnanasara (by Chaturanga Samarawickrama) – Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) General Secretary Ven. Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera, who was released from the Welikada Prison yesterday, said that Sri Lanka is still at risk, something he has been reiterating for five years, and therefore, the BBS is committed to working for the country. He said that President Maithripala Sirisena had taken a brave decision to release him without giving into influence from certain internal and external forces. “The country is now in a critical situation. We should work patiently and responsibly in the future. I urge the members of the BBS to work very patiently. There is a possibility of creating various types of issues such as sabotaging activities. Therefore, we should give our maximum support to the security forces in the country because more evil forces are aiming to destroy the country,” Ven. Gnanasara

<sup>456</sup> Lankadeepa, May 24, p. 8

<sup>457</sup> Daily Mirror, May 24, p. A1, A2.

<sup>458</sup> Daily Mirror, May 24, p. A3.

<sup>459</sup> Daily Mirror, May 24, p. A4.

added. He was convicted on four charges of contempt of court and sentenced by the Appeal Court to 19 years of rigorous imprisonment, which was to be completed within six years on August 8.<sup>460</sup>

**Global Islamophobia and its Lankan agents** (by Ameen Izzadeen) – In this short opinion piece, the author discusses Islamophobia as an industry worth \$500 million in the United States alone, according to research carried out by the Council for American- Islamic Relations (CAIR). The ‘tentacles’ of Islamophobia extend to every country where Muslims are a minority. Examples in Asia include India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. In the latter case, Aluthgama in 2014, Digana last year and several places last week are examples of anti-Muslim violence. The author argues that US policymakers are Islamophobes who seek to demonise and inflict violence against Muslims. This leads to a vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence as radicalisation affects Muslims. The author sees this self- fulfilling cycle in the Easter Sunday attack and the reprisals against Muslims in Sri Lanka. The author talks more about global Islam, globalised violence and the Cold War.<sup>461</sup>

**A ‘symbolic’ arrest** (by Shatara Jayasuriya) – This feature piece notes that, recently a Muslim woman was arrested for wearing a dress with a picture that apparently resembled the dharmachakra - the wheel of dharma. Social media was abuzz criticising the arrest as many believed that the picture was that of the helm of a ship. Amnesty International (South Asia) said that the absurdity of the purported ‘offense’ should be sufficient to release her immediately and provide her with compensation. Human rights lawyer, J. C. Weliamuna, noted that Section 291B could be used to file charges. This section relates to deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class, by insulting its religion or religious beliefs. According to Police Media Spokesperson Ruwan Gunasekara, the woman was arrested on the grounds that the picture on her dress ‘resembled’ a dharmachakra. “Since there was a possibility of the incident leading to unrest with the people around, the woman was arrested. She was produced before courts and is in remand until the 27th of May,” he told the Daily Mirror. Sociologist Dr. Kumudu Kusum Kumara pointed out that the picture concerned was obviously the wheel of a ship. “We have to view this incident as one of targeting a Muslim person wrongfully perceived as consciously offending Buddhist religious sentiments. This is part of the widespread generalised anti-Muslim sentiments that have been simmering in the post Easter-bomb attacks that became evident in social media and surfaced in the attacks on Muslims in Gampaha and the North-Western Province,” he said. Meanwhile, Ven. Dhammananda Thera, Executive Director of the Walpola Rahula Institute for Buddhist Studies, said that harassing people based on a symbol- be it in a dress or slipper - is not Buddhism. “Even if the picture is that of the dharmachakra arresting people based on wearing a dress with it is not Buddhism.<sup>462</sup>

<sup>460</sup> Daily Mirror, May 24, p. A6.

<sup>461</sup> Daily Mirror, May 24, p. A8.

<sup>462</sup> Daily Mirror, May 24, p. A9.



**TNA condemns Ven. Gnanasara Thera's pardon** - The TNA stated that at present, Sri Lanka faced the challenge of containing racial and religious bigotry and hence; if the country was to move forward with all its citizens being treated as equals, the government must deal with all hate-mongers, regardless of their race or religion. "When the call of the hour was to take stern action against all such individuals, the act of pardoning a Buddhist monk sends the wrong message to the country - that it is only unacceptable when violence is incited by minorities and not the majority," the statement read.<sup>463</sup>

**Darkness scary, daytime uncomfortable** (by Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne) - This feature piece condemns both the Easter Sunday attacks, and the violence against Muslims, and calls for the country to unite. It is irrational to attack Muslims as a punishment to ISIS ideologists. Sri Lanka must bring its communities together, no matter what race or creed. The attacks, both against Christians and Muslims, were against the heritage of our nationalities, and their damage to our mindsets and our morals and our sense of belonging is real. In order to combat this threat, we must unite as Sri Lankans.<sup>464</sup>

**Heads of schools cautioned to abide by Gazette notification** - Heads of all schools were yesterday informed by the Education Ministry to abide by the gazette notification issued under the emergency regulations which prohibited dress and helmets preventing the identification of persons. Accordingly, entering school premises wearing burqas, niqabs, full face, modular and off-road helmets has been banned, while the wearing of the chador, hijab and other helmets has not been banned.<sup>465</sup>

**No-Confidence Motion is against Muslims** (by Lawrence Selvanayagam) - Minister Mangala Samaraweera said that the No-Confidence Motion (NCM) brought against Rishad Bathiudeen is not only against him but also against the entire Muslim community. He said that the motive behind the NCM was to get rid of Muslims in the government. He stated that the opposition was attempting to portray all Muslims as terrorists and the NCM against Bathiudeen is a part of that.<sup>466</sup>

**Muslims can perform their religious activities at any time** - Major General Mahinda Mudalige stated that Muslims could go to mosques anytime and indulge in religious activities. He made this statement during a meeting with civil activists and ulamas. The meeting, organised by the Kalmunai Chamber of Commerce, focused on security.<sup>467</sup>

<sup>463</sup> Daily News, May 24, p. 2.

<sup>464</sup> Daily News, May 24, p. 7.

<sup>465</sup> Daily News, May 24, p. 10.

<sup>466</sup> Thinakaran, May 24, p. 1.

<sup>467</sup> Thinakaran, May 24, p. 17



**Sri Lanka is a Sinhala-Buddhist country that gave all rights to other ethnicities – Navin Dissanayake** (by Jayasiri Peduruarachchi) – Minister of Plantation Industries Navin Dissanayake stated that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala- Buddhist country that gave all rights to other ethnicities and added that as this is the only country for Sinhalese everyone likes to think that this is the Sinhala-Buddhist country. Dissanayake noted these while attending the inauguration ceremony of “Wewili Saviyen- Sasunata Eliyak” recently (21).<sup>468</sup>

**If new laws were not brought to counter terrorism, the masses would bring a no- confidence motion against all 225 MPs** – Patali Champika Ranawaka (by Chameera Elladeniya) – Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that it is not ideal to maintain the Sharia University in Batticaloa even as a private institute. He added that it should be maintained as a government university after nationalisation of it. Ranawaka also opined that Madrasa institutions should not be maintained separately and further added that neither is it ideal to maintain them under the Ministry of Muslim Religious Affairs. Delving further he noted, they should be regulated in the manner in which the Piriven education is regulated under the National Institute of Education under the Ministry of Education. He pointed out that such a regulation is necessary because of the fact that there are foreign teachers in Madrasas and various interpretations are given to Quran. He also posited the view that it is examined that various groups get inclined to violent activities based on those ideas. Thus, he noted, that they believe that the Madrasas should be maintained in the same manner in which the other educational institutions are maintained. He also noted that new laws are needed to control ideologies that are used to suppress people of other religious faiths by giving various interpretations to Quran. He also noted there is also no right to harass people of other religious faiths by abusing Buddhism in the gravest manner. He also noted that the civilisation in the country was built upon the Buddhist civilisation and added that there is nothing in Buddhism asking to undermine other religious communities.<sup>469</sup>

**The majority in the country knows as to whether the UNP protected Buddhism or not – Thalatha Athukorale**– Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms Thalatha Athukorale stated that some state that the UNP destroyed Buddhism and added that everyone knows whether the UNP protected Buddhism or not. She also noted that the Mahamaluwa of the sacred temple of the tooth in Kandy was taken under the Land Reform Commission set up under the Sirimavo Bandaranayake Government and added that it was after 1977 under a Government of J. R Jayawardena that it was handed over to the Temple of the tooth back. She also noted that it was the UNP that took steps to uplift Buddhist temples by creating the Central Cultural Fund. It was also pointed out by Athukorale that the Premier donated 5-10 lakhs to the temples in the rural areas from the Central Cultural Fund.<sup>470</sup>

A concrete road has been built within the archaeological site of Pothuvil Muhudu Maha Viharaya – Udalamaththe Ratnapriya Thero (by P. Jayasinghe Dadayamthalawa) – Udathalamaththe Ratnapriya Thero who is the residing monk in the Pothuvil Muhudu Maha Viharaya has lodged a complaint in the Pothuvil Police against

<sup>468</sup> Dinamina, May 25, p. 11.

<sup>469</sup> Dinamina, May 25, p. 11.

<sup>470</sup> Divaina, May 25, p. 6.





the construction of a permanent road after paving concrete within the archaeological site of the Pothuvil Muhudu Maha Viharaya. The chief Prelate of the Muhudu Maha Viharaya Warakapola Indrasiri Thero noted that no action had been taken by the Pothuvil Police on the complaint lodged. Thero also noted that it would be impossible to prevent the destruction of the archaeological ruins that have not been excavated hitherto due to the silent mode adopted by the relevant stakeholders.<sup>471</sup>

**The truth that is not seen in the national harmony** (by M. S. M. Ayub) – Many Non- Muslims too have got involved with the conversation on the creation of national integration that emerged after the Easter Sunday attacks. But some ideas expressed within this dialogue are misleading. Especially it seems that some have confused the face- coverings like niqab, and burqa worn by Muslim women for the past decade, Islamic Dhamma schools known as Madrasas, schools and the political parties that are maintained on an ethnic basis and the Muslim personal law with extremism and terrorism. As a consequence of this pursuit of real terrorism becomes difficult. Under the existing circumstances, it is a threat to the security. Moreover, it is not something that is prescribed by the Islamic faith. That is because the education in many madrasas were confined to religion. Moreover, many scholars that come out of them do not possess the requisite knowledge on languages or knowledge on any other disciplines. In that sense, these religious schools should be reformed. It is suitable to place them under the monitoring of the Government to remove the mis opinions on them. Despite repeated appeals by the President, Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Cardinal not to put the ordinary Muslims into the group of terrorists in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks, many media outlets portrayed a huge Muslim phobia when reporting on the searching operations conducted by the Army. The consequence of these attacks was that the pushing of the Muslims who were trying to get out of the box that they were hitherto confined due to the conduct of the extremists, economic reasons and clothes that portray religious-exhibiting clothes.<sup>472</sup>

**An American Security Agreement in the context of bringing a peace-keeping force** (by Keerthi Warnakulasuriya) – The United Nations Organisation (UNO) has issued warnings to Sri Lanka reminding about the R2P convention. Under this Convention, if the government in the country is unable to protect its people, a peace-keeping force can be sent to the island. BBC and three newspapers in Britain blamed Sinhala Buddhists for the prevailing situation in the country. The terrific conduct of the ISIS has been forgotten in this regard. Instead, the London Guardian stated that Holy Quran had been thrown to the ground, to provoke Muslims in the country. It was discovered that external parties were involved in the incidents that happened in the North-Western Province. Some parties who took this to their advantage broadcast photographs that depict as to how Muslim Mosques in North-Western Province have been destroyed by fire. What was attempted

<sup>471</sup> Divaina, May 25, p. 6.

<sup>472</sup> Divaina, May 25, p. 4.



by showing this to the international community was that Buddhists and Catholics in Sri Lanka have destroyed Mosques in Sri Lanka.<sup>473</sup>

**What the UNP does from the selection committee is rescuing the party and Bathiudeen** – S. B. Dissanayake (by Nimala Kodituwakku) – MP S. B. Dissanayake stated that Minister Mangala Samaraweera keeps on repeating a statement that any non- Buddhist person in this country does not tell that- this is not a Sinhala Buddhist country. Dissanayake noted that Samaraweera keeps on insulting the honourable Bhikkhus as “those who don robes”. Dissanayake opined that even foreign countries acknowledge that Sri Lanka is the centre of Theravada Buddhism. Adding that even the Cardinal too entertained this view, Dissanayake remarked that it is in this context that Samaraweera makes such statements. He also noted that the main Muslim Mosques in the island such as the Kandy Asgiriya Muslim Mosque, Udunuwara Muslim Mosque, Gampola Muslim Mosque and Kurunegala Muslim Mosque have been built in lands that belong to Asgiri, Malwathu and Ridee Viharayas. He emphasised that the culture that all people belonging to different ethnic groups and religious groups should live in harmony transcends. He further added that unfortunately Mangala Samaraweera cannot understand it and what he wants is to provoke Sinhala Buddhist masses.<sup>474</sup>

**Our country is a Sinhala Buddhist country: No one can change it** – Navin Dissanayake (by Nimala Kodituwakku) – Minister of Plantation Industries Navin Dissanayake noted that this country is a unitary country with a Sinhala Buddhist majority, and no one can change it. He also noted that it should not be separately mentioned that the other communities too have the all the similar rights in an identical manner that are enjoyed by the Sinhala-Buddhist majority. He opined that we have given equal human rights for all communities from the basic law of the country- the Constitution. He also noted that this country is the only country that is there for them as Sinhala Buddhists and added that accordingly we can declare with particular deliberation, love and respect that this country which is the only country where Sinhala Buddhists live is a Sinhala-Buddhist country. He opined that there is no problem in that.<sup>475</sup>

**Can Muslims integrate with others without their support?** (by M.S.M. Ayub) – The initial reaction by Sri Lankan Muslims to the Easter Sunday terrorist suicide attacks on churches and five-star hotels was not something unexpected. While sympathising with the victims, they genuinely felt a sense of shame and guilt, because the suicide attacks that killed 266 people that day were carried out in the name of Islam by terrorists belonging to their faith. The author notes that ordinary Muslims launched a ‘scathing media campaign’ against extremists and dissociated themselves from them by helping the security forces. It came to light after April 21 that Muslim leaders had been alerting the authorities about a dangerous trend within the community since 2013, which later turned out to be full blown terrorism. The author states that those wearing the face veil

<sup>473</sup> Divaina, May 25, p. 8.

<sup>474</sup> Lankadeepa, May 25, p. 5.

<sup>475</sup> Lankadeepa, May 25, p. 8.



have nothing to do with terrorism, but it is ‘fashionable’, coming under ‘exhibitionism’ despite hindering social integration. Madrasas are also not to blame, although poor education in many can hinder integration. The Muslim Personal Law as the other Personal Laws in the country covers very personal issues, including matrimonial and property issues, and they have never hindered social integration or contributed to extremism and terrorism. Besides, they are under the common legal system of the country. Yet, there are backward elements in those laws which have to be rectified. Ethnicity-based schools and political parties are two other phenomena which have to be done away with to achieve integration. The author states that integration is not possible without the support of other communities, which is not forthcoming. He sees media dramatisation of search operations and demonisation of the Muslim community leading to racist elements burning down hundreds of Muslim-owned houses and shops, and damaging and vandalising several mosques in the Puttalam, Kurunegala and Gampaha districts on May 12 and 13. The author notes that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa had confessed several times that he was not allowed to take action against the group that terrorised the Muslims during his tenure by one of his ministers who was said to have threatened to bring thousands of monks to the streets.<sup>476</sup>

**TNA decries Gnanasara Thera’s release** (by Sandun A. Jayasekera) – The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has “vehemently criticised” the release of Bodu Bala Sena General Secretary Gnanasara Thera. The TNA characterised the pardon as an abuse of the constitutional powers vested in the president. TNA MP M.A. Sumanthiran stated that “Sri Lanka now faces the challenge of containing racial and religious bigotry if the country were to move forward with all citizens being treated as equals. In addressing this challenge, the government must scrupulously deal with all hate-mongers...whichever ethnic or religious group they belonged to.”<sup>477</sup>

**Re-building the nation** (by Eksith Fernando) – This short opinion piece provides a descriptive account of the Easter Sunday Attacks and their aftermath. The piece then stresses that religious leaders from all religions must “come down hard” on their own extremists. “Perhaps more importantly”, the author states that there must be a major overhaul of the education system. School segregation should be outlawed, and every school and classroom must be multicultural. All must come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.<sup>478</sup>

**CID assigned to investigate NTJ sterilisation allegations - Speaker** (by Sandasen Marasinghe and Camelia Nathaniel) - Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said that the investigation into reports that a gynaecologist affiliated with the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) had sterilised many unsuspecting Sinhala women had been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). JVP leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake asked if the

<sup>476</sup> Daily Mirror, May 25, p. A11

<sup>477</sup> Daily Mirror, May 25, p. A6.

<sup>478</sup> Daily Mirror, May 25, p. A8.



investigation was being carried out regarding the suspect gynaecologist or the newspapers that reported the incident. The Speaker responded that the investigation was initiated regarding the incident.<sup>479</sup>

**Sri Lankan Muslims need to blend into society more** - Ranawaka - Joining the debate to extend Emergency Laws, Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that Thowheed extremists operate across the world to make everyone believe in one God and kill all non-believers. He stated that there could be another 100 to 200 terrorists of this kind, with around 1000 to 2000 sympathisers. Another category is around 20,000 to 30,000 Muslims who hold the same beliefs but aren't involved in any violent activities. A fourth category consists of 'Arabicised' Muslims, and the fifth is the Sri Lankan Muslim that accepts the beliefs of others and lives peacefully. Minister Ranawaka said that there should be a five pronged strategy to empower Sri Lankan Muslims and to bring all others over to the fifth category.<sup>480</sup>

**Flak over paper report on sterilisation** - The newspaper report that alleged the sterilisation of Sinhalese women by a Muslim gynaecologist lacks credible evidence and is misleading, UNP S.M. Marikkar said. He stated that although the newspaper article claimed that an investigation was underway, when he asked the police, they denied the claim. According to Marikkar, the high-ranking police official he spoke to stated that an investigation has now been launched, and the reporter and editor of the above mentioned piece would be summoned by the CID and any information regarding this report would be obtained. Marikkar claimed that the report was a "blatant attempt to spread racial disharmony" and that the government is spineless and has failed to take actions against such incidents.<sup>481</sup>

**The lesson learnt** (By K.K.S. Perera) - This feature piece elaborates on the anti-Muslim attacks of 2014, in Aluthgama, and in 1915, while Sri Lanka was still under British rule. The piece stresses the importance of laws against hate speech. Though freedom of speech and expression is protected by the constitution, an amendment for "reasonable restrictions" can be introduced on freedom of speech and expression like in the Indian Constitution, where the restriction is imposed on speech that advocates or encourages violent acts or crimes of hate. The proposed high-level commission to investigate violence in Wayamba and Minuwangoda is most welcome, but people have little faith in such investigations. What is essential at this stage is to have the attackers arrested and jailed by enacting new laws against hate speech.<sup>482</sup>

**UNP did not destroy Buddhism** - Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms, Thalatha Atukorale denied claims that the United National Party (UNP) was destroying Buddhism. The minister stated that the UNP had initiated several programmes in support of the

<sup>479</sup> Daily News, May 25, p. 1, 8.

<sup>480</sup> Daily News, May 25, p. 2.

<sup>481</sup> Daily News, May 25, p. 2.

<sup>482</sup> Daily News, May 25, p. 7.



religion, such as Cultural Fund allocation, an Anuradhapura university for Buddhist monks, and the Gangarama perahera (commenced by former President J.R. Jayawardene).<sup>483</sup>

**Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country, but not a Sinhala Buddhist country** - Minister Mano Ganesan stated that he agrees that Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country, but not a Sinhala Buddhist country. In an interview, he pointed out that the leader of the Bodu Bala Sena organisation has claimed that Sri Lanka belonged to Buddhists, citing the Mahavamsa. Ganesan pointed out that the Mahawamsa stated that the Sinhalese were descendants of Vijaya who came from India.<sup>484</sup>

**Ordinary law for Sinhala extremists** (by Tharindu Uduwaragedara) – Charges for perpetrators of violence leashed targeting Muslim community in several areas across the island on 12th and 13th of May have been filed under ordinary law. This is notwithstanding the fact that there are separate laws that can be implemented against people involved in extremist acts. Thus, these perpetrators have been able to procure police bail and Magistrate bail. The relevant law that should have been ideally imposed on these perpetrators was the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act No. 56 of 2007; but those who were arrested in connection to anti-Muslim attacks on 12th and 13th of May have been presented to the Court under general law as per the Penal Code. A person charged under the above 2007 Act can get the bail only from a High Court. But individuals who have not been involved in violent incidents between communities have been arrested under this law. An author called Shakthika Sathkumara who has written a short story on social media and a woman was arrested in Hasalaka for donning a garment with the image of a steering wheel of a ship are currently imprisoned without bail.<sup>485</sup>

**Divaina lie: Police investigations** (by Tharindu Uduwaragedara) – It is reported that the news item published in Divaina newspaper on 23rd of May reporting on a Doctor who is alleged to be a member of the Thowheed Jama'ath Organisation who is alleged to have sterilised more than 4000 Sinhala Buddhist mothers. It was reported in the Divaina main article that information supplemented by evidence has been uncovered on the particular Doctor and that broad investigations were being conducted by the Police to arrest the particular Doctor. When the Police was inquired about this by the Anidda newspaper, Police Spokesperson replied that Divaina newspaper would be asked as to which Police division is conducting the alleged broad investigation. The Police Spokesperson also noted that if it were proved that the Divaina newspaper has published an incorrect article, due legal actions would be taken on it as it is certainly a violation of the existing law in the country.<sup>486</sup>

<sup>483</sup> Thinakaran, May 25, p. 9.

<sup>484</sup> Virakesari, May 25, p. 14.

<sup>485</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 1, 2.

<sup>486</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 1, 2.



**The labour room of Easter-bomb attackers lies in the religion (2)** (by Gamini Viyangoda) – It is clear that the institutionalised religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism Islam and Jewish faith are at present engaged in the provision of a mundane identity to the individuals and ethnic groups as oppose to the provision of a spiritual relief. This identity is so embedded into one's life so that if one leaves his usual faith, his/ her life might become futile. Why have new religions not emerged during the past 1000 years? One possible reason is that the existing faiths have provided a number of answers to suppress the fear of death that was attached to the human existence. Another reason is that the global community has come to a level where it has attained a mundane intellectual acumen to understand the unexpectedness of death. The most important reason is that the existing religions have captured the authority in the global political arena permanently. When the religion becomes a mundane vision, it must use the name of the religion in the mundane world to secure that religious identity camp. Crusades are a series of extremely brutal massacres. This initially emerged as an operation launched by the Christians to recapture the religious city of Jerusalem by Muslims. There have been eight crusades from the Christians against people who observe Islamic faith during the 200 years from the 11th century. There has been a link as that of Christian faith and Crusades in the Jihad wars and Islam. Islamic faith was deeply linked with state administration from the time of Prophet Muhammed. "Jihad/holy war" can be identified in two senses; one is the struggle to cleanse one's inner soul; that is extremely ideal for a religion. Actually, this meaning within the Islamic faith is what advocated by most Islamic scholars. But what is unfortunate is that, Islamic faith as any other religion has capitalised on religion in a violent manner for politics within the 1500 years where the Islam is linked to state administration. Today the historians point out that out of all wars that have been waged so far, two-thirds have emerged based on religion. When some people say that Sri Lanka is a country of Buddhists, the idea connoted by it is that the Sri Lanka is a country of Sinhala-Buddhists baptised by the author of Mahawamsa as opposed to a land of Gautama Buddha. The consequence of it is that violence has been acknowledged in the name of Buddhism and Sinhala race to save Sinhala Sri Lanka for Buddhism and vice versa.<sup>487</sup>

**President carries out an act of contempt of Court by pardoning Gnanasara Thero and he has made the Muslim community more terrified** (by K. W. Janaranjana) – What can be said about the decision made by the President to pardon the General Secretary of the Bodu bala Sena organisation Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thero is that it is something that must not happen happened at a time that is ideally not suitable. The Muslim population in the country that numbers up to twenty lakhs is terrified due to a number of activities. They have been subject to various harassments by the Sinhalese such as the forcible hanging of Buddhist flags and Vesak lanterns in front of their houses. Moreover, they have been also affected by unethical arrests by the security forces and branding by media as terrorists. What would be the impact, the decision of the President to pardon Gnanasara Thero would have on the Muslim community? Gnanasara Thero is someone

<sup>487</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 2.



who has proved that he is an ardent anti-Muslim. The anti-Muslim incidents that have been instigated by him are not miniscule. Everyone knows that the catastrophe that was launched at the Muslim community in June 2014 in Beruwala and Aluthgama due to Gnanasara Thero. But there was no criminal investigation on that. What is President expecting by releasing Gnanasara Thero at this time? One reason is to get the votes of the Sinhala racists and extremists in the upcoming presidential election. He might be thinking that many other Sinhala Buddhists would flock around him by making the minority ethnic groups “enemies” with the help of Gnanasara Thero.<sup>488</sup>

**Burning the city of peace** (by Rekha Nilukshi Herath) – A month has passed since the Easter Sunday bomb attacks. Actually, we could have devoted more space in our newspaper for that and how to defeat that terrorism handled by a group who were suffering from a religious mania. But we have had to devote more space to douse out the extremist disturbances that erupted in the aftermath of the terrorist attack. Pushing of all Muslims into a corner after branding all of them as terrorists would not aid in the defeat of terrorism; it is actually a pouring of petrol on the blazing conflagration of terrorism. It is not us who attributed an ethnicity to the shops, and it was extremists who demarcated shops as Sinhala shops and Muslim shops. They were also the ones who suggested that it is not the quality of the good that matters but the ethnicity of the owner of the shop. They have also burnt a number of “Sinhala shops” (if their parlance is used). Residents say that those responsible for the burning of Muslim shops in the area are outsiders. But the individuals with whom we had conversations revealed that many residents in the area are involved in the arson. It can be vaguely assumed that it was the outsiders who burnt a series of Muslim shops in the centre of the town. But a number of Muslim shops that were situated in various other parts of the town have been burnt. People affected from the burnings and looting query “as to how the Muslim shops were recognised, if the outsiders were involved in the attacks”. A Muslim resident in the area expressed the idea that notwithstanding the fact that they are aware that residents in the area itself were involved in the attacks, they are also aware of the fact that the attackers do not constitute the majority of people in the area. The only concern that he had was the impression that the Muslims in remote areas of the island who are unaware of the fact that the bulk of the Sinhalese is peaceful would get from these attacks. He feared that they would be inclined to extremism.<sup>489</sup>

**Mainstream Muslims must unite to bring about a Progressive Islam** (by Ameen Isadeen) – A number of questions of dilemma has emerged about the Islamic faith, its teachings and orders particularly in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday bomb attacks and the emerging Islamophobia and hate speech in the country. A notable story that is being circulated in the mainstream media and social media (and ideally what ought to be too) is the story that the perpetrators of the Easter Sunday attacks that took lives of many get 72 virgins in the next birth as a reward. Is there reference to such a thing in the Quran?

<sup>488</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 3.

<sup>489</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 4.





The idea opined by Muslim intellectuals that there is no reference like that in Quran is accurate. But there is reference to this idea on 72 virgins in the Hadith. “Hadiths” are interpretative books on the statements of Prophet Muhammad and his traditions. But it is the idea of the modern intellectuals of the Hadith books that thousands of inaccurate facts have been attributed to the Prophet Muhammad within Hadith books. Muslim intellectuals in ecclesiastical and academic sectors should come to the forefront to create a progressive Islamic faith that is based on rational and traditional base. Such an endeavour easily fits in with the essence of the Islamic faith. Making the groups that are obsessed with an extremely dangerous and inhuman suicidal vision futile is not only a matter that is related to the national security of the country but also it is the religious responsibility of every Muslim clergy and every Muslim individual.<sup>490</sup>

**Religion, politics and secularism** (by Jayadeva Uyangoda) – A main constituent in the social peace agenda in front of Sri Lanka at present is the prevention of recurrence of violent acts and conflicts between the communities with religious and ethnic identities. The fault-line that existed hitherto was the “ethnic identity”. But after the Easter Sunday attacks the novel fault-line is based on the religion. The issue between the politics and religion in Sri Lanka has become complicated with the linking of the religion with identity politics and then as religion becomes a medium of legitimising political violence. One of the most extreme statements of this kind that was made recently was that Islamic faith is the source that provides inspiration for violent terrorist activities the adherents of other religions. Due to this, the Islamic religious community in Sri Lanka is facing a colossal ethical crisis. It is not easy for the Islamic clergy and the Muslim citizens in Sri Lanka to get rid of this crisis. One of the alternatives before them is going back towards the “Sri Lankan Islamic culture” that existed before 1980. “Sri Lankan Islamic culture” is the Muslim culture that developed as a response to the social and cultural background that existed in various parts of the country for centuries among the Islamic communities that came to the country from a number of sources including Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Eastern- Africa. That was also a South-Asian Islamic culture and was also subject to the influence of Buddhist and Hindu cultures. The transformation that is talked about many in Sri Lanka in recent times known as “Wahabbism” originated in the Muslim community in Sri Lanka in mid 1980s. That is a conventional Islamic stream that exists in the Saudi Arabia. That belongs to the Sunni Islamic sect. There should be an empathetic response within the other religious communities on the Islamic community of Sri Lanka in a backdrop where there is a new wave of Islamophobia and the internecine conflicts in the Muslim society. It does not seem that the first step taken by the Cardinal in this regard has turned into a secondary step. If that empathetic response is not depicted by all communities Buddhist, Hindu, Catholic and Christian, the religious harmony in Sri Lanka is likely to further deteriorate.<sup>491</sup>

<sup>490</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 6.

<sup>491</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 7, 9.



**Is its religious coexistence or colonisation?** (by Saminadan Wimal) – A series of photos are being exalted in the conversation that has emerged in relation to Easter Sunday attacks. That is a group of Muslims going to a temple with Buddhist flags and oil lamps, flowers. Nonetheless, there are two main incidents that should be given due focus in this context. One is the Easter Sunday bomb attacks that were targeted at Catholic churches. The other one is the violence leashed on the Muslim community and Muslim Mosques in Minuwangoda and Kuliyaipitiya. In the first incident the perpetrators belong to the Muslim religious faith and the victims were mainly Christians. In the second incident, the perpetrators were people who belong to the Sinhala Buddhist group and the victims were Muslims. If there was a genuine sentiment on religious coexistence, what should have been done ideally at the initial stage was Muslims going to Christian Churches and requests pardon. The other one was Buddhists going to Muslim religious places and request pardon for the destruction of physical and cultural property. But none of these things never materialised. On the contrary, Muslims had to go to the Sinhala Buddhist party that was never a victim; that too with the sentiment of guilt created when the entire Muslim community was branded as perpetrators of violence while also bearing the feeling of helplessness by being victimised by racial, religious disturbances. What would have been in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attack was the discussion on the global terrorism and its social, economic and political context. What happened on the contrary was the culmination of already-existing anti-Muslim sentiments. It is reasonable for the emergence of a suspicion on the Muslim community given the sense of insecurity that prevails in the country and given the racist context that has existed for a long time. But the question that arises spontaneously then is are we expecting security from a group that foments a phobia on the garments that depict Muslim identity and from a group that fails to correctly distinguish a Dharma Chakra from a steering wheel of a ship. The inclination to adopt measures like “peace, alms and penalties” in respect of Muslim community and thereby to tame them and make them compatible to the “predominant culture” is akin to colonisation as opposed to religious coexistence.<sup>492</sup>

**Imams had come from abroad to deliver sermons in Madrasa schools** (by Keerthi Warnakulasuriya) – It has been revealed that 2161 Islamic Imams and preachers had come to Sri Lanka to conduct sermons in 1687 Islamic Madrasa schools in the country. These Imams and the preachers had come under the recommendations of the Ministry of Muslim Religious Affairs and the relevant Department. There have been no investigations as to whether there were ISIS activists among these Imams and preachers. Before the arrival of these Islamic Imams and preachers under residential visas and entry visas, security reports on their background too had not been taken. Sources indicate that four Muslim politicians in this country had intervened to bring these imams and the preachers using their political force.<sup>493</sup>

<sup>492</sup> Anidda, May 26, p. 12.

<sup>493</sup> Divaina, May 26, p. 18.



**The message given to terrorists by celebrating the noble Vesak festival together** (by Dhanu Wijeratne and Nadeesha Atukorale) – Vesak festival this time ended adding a novel value to it. There was extensive support from the Catholics and Muslims for the Vesak festival that was confined only to Sinhala Buddhists. There was no participation of Buddhists in the Catholic masses in the history. There was no involvement of Buddhist and Catholic religious followers for the Islamic festivals. The harmony between the ethnic and religious groups vividly emerged after the Easter Sunday attacks that were carried out targeting Catholic Churches. The support of the Buddhist religious leaders was mandatory for the fathers in Catholic Churches and vice versa. Muslim religious followers required the protection and sympathy of everyone. Despite the presence of a particular uneasy situation with the Muslims after the mean attack of Islamic extremists, the Vesak festival was celebrated together by everyone in all three religions depicting the entire world the best lesson for the brutality of the attack. For the first time in history, there were Vesak decorations within the Catholic Churches, and it was well-supported by the Catholic clergy. It is worthy to note that for the first time in the history, there was contribution from the Muslim community for the Vesak decorations in the temples and Churches. One notice that was displayed in a Catholic Church captured our attention. “We used to come to the temple earlier. But we won’t be able to come this time around. But we brought Vesak to the Church as much as we can. Though we were deprived of the Easter, we won’t allow Vesak to get vanished. We love Vesak. We love Buddhism. We are truly Sri Lankans”. Another notice in a Church too garnered our attention. “Praise the Lord. This bond became stronger. Tell the world loudly. Whatever is convinced by the extremists, this is our Sinhala Buddhist country and we are Catholics who live happily in it”. As Buddhists, we felt that we have committed merits to witness these things.<sup>494</sup>

**Extremism does not cease with Saharan’s clan – Deputy Mayor of Kattankudy** (by Amila Malawisuriya) – Deputy Mayor of Kattankudy Urban Council Mohammed Ibrahim Mohammed Jaasim stated that he remembers that even around 2004-2005, the extremists committed a huge destruction by setting fire upon houses of Sufis and killing several people. He added that but the security forces did not pay much attention to them. When he was questioned during the interview as to what his thoughts are on the emergence of distorted organisations in his hometown based on his religion, Jassem noted that various organisations are set up under various names to get money from Arabia. He added that in turn the Arabia too get their things done and mentioned that that is to spread Wahhabism. He stated that there lies the genesis of this catastrophe and they wanted to build an Arabian model here. When he was asked as to what the reason for Wahabbism to win extensive appeal of the Muslims in Kattankudy, he stated that it originated due to the migration of youth to Saudi Arabia. He stressed that the radical teachings in Arab regions that defied conventional Muslim ideas attracted Muslim youth. He noted that it was the Muslim community that was mostly affected by the Wahabbists.

<sup>494</sup> Lankadeepa, May 26, p. 3.



He also noted that the security forces should pay attention to every extremist tendency that has been growing in different parts of Kattankudy.<sup>495</sup>

**Police stood by while mobs rampaged: HRCSL** - In a letter to the police chief, HRCSL Chairperson Dr Deepika Udugama claimed that local police stations had called for reinforcements of STF and extra personnel “very late”, allowing “Mobs to go on the rampage, causing severe damage to property and livelihood.” According to the HRCSL chairperson, the mob attacked the main mosque in Bandara, Koswatte despite police and army presence and in Kottampitiya, police had asked villagers to move off the main roads because of possible attacks, but had failed to prevent the mobs from attacking the village. The commission has therefore recommended that police take heed of early warning signs, including complaints and appeals by residents, and take preventive action when there is even the slightest hint of communal unrest. According to Dr Udugama, records of the Bingiriya police station has indicated that while the suspects had been taken in for engaging in communal riots (bailable only in exceptional circumstances by the High Court) they had been released on police bail for mischief. At least one person was killed in the violence that police said appeared to be politically motivated and highly organised.<sup>496</sup>

**Media incitement is betrayal!** - This editorial piece speculates that the anti-Muslim attacks are a result of the twisted perception of ‘patriotism’ that some people have, as well as the planned political manipulations of certain individuals. The editorial commends the “prompt and tough police action” as well as the “astute social management by community leaders” for stemming the riots. Social media is being used to spread racism and alarmist misinformation. A section of the conventional media seem to be doing the same thing. This includes fake news (such as stories on anti-fertility pills), reporting poorly verified incidents, and overly biased highlighting of detections of traditional Muslim family swords. The piece goes on to say that unverified reports of medical manipulation of gynaecological procedures are now being presented as ‘news’. Is this the ‘watchdog’ function of the news media or, is it a case of the misuse of news media outlets by cynical political manipulators and/or ideologically demented journalists?<sup>497</sup> Gnanasara’s release worries victims, minorities, activists (By Anurangi Singh) - Galagodaaththe Gnansara Thera has been accused of inciting violence against minority communities and was sentenced to 19 years rigorous imprisonment to be served concurrently over a six year period. The monk’s presidential pardon has Sandhya Eknaligoda fearing for her life, as well as that of her family. She is planning to write to the National Authority for the Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses as she was not given prior notice of his release, which she is legally entitled to. The TNA, as well as Fr. Asiri Perera, whose church was recently subject to mob attacks, also expressed

<sup>495</sup> Silumina, May 26, p. 16.

<sup>496</sup> Sunday Observer, May 26 p. 1, 2.

<sup>497</sup> Sunday Observer, May 26 p. 8.



sentiments of insecurity at the monk's release. Although Gnanasara stated he would be "retiring into the bhikkhu life" after his release, he addressed a press conference a day later, giving the police an ultimatum of a week to arrest the head of the All Ceylon Thowheed Jamath, Abdul Razeek.<sup>498</sup>

**Religious terrorism, extremism and citizen responsibility** (By Anuradha Kodagoda) – To commemorate the first month after the Easter Sunday terrorist attack, a seminar titled 'Religious terrorism, Extremism and Citizen Responsibility' organised by the Civil Society and Trade Union Collective was held on May 21st at the Lighthouse Auditorium of the Lakshman Kadiragamar Institute. The writer noted that Black July 1983 began with the killing of 13 military soldiers in the North. The riot that broke out ended in the 30- year civil war. After the brutal terrorist attack on Easter Sunday, due to the praiseworthy efforts of Malcom Cardinal Ranjith and other religious, anxiety and tension among the public was allayed. But several weeks later, organised communal terrorist attacks were launched, targeting unarmed Muslims in an unprecedented manner. Further, the writer remarked that anyone who has an understanding of Sri Lankan politics can understand that these attacks were conducted purely with political motives. Speaking at the seminar Dr. Wickramabahu Karunaratne said it is important to understand that organisations such as ISIS are an outcome of the frustrations of liberal democracy. "This is not simply an issue that arises from the Muslim religion. What we have to understand is that religious extremism can be within any religion and we have to fight against all extremism," said Dr. Wickramabahu. It is widely accepted that a great responsibility should be played by the media to create racial and religious harmony among the citizens of the country.<sup>499</sup>

**Muslim leaders meet the president** (by M.A.M. Nilam) - President Maithripala Sirisena has promised to take steps to enable Muslims to observe the holy month of Ramadan without any hindrance or problems. In addition, he has also promised a quick resolution for those who have been arrested with no links to terrorist activities, and those who were arrested with insufficient evidence. The president made these promises when he met a group of Muslim ministers headed by A.H.M. Fowzie on May 25. <sup>500</sup>

**Specialist doctor arrested in Kurunegala hospital** - Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi of the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital has been arrested on charges of accumulating wealth through suspicious means. The CID is probing to see if the doctor is connected to the banned organisation, Thowheed Jamath.<sup>501</sup>

**Unity in diversity: Living in unity is appropriate** - This editorial discusses the aftermath of the Easter bomb attacks. The editorial mentions the security measures taken and steps enacted to prevent similar incidents. The editorial, while stating that the

<sup>498</sup> Sunday Observer, May 26 p. 10.

<sup>499</sup> Sunday Observer, May 26 p. <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2019/05/26/news-features/religious-terrorism-extremism-and-citizen-responsibility>.

<sup>500</sup> Thinakaran, May 26, p. 1.

<sup>501</sup> Thinakaran, May 26, p. 1.



country was slowly returning to normalcy, also points out the fear factor that is prevalent among people due to the recovery of hand grenades and other weapons from several areas, including schools. In addition, the editorial points out that when Christians died in churches, many people, including Muslims had shared the grief. The editorial points out that when people attempted to unite and share their grief, certain segments of society had tried to create tensions by targeting Muslims in Minuwangoda, Chilaw, Kurunegala, and Kuliypitiya. The editorial claimed that these attacks were carried out with political patronage. Further, it stated that respecting others and understanding them are basic needs for coexistence, and pointed out that people needed to work towards unity in diversity.<sup>502</sup>

**Ifthar event in Ampara to strengthen racial harmony** - Special Ifthar programmes are being conducted in Muslim villages in Ampara in order to strengthen racial harmony. The organisers pointed out that the relationships between communities had been adversely affected following the Easter bomb attacks, and therefore, these special Ifthar events have been organised to rebuild the relationship between communities.<sup>503</sup>

**The unity of all religious leaders is a good sign for reconciliation** (by Paul Wilson) - The Chief Priest of the Sri Lankan Reformed Church, Rev. Shirley Faber stated that reconciliation was possible, and that the unity among religious leaders is a good sign for reconciliation. He pointed out that there were fundamentalist groups in every religion and, therefore, blaming an entire community or showing hatred towards them was not the correct way to deal with the situation.<sup>504</sup>

**The harassment of women within the Burqa opposition** (by Asela Kuruluwansha quoting Lal Wijenayake)- There was an extensive discussion with the Easter Sunday attacks about the burqa worn by Muslim women covering the face based on the rationale that it would disrupt the recognition of the identity. With the series of terrorist attacks on Easter Sunday carried out by a group of Islamic extremists, Muslim masses became terrified to a certain extent due to the aspersions that there would be backlashes on them from the Sinhala Buddhist and Christian masses. These aspersions casted were amplified after the discovery of swords and knives from Islamic religious places and houses. In this context, there were instances where some acted against the Muslim community by taking law unto their own hands. Muslim women became a notable victim of this. There were instances clearly where Muslim women who hitherto donned clothes that covered the face entirely were forced to remove such face-coverings. Buddhist clergy too proposed the government to ban the burqa and given the crisis that had emerged by then it could be examined that Muslim masses too depicted a certain compliance on it. In this context, the government proscribed the wearing of the burqa and the niqab through a special gazette. Though such clothes that makes it difficult to substantiate the personal identity were banned, the clothes worn by Muslim women that cover the ears but reveals the face

<sup>502</sup> Thinakaran, May 26, p. 6.

<sup>503</sup> Thinakaran, May, 26, p. 9.

<sup>504</sup> Thinakaran, May 26, p.13.



has not been proscribed such as hijab, chador, shayra, al-ameera and Bimar. But it is disconcerting to note that there are objections even to the women who don such garments by some sectors of the society. As per the provisions in the Fundamental Rights Chapter of the Constitution, the privacy of an individual should be safeguarded. It allows individuals to lead his/her lifestyle according to his/her desire, select the clothes. Given the context that prevails in the country, extra care diligence should be paid on the national security. As the identification of individuals become a crucial fact in this context, if the external parties cannot recognise the identity of someone due to the garment worn by that particular individual, an issue arises there. Under the existing circumstances, it is actually a challenge to the national security of the country. When someone who wears such a cloth is not allowed to wear them further, that does not infringe the fundamental rights of that individual. Nonetheless, compelling someone to remove a dress that is not proscribed by the law is an offence under the law. It seems that some regional politicians have capitalised on the issue on burqa to fish in muddy waters. That is due to the fact that in a context where the government has issued a gazette to ban the burqa, there is the propensity of the pradeshiya sabhas to pass resolutions calling for the proscription of burqa in the relevant areas under their authority. Masses should realise that this is purely an endeavour to gain political gains by fomenting racism. The politicians who have made the burqa an issue, reckon the more the Muslims are compelled the more they would get the votes of Sinhala Buddhists. The endeavour taken by this group to portray that they are the only group that appears for the Sinhala Buddhist masses is actually an unashamed act. If someone thinks that one's Sinhala Buddhist vote count would escalate by harassing Muslim masses, it is a misleading thing. On the one hand it is a disgrace to the Sinhala Buddhist masses. The Islamic extremism should be defeated not by pushing the Buddhists to the extremism. If Sinhala Buddhist extremist groups attempt to utilise the Easter narrow political gains for narrow political gains the ultimate result of it would be to further strengthen the Islamic extremism.<sup>505</sup>

**Objections of the Kovil Trusteeship board to the excavation activities of the Kinniya ancient dagaba** (by Saman Mallawarachchi) – The Government Agent of the Trincomalee District took steps to temporarily halt the excavation activities of the ancient dagaba that was revealed in the archaeological site of the Kinniya hot water spring premises. This move was prompted when a group identifying as members of the Kovil trusteeship board objected the excavations. The carrying out of the excavation activities was temporarily halted till 10th of June. The people identifying as the Trusteeship board had alleged that there was a Kovil on this ancient dagaba.<sup>506</sup>

Muslim leaders seek legal redress for suspects not linked with terrorism (Kelum Bandara) – A group of Muslim political leaders including some ministers have requested that President Sirisena provide redress for suspects arrested in connection with incidents not directly relevant to terrorism. Muslim leaders, including Higher Education Minister

<sup>505</sup> Dinamina, May 27, p. 9.

<sup>506</sup> Divaina, May 27, p. 1, 4.





Rauff Hakeem, along with MPs A. H. M. Fowzie, Faiszer Mustapha and Ameer Ali, called on the president on Saturday to discuss this matter. According to sources privy to the talk, they brought to the notice of the president that some suspects had been arrested for minor offences such as keeping kris knives. They requested that the president charge them under normal laws or bail them out. They also discussed the arrest of a medical doctor accused of performing forced sterilisations on women referred to him for caesarean deliveries. They also asked the president to make sure that Islamic religious activities conducted in view of Ramadan were not hampered when subjecting the mosques to search operations.<sup>507</sup>

**Doctor arrested in Kurunegala, handed over to CID** (by Darshana Sanjeewa Balasuriya and Pushpakumara Jayaratna) – Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi, a doctor attached to the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital, who was arrested for earning assets in a suspicious manner, was handed over to the CID, Police Spokesman SP Ruwan Gunasekera said. The 42-year-old doctor, a resident of Kurunegala, was arrested by the Kurunegala Police on Friday night over assets earned through suspicious means and other allegations. It was reported that investigations are being conducted over high value properties belonging to the suspect in Kurunegala and several other areas, and his bank accounts. Sources said that the investigation would probe whether the doctor is connected to the National Thowheed Jamath organisation. It was also reported that he was a member of Minister Rishad Bathiudeen’s All Ceylon Makkal Congress (ACMC) and had contested the 2015 General Election from the Kurunegala District under the UNP.<sup>508</sup>

**Unlawful sterilisation: Affected women requested to give evidence** (by Indika Ramanayake) – The Director of the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital, Dr. Sarath Weerabandara, requested that women complain immediately to hospital authorities if they feel that they had been subjected to unlawful sterilisation after caesarean operations performed by the controversial doctor. He made this request at a media briefing held at the Kurunegala Hospital on Saturday. He said that allegations had been made against this doctor who was arrested by the police for the alleged sterilisation of women without their consent and keeping unaccounted assets in the district.<sup>509</sup>

**JVP to introduce proposals to contain religious fanaticism** (by Dayaseeli Liyange) – The JVP has arranged to present a series of proposals on June 4 to “defeat religious fanaticism and racism to ensure national and public security.” These would spell out actions for the government to take to quell religious terrorism.<sup>510</sup>

**Niqab: When religion becomes a matter of attire** (by Asiff Hussein) – This short opinion piece discusses the controversy generated by the niqab, although worn by only a few women. The author speaks positively of the ban on face-coverings in the aftermath

<sup>507</sup> Daily Mirror, May 27, p. A1, A2.

<sup>508</sup> Daily Mirror, May 27, p. A1, A2.

<sup>509</sup> Daily Mirror, May 27, p. A1, A2.

<sup>510</sup> Daily Mirror, May 27, p. A4.



of the Easter Sunday attacks, but asks whether they will return once the emergency period lapses. He states that while Islam dictates that the face and hands must be covered, there is no obligation to cover more as the niqab does. He also notes that the Qur'an tells men to "lower their gaze" rather than place the full onus on women to ensure their modesty. The author notes that there are many "insidious campaigns to promote niqab going on even as we speak." He states that the niqab may not be a good means of promoting chastity, as a fully veiled woman has the secrecy to "indulge in adulterous affairs without her husband as much as suspecting it." He also notes that the disapproval society gives to the niqab and states that Islam would never have made such attire obligatory.<sup>511</sup>

**Renewed fortitude to fight terrorism** – PM – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has vowed to take stringent security measures to prevent Islamic State (IS) terrorism from raising its head again. He added that the security forces and police have apprehended those involved in the Easter Sunday attacks that killed 258 people. The prime minister, addressing a group of representatives of civil societies and trade union collectives at Temple Trees, appealed to the people not to support extremism or religious fanaticism. He added that although some unfortunate incidents occurred in Minuwangoda and Kuliyaipitiya recently, normalcy has been restored in the country. He told those present that the government is to present many measures in collaboration with the Muslim community, such as changes in the madrasa education bill which will bar Sharia universities, and ensuring that name boards are only in the three languages of this country. He said the government was able to solicit the support of the Muslim community in this instance because ISIS has not elicited any form of approval from the Muslim community.<sup>512</sup>

**Over 10 complaints against Kurunegala doctor** (by S. M. Wijayaratne) – The crime division of the Kurunegala Police confirmed that over 10 complaints had been received from women on whom Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohammed Shafi, a gynaecologist from the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital had performed Ligation and Resection of Tubes (LRT) operation without their consent. "Most of these women are undergoing side effects since the surgical operations were done," a police officer confirmed to the Daily News, adding that their statements are being recorded and that the case is to be handled by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) due to the severity of the allegations. The 42-year-old Dr. Shafi was arrested on the 24th by officers of the Kurunegala Police for amassing huge sums of wealth and assets in a short time. It was widely reported that the doctor had performed more than 8,000 Caesarean operations and had also performed LRT without the patients' consent at the Kurunegala hospital. The specialist is a resident of Kurunegala and had contested under elections on the ticket of a leading political party for the Kurunegala district.<sup>513</sup>

511 Daily Mirror, May 27, p. A9.

512 Daily News, May 27, p. A1, 8.

513 Daily News, May 27, p. A1, 8.



**Terrorism rooted in misguided religious belief** (by Fr. Augustine Fernando) – In this long opinion, Fr. Augustine Fernando (diocese of Badulla) notes that “Peaceful Muslims follow the Qur’an. 99.99 percent of Muslims do not accept the fanatical ways of acting of the Taliban, Al Qaeda, ISIS, ISIL and IS who call themselves Muslims and wish to convert the whole world to Islam.” He also notes that Buddhism is a religion of non-violence, therefore “to hurt another being is to hurt oneself”. He notes that it is distressing to see violence from monk-led mobs against innocent Muslims. The author questions whether Sri Lanka will become another Myanmar. He sees politicians as blame-worthy, and says that “the veneer of superficial religion grafted to politics and warped by racial, cultural prejudice, lies and violence has done great injustice to people and soaked this country in so much slaughter.” He argues that violence is more political than religious, as “violence is incompatible with any religion”. Further, he states that “Sri Lanka cannot adjust the world to suit her requirements. Cognisant of this fact she could coordinate with the rest of the world to find a *modus vivendi*, a way of living upholding and promoting human dignity and equal rights of all people. She should not only actively cooperate and collaborate with the United Nations in general but also the countries that are prioritising anti-terrorist programmes in particular. Political leaders should wake up from their self-indulgent partisan political slumber to positively contribute new thinking and initiatives to create a world of coexistential equilibrium within a new world order so that all may live in happiness and peace.”<sup>514</sup>

**Talibanisation of Sri Lanka** (by Jeevan Thiagarajah) – In response to the Easter Sunday attacks, there has been an ‘all out attack’ on followers of Islam, argues the author. He describes this as ‘our version of Talibanisation’ and provides examples. Firstly, a Sinhala daily had as its lead story a report of caesareans undertaken by a Muslim doctor. The report said that the doctor is a Muslim and forcibly sterilised Sinhala Buddhist women. Professor Hemantha Senanayake head of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Colombo Medical College said the allegation is “implausible.” He told Republic Next that “there are three members in the surgical team and all of them know which procedure is being carried out.” According to the author, this report joins a catalogue of similar instances in the print and electronic media, ‘spreading hatred about Muslims, inciting violence against them and causing public discontent’. This could result in a violent backlash against the Muslim community. Secondly, the banning of the burqa and the niqab without any causal evidence linking them to acts of terror is also unjust. The rights of Muslim women are being “snatched away” because of terrorism. Thirdly, the attacks on the ability of the Muslim community to engage in business by harassing them and their customers, or through full on vandalism is another example. Fourth, the author notes the communal violence, referring specifically to an incident in Hunupitiya where a Muslim family was attacked when their orange cloth was mistaken for the robes of a monk. Finally, the author discusses the plight of the Ahmadi Muslim refugees who have faced threats to their

514 Daily News, May 27, p. 6.

security in the aftermath of the attacks. Their location in Vavuniya had come under threat, with harm only being prevented by the presence of army personnel.<sup>515</sup>

**CID questions Dr. Shafi** (by M.F.M. Basheer) - The CID has commenced questioning Dr. Shafi who was arrested on allegations of amassing wealth, and who was accused of sterilising women. The doctor was taken to the fourth floor of the CID for interrogation. Two women have also lodged complaints at the Kurunegala hospital.<sup>516</sup>

**Follow the circular when conducting search operations in places of worship** – Mujibur Rahman (by M.R.M. Waseem) - Parliamentarian Mujibur Rahman has stated that the police should follow the instructions in the circular issued by the inspector general of police when conducting search operations in places of worship. The parliamentarian pointed out that by doing so, unwanted problems could be avoided and the sanctity of places of worship could be maintained. He said that there were complaints that the dignity of places of worship were impacted during such operations.<sup>517</sup>

**Devotees who visited the old Semmalai Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple were obstructed** (by K. Kumanan) - Devotees who visited the old Semmalai Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple on May 26 were obstructed by a Buddhist monk who had occupied the area. The Buddhist monk had built a temple named Gurukanda Rajamaha Vihara as well as a Buddhist statue. The Hindus claim that the Pillayar temple has been in the location for years. The dispute was taken to the Mullaitivu court where it was ruled that both parties (Buddhists and Hindus) could worship in their respective temples without any hindrance, and that all development activities of the temples should be carried out in accordance with the local authorities. The obstruction had been caused when a group of devotees and the local authorities had gone to the temple to place the name board 'Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple'. The name board was to be placed with the approval of the Road Development Authority, Karathuraipattu Pradeshiya Sabha, in accordance of the court order.<sup>518</sup>

**Reconciliation and coexistence should be strengthened within communities** - The priest of the Akkaraipattu Catholic church, P. Devananthan stated during an Ifthar ceremony in Akkaraipattu that the Thripitakaya of the Buddhists, the Baghvat Geetha of the Hindus, the Quran of the Muslims and the Bible of the Christians all preached peace. Speaking at the event, titled 'We will establish permanent peace through reconciliation', Rev. Devananthan stated people of all religions were saddened by the Easter bomb attacks, and it was necessary to work towards reconciliation for the benefit of the future generation.<sup>519</sup>

<sup>515</sup> Daily News, May 27, p. 7.

<sup>516</sup> Virakesari, May 27, p. 1.

<sup>517</sup> Virakesari, May 27, p. 3.

<sup>518</sup> Virakesari, May 27, p. 8.

<sup>519</sup> Thinakaran, May 27, p. 8.



**That doctor** – Dr. Mohammed Shafi Siyabdeen, who earned limitless assets, was arrested by the Kurunegala Police and brought to the CID in Colombo by Saturday evening. It is said that while he is a gynaecologist, he is also an industrialist who conducted more than 8,000 caesarean operations and sterilised many Sinhala Buddhist women. We call him an industrialist for it is only the likes of a bakery, a saw mill and a brick factory that would possess the ability to keep up such a production capacity while conducting such a large number of caesarean operations. Usually, the duration of a caesarean operation is between one and a half hours and two hours. Our surgeon here is a very active, great doctor who spends approximately just 15 minutes or half an hour on a single operation. Great individuals like this should be considered as machines that conduct operations and should be sent to the Galle Face grounds to receive the people's tribute. However, news that this great doctor has sterilised thousands of Sinhala women is very bad.<sup>520</sup>

**There must be proper investigations on the doctor who is alleged to have carried out sterilisation surgeries** – Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera (by Subhashini Senanayake) – Investigations are being carried out on a Gynaecologist of the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital Dr. Shafi Siyabdeen, who is currently under arrest. The investigation should be carried out properly and the truth about the matter should be revealed independently and impartially. Apart from Shafi Siyabdeen, we have also already received information from a mother that an individual named Ibrahim had sterilised her during her caesarean operation. This was revealed when the relevant mother had gotten a check done because she had not been able to conceive even when she wanted a second child. We have received information that Dr. Ibrahim is currently living in Australia. According to this information, a suspicion has arisen about a Saudi project to make the Sinhala race extinct. We cannot let these incidents be swept under the carpet due to reasons like racism. We are not surprised that Muslim ministers have come forward to save Dr. Shafi Siyabdeen. No matter by whom and how this issue is influenced, investigations about this doctor should be conducted immediately. There is a possibility of testing ten Sinhala women who have had caesarean operations done by the doctor to ascertain whether they have been sterilised or not.<sup>521</sup>

**Laws should be passed to counter-terrorism** – Malwathu Chief-prelate (by Asela Kuruluwansa and Indika Polkotuwa) – Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that the conventional Muslim community is ready to live in peace and harmony with other communities. He added that an extremist group with extremist ideas that vandalise the statues of other religions out of revenge too live in the country. Delving further, he added that laws should be swiftly passed on burqa, Madrasa schools and Sharia universities. He also noted that a common law should be applicable for all in the country.<sup>522</sup>

<sup>520</sup> Divaina, May 27, p. 8.

<sup>521</sup> Dinamina, May 27, p. 12.

<sup>522</sup> Dinamina, May 28, p. 5.



**50 more complaints against the Kurunegala Doctor** (by Hemantha Randunu) – 49 mothers had complained to the Kurunegala General Hospital on the incident related to the loss of babies after the performance of caesarean surgeries by Doctor Shafi Shehabdeen; there was another complaint on the same incident to the Dambulla Hospital.<sup>523</sup>

**CID questions the sub-editor of Divaina -Randunu for five hours** (by Chaminda Silva) – Criminal Investigation Department (CID) questioned and obtained a statement from the sub-editor of Divaina- Hemantha Randunu who made the first disclosure on the incident where it is alleged that Doctor Shafi Shehabdeen who was working in the Kurunegala general hospital had sterilised Sinhala women. The interrogation went for five hours. The CID has also obtained a statement from the main editor of the Divaina newspaper Anura Solomons about this issue. Speaker Karu Jayasuriya has ordered the Acting Inspector General of Police C. D. Wickremarathne to conduct a broad investigation as to the incident of sterilisation of Sinhala women during caesarean surgeries. Thus, the Acting DIG has assigned the investigations to the CID.<sup>524</sup>

**Muslim individual who threatened the father of the Church that a bomb would be hurled arrested** (by Suranga Dilhan) – Gampola Police arrested a Muslim individual for threatening a father in a Christian Church in Gampola telling that bombs would be hurled and for attempting to hurl stones at the father. The Muslim had gone to the Church in Gampola to sell wax oil lamps.<sup>525</sup>

**A complaint on a threat made to the adherents of the Ganadevi Kovil in Gurukanda** (By Dinaseena Rathugamage) – A group of Hindu adherents had made a complaint to the Mullaitivu police that an organised group threatened them and attempted to attack them when they went for a religious observance in the Ganadevi Kovil near the vicinity of Mullaitivu Gurukanda viharaya. The adherents state that Neeraveddi Ganadevi Kovil in Semmalai in Mullaitivu is an ancient Kovil that dates back to many years. They also stated that Hindu adherents too installed a sign board near the Ganadevi Kovil when a certain group installed a name board stating that this is a Buddhist temple having established a Buddhist statue near the Ganadevi Kovil. The complaint had been lodged in the Police stating that a group who got enraged with the placing of the sign board by Hindu devotees, threatened the Hindu adherents. Hindu devotees further stated that though a group of Sinhala Buddhists claim that this particular place belongs to them, a decision had not been given from the case that had been filed in the Mullaitivu Court yet. The Hindu adherents who made the complaint had also stated that though the Sinhala Buddhists identify the area where the Buddha statue was planted as the Gurukanda Viharaya, the

<sup>523</sup> Divaina, May 28, p. 1, 4.

<sup>524</sup> Divaina, May 28, p. 1, 4.

<sup>525</sup> Divaina, May 28, p. 3.



Hindu adherents go to that place as the Ganadevi Kovil belongs to them. Mullaitivu Police has started investigations on the complaint.<sup>526</sup>

**It is doubtful whether a country would remain due to the terrific destructive acts that occurred in the country-** you all should tell the President to take stern decisions – The Chief-Prelate of the Malwatta Chapter (by J.A.L.Jayasinghe) – Minister Of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that there is a group of 200-300 maniacs who got the extremist terrorist training in the country. Ranawaka further stated that there are some groups within that organisation who possess the ideology that adherents of other faiths should be destroyed and who destroy Buddhist statues and statues of god. He also opined that there are some groups who view that Islamic Sharia law should be implemented in the country. Ranawaka added that Muslim community in Sri Lanka lived very peacefully in the past and added that but the extremist Muslim group that had emerged recently state that there should be only one god in the world. He also added that they view that those who don't believe in that one god should be destroyed. Noting that this particular group needs destruction and killing, Ranawaka added that there should be new laws to control these extremist Muslim fundamentalists. He also stated that the Muslim society is assassinating the people who observe the very religious faith and added that this situation should be controlled. He also entertained the view that there should be no room for Buddhist extremism . Ranawaka made these remarks when he met the Chief-Prelate of the Malwatu Chapter. <sup>527</sup>

**Four-member committee to probe Kurunegala hospital doctor** (by Yohan Perera) – The Health Ministry has appointed a special investigative body to look into the allegations levelled against Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi, attached to the Kurunegala Hospital, who is accused of performing forced sterilisation surgeries, Subject Minister Dr. Rajitha Senaratne said yesterday. He told a press conference held at Temple Trees that an investigative body comprising three members from the Ceylon College of Gynecologists and one member from the Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC) would probe the allegations. “This committee will determine whether the doctor concerned had committed any offence or not,” he said.<sup>528</sup>

**More than 50 women complain against Kurunegala doctor** (by Pushpakumara Jayaratna) – The Kurunegala Teaching Hospital authorities said that they had received 51 complaints from women up to today (27) against Kurunegala Hospital gynaecologist Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi, who had been arrested on suspicion over several allegations. The women said that they had side effects after the caesarean operations performed by the doctor and accused him of sterilising them. There was a complaint made by a woman who had become totally blind after the operation. She said that a

<sup>526</sup> Divaina, May 28, p. 5.

<sup>527</sup> Lankadeepa, May 28, p. 12.

<sup>528</sup> Daily Mirror, May 28, p. A1, A4.





cesarean operation was performed on her in 2010 after giving her a green coloured drink called the “welcome drink”.<sup>529</sup>

**Throwing petrol bombs at two mosques** (by K.S. Fernando) – Four suspects, including a Buddhist monk, who stood charged with throwing petrol bombs at two mosques in Panadura and Eluwila, and damaging a shop at Eluwila in 2017, were discharged by Panadura Chief Magistrate Amila Ariyasena on the attorney general’s report. The suspects Ven. Nuwara Eliye Kavissara Thera, Prageetha Gunatilleke, Rohitha Fernando and a former PC K.M. Chandrasena had been charged by the Panadura Police for attempting to arouse communal disturbances. However, the attorney general had advised the discharge of the suspects in the absence of adequate evidence to establish the charges.<sup>530</sup>

**Women who underwent involuntary sterilisation should be compensated** – Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapaksa said that the government should compensate the women who were illegally sterilised for this “grave injustice”.<sup>531</sup>

**Inform if there’s any sign of extremism within the institute** (by Lahiru Pothmulla) – Reiterating that all Muslims are not terrorists or extremists, Colombo Mayor Rosy Senanayake yesterday requested moulavis to inform law enforcement authorities of any sign of extremism or terrorism. She stated that terrorism should be eradicated from the soil of Sri Lanka and that she would protect all in Colombo and ensure the safety of mosques.<sup>532</sup>

**Access denial to women to premises based on attire: HRCSL raises issue** (by Disna Mudalige) – The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL), in a series of letters to public authorities, the University Grants Commission (UGC), the chamber of commerce and the judicial service commission, raised its concerns over rising complaints of wrongful refusal of entry to women to public and private premises and buildings due to their attire. “The HRCSL has received several complaints from women that they were prevented from entering public premises and public buildings in the last two weeks. We are extremely concerned to receive these complaints and write to appeal to you to ensure that no one is denied entry to public spaces unless they contravene the law. In some instances, our concern is greater because we hear this wrongful refusal of entry lead to these women being denied essential services,” Dr Udagama said.<sup>533</sup>

**Committee of Experts to probe Kurunegala doctor’s conduct** (by Amali Mallawaarachchi) – A committee of experts has been appointed to conduct a comprehensive investigation on the controversy relating to the doctor of the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital who was taken into custody recently, Health Minister Rajitha

<sup>529</sup> Daily Mirror, May 28, p. A1, A4.

<sup>530</sup> Daily Mirror, May 28, p. A2.

<sup>531</sup> Daily Mirror, May 28, p. A3.

<sup>532</sup> Daily Mirror, May 28, p. A3.

<sup>533</sup> Daily News, May 28, p. 1, 8.



Senaratne said. The said doctor was arrested over several allegations, including earnings of large wealth by suspicious means and over 10 complaints for carrying out illegal sterilisation procedures. Minister Senaratne made these observations at a press briefing held at Temple Trees yesterday evening. Speaking further on the matter, Minister Senaratne said, “It is important to conduct a proper investigation on this allegation. First, the media reports stated that 4,000 sterilisations were carried out by this doctor. Then, it became 8,000 caesarian operations. As much as I know, there is a group of experts to carry out a caesarian operation. One person cannot conduct an operation alone. Anyway, let us wait until the committee of experts look into this matter and find out the truth.” Minister Senaratne observed that the said doctor will be suspended depending on the findings of the preliminary investigations until a comprehensive formal investigation is conducted.<sup>534</sup>

**“Schools will not be divided on religion in future”** (by S.M. Wijayaratne) – A new education act will be brought before parliament soon, according to the Education Minister Akila Viraj Kariyawasam. The new right to education act would streamline teacher transfers, and allow the Education Ministry to supervise all schools nationwide.<sup>535</sup>

**Fifty-one complaints against gynaecologist** (by Lahiru Fernando) – A total of 51 women have lodged complaints at the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital by May 27 evening against Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi, who allegedly performed unlawful sterilisations after c-sections. Their statements were recorded, and complaints would be analysed, stated the Hospital Director Dr. Sarath Weerabandara.<sup>536</sup>

**Muslim MPs speak against unwarranted arrests** – Upon urging by Muslim parliamentarians on Saturday (25), President Maithripala Sirisena agreed to look into the matter where some of those arrested during recent countrywide raids include innocent civilians who have no links to extremism or terrorism. The members of the delegation included Ministers Rauff Hakeem, Rishad Bathiudeen, M.H.A. Haleem, State Ministers Seyed Ali Zahir Moulana, M.S. Ameer Ali, Deputy Minister Abdullah Mahroof, parliamentarians A.H.M. Fowzie, M.S. Thowfeek, M.I.M. Mansoor, Kader Masthan, Faiszer Musthapha and S.M.M. Ismail. During the meeting, SLMC Leader, Minister Rauff Hakeem explained the issues on behalf of Muslim ministers and MPs, a media release issued by the City Planning and Water Supply Ministry said. He explained that some Muslims were taken into custody since they had copies of the Holy Quran, Arabic literature and Arabic newspapers. The security forces lacked sufficient knowledge about the nature of these documents and hence the arrests had been made.<sup>537</sup>

<sup>534</sup> Daily News, May 28, p. 1, 8.

<sup>535</sup> Daily News, May 28, p. 2.

<sup>536</sup> Daily News, May 28, p. 3.

<sup>537</sup> Daily News, May 28, p. 3.



**True Muslims reject extremism: Minister** (by Irangika Range) – Highways, Road Development and Petroleum Resources Development Minister Kabir Hashim said yesterday that true Muslims reject Islamic fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism. "According to Islam, destroying life is like destroying humanity. No true devotee of Islam could ever engage in destruction similar to that which occurred on Easter Sunday as we reject crimes against humanity," he added. The minister was addressing a gathering at the inauguration ceremony of several road development projects held in Aranayake, yesterday. Minister Hashim said that the government was heavily criticised when the attacks occurred on Easter Sunday. "In most countries, it takes several months to investigate and apprehend the culprits on such occasions. But our security forces and the police have already detained most of the suspects linked to the attacks within just two weeks," he said. "The government will continue search operations and investigations to ensure the security of the country and its people. We are currently in a critical phase. Therefore, we all must unite to face the challenges that lie ahead," he added.<sup>538</sup>

**A call for restraint** – This editorial notes that Muslim parliamentarians from both sides urged the security forces and police to be 'more circumspect' in arresting suspects, as some arrestees are unconnected to terrorism. Muslim youth were allegedly being held under the Counter Terrorism Act for possession of even a kris knife, while the Muslim doctor was similarly charged despite his supposed offence coming under the Inland Revenue Act. The editorial notes that "desperate situations call for desperate measures" and extraordinary measures may have "hurt the feelings of the community". Now that normal life is resuming search operations should continue with the same intensity, but without any room "left for any abuse of authority". Lessons should be learnt from history and the unjust treatment of Tamil youth prior to the decades-long civil war, although actual war is very improbable. Muslims have been in a "state of siege following the terror attacks", with their community being viewed with suspicion. Therefore, steps should be taken speedily towards mending fences. This would not be a difficult task since the three communities have been co-existing for centuries in this land. The key to reconciliation lies in banishing all suspicion. Religious leaders could take the lead in this exercise rather than most politicians who have lost the trust of the public with in-fighting, such as the NCM against Minister Bathiudeen.<sup>539</sup>

**Remove the CCTV cameras fixed by a monk in the Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple** - The Mullaitivu District magistrate ordered that the CCTV cameras fixed by a Buddhist monk at the Semmalai Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple be removed. The magistrate questioned the police about the incident, in which the Buddhist monk had obstructed the temple administration from naming the building 'Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple'. The monk also fixed CCTV cameras in the premises against court orders. The magistrate ordered the

<sup>538</sup> Daily News, May 28, p. 5.

<sup>539</sup> Daily News, May 28, p. 6.



cameras to be removed, and also ordered the name board 'Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple' to be placed at the entrance of the temple.<sup>540</sup>

**Special committee of experts to examine complaints against Dr. Shafi** (Dilshan Tharaka) - Police Spokesperson SP Ruwan Gunasekera said that the Chief Judicial Medical Officer in Colombo will head a special committee of experts to examine the females who have lodged complaints against Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has recorded statements from 420 females and 26 doctors, including six visiting obstetrics and gynaecology doctors (VOG), over the illegal sterilisations allegedly carried out by Dr. Shafi. In addition, 69 nurses and 18 other hospital staff members have also recorded statements with the CID over the incident.<sup>541</sup>

**Registration of race and religion based parties should be banned** (by M.A. Ameenullah) - A petition was handed over to the Malwatte and Asgiriya mahanayake theros which contained requests to ban the registration of political parties that were based on religion and race. The petition was handed over by the General Secretary of the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA), Mahinda Amaraweera.<sup>542</sup>

**Court orders for the removal of CCTV cameras in Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple** - The name of the Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple, which was changed to Ganadevi by a Buddhist monk, was once again renamed Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple, according to the ruling of the Mullaitivu District court. It was reported that the court order was not carried out by the police for over 20 days and that the monk had placed CCTV cameras in the premises. The magistrate who inquired about the developments from the police mandated that the name board should be changed to Neeraviyadi temple.<sup>543</sup>

**16 complaints registered on sterilisation against Dr. Shafi** (by M.F.M. Basheer) - 16 complaints regarding sterilisation have been made against Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi at the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital. Four of them were said to be made by surgeons who worked with him. Several complaints were made by women aged between 28-30.<sup>544</sup>

**A decision against racial harmony** (by P. Manikkavasagam) - This piece criticises the president's decision to release the General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena, Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera. The article points out that the track record of the monk is not favourable for Muslims. The piece cites the violence against Muslims in Aluthgama in 2014, and the Buddhist conference in which the Myanmarese Buddhist monk, Asin Virathu pledged to work with the BBS, creating fear among Muslims.<sup>545</sup>

<sup>540</sup> Uthayan, May 28, p. 1.

<sup>541</sup> Thinakaran, May 28, p. 1.

<sup>542</sup> Thinakaran, May 28, p. 5.

<sup>543</sup> Thinakaran, May 28, p. 10

<sup>544</sup> Virakesari, May 28, p. 1.

<sup>545</sup> Virakesari, May 28, p. 4.



**Mahason Balakaya Leader was there in the Hettipola town on last 04th for six hours** (by Siranjani Kumari and Ridmi Amoda) - Kirulapona Police informed the Additional Magistrate of Colombo Shalani Perera that information is surfacing that the Head of the Mahason Balakaya -Amith Weerasinghe stayed in the Hettipola town for more than six hours on last 04th. Police informed this to the court when the case was taken before the court against Amith Weerasinghe who was arrested under the suspicion of releasing ideas that obstruct the existing racial and religious harmony through the internet. He was further imprisoned till 29th of May.<sup>546</sup>

**Media allowed for the first time in history to attend a parliamentary select committee – Ranjith Madduma Bandara** (by Kamani Alwis) -Minister of Public Administration, Disaster Management and Rural Economic Affairs Ranjith Madduma Bandara noted that Sri Lanka does not need the Arabic Muslim culture. He mentioned that Sri Lanka needs only the Sri Lankan Muslim culture. Mentioning that over 95 per cent of the Muslim community is against terrorism, he added that only a minority of the Muslims are extremists and terrorists. He added that Muslim religious leaders are holding discussions on a Sri Lankan Muslim culture.<sup>547</sup>

**ISIS mental malady** (by Professor Prishantha Gunawardena)- The shock generated by the bomb attack launched by a group of Muslim extremists terrorist group on Easter Sunday has not disappeared yet. The harassment of another community after gravitating towards an extremist ideology based on any religion, ethnicity or any other human characteristic and ultimately killing them is a mental malady. A broad programme was implemented since the advent of the good-governance government in 2015 to strengthen the national and religious reconciliation. Any civilised society does not acknowledge the harassment of other religious groups by any other religion misusing the given freedom by convincing extremist ideas to masses, propagation of hate campaigns. There has been a mis- utilisation of the freedom given under the reconciliation to implement the extremist terrorist acts of the Thowheed Jama'ath organisation. The indirect objective of this is to implement strategies to push the country towards a destruction of life by sabotaging the national and religious reconciliation strengthened in the country. Nonetheless, the fact that assistance is rendered by the Muslim community itself to suppress the miniscule group related to these extremist terrorist activities should be applauded. It is also crucial to create a broad discussion on the values of the noble principles of reconciliation by strengthening the bonds between all religious groups.<sup>548</sup>

**500 lakh rupees to uplift the places of religious worship in Nawalapitiya** (by Suranaga Dilhan) - A colossal amount of 900 lakh rupees has been allocated for the first time by a government to rehabilitate and uplift the places of religious worship in Nawalapitiya electorate. 500 lakh rupees were given for 60 places of religious worship as

<sup>546</sup> Dinamina, May 29, p. 6.

<sup>547</sup> Dinamina, May 29, p. 7.

<sup>548</sup> Dinamina, May 29, p. 9.

the first step of it by the Acting organiser of the UNP and the Chairman of the Nawalapitiya urban council sasanka sanjeewa.<sup>549</sup>

**134 complaints against the Kurunegala Doctor** (by Hemantha Randunu and Sarath Eraminigammana) – 134 Sinhala Mothers who are alleged to have lost further prospects of pregnancy after caesarean surgeries conducted by Shafi Siyabdeen have lodged complaints in the Kurunegala General Hospital and Dambulla Hospital. Meanwhile a large group of Sinhala mothers who lost the prospects of pregnancy after the surgeries that are alleged to have been carried out by Doctor Shafi are expecting to lodge their complaints too.<sup>550</sup>

**Ministers, do not dare to intervene on behalf of this Doctor** – Theros who staged a protest in front of the Kurunegala Hospital (by R. M. W. Bandara) – There was a massive protest in front of the Kurunegala Hospital against the conduct of the gynaecologist of the Kurunegala Hospital (who is currently in custody) Doctor Shafi Siyabdeen. Theros who took part in the demonstration noted that though it is stated that the Sinhalese are the majority in the country, there is no one at present to voice the concerns of Sinhalese. Noting that Sinhalese are encountering a precarious situation, theros noted that there is an island-wide conspiracy to destroy Sinhalese. They also noted that the most prominent example in this regard is the series of incidents that have taken place in the Kurunegala Hospital (referring to alleged sterilisation carried out by Doctor Shafi on Sinhala mothers).<sup>551</sup>

**Amith Weerasinghe further remanded till today** (by A.J. An Abeynayake) -The additional Magistrate of Colombo Shalani Perera ordered to further imprison the Amith Jeewan Weerasinghe- the Leader of the Mahason Balakaya till today (29) who is charged of acting in violation of the public peace and reconciliation. The Magistrate also ordered the police to submit a succinct report of the evidence to substantiate the charges levelled against the accused.<sup>552</sup>

**Reconciliation should not be abused** - The term reconciliation was a buzzword in the recent past. A broad discussion was present in the country before the advent of the good- governance government into power that there is no reconciliation in the country and that the good-governance should be setup to reinstate reconciliation. But it is clear that reconciliation has been extremely abused. There was a golden opportunity to nurture reconciliation in the country after the termination of the war. But we could not capitalise on that advantage due to the opportunist narrow political agendas. Though there was considerable progress in terms of the economy under the Mahinda Rajapaksa government, that government could not establish reconciliation in the country. Especially that government had to succumb to the vicious forces against the Muslim community. The

<sup>549</sup> Dinamina, May 29, p. 24.

<sup>550</sup> Divaina, May 29, p. 1, 4.

<sup>551</sup> Divaina, May 29, p. 3.

<sup>552</sup> Divaina, May 29, p. 7.

discussion on the need to build reconciliation has re-emerged with the series of bomb attacks launched on Easter Sunday. But there cannot be seen an exact programme to build reconciliation. The religious misnomers of the extremists should be dismantled to prevent the destruction caused by extremists in the country. Muslim leaders should come to the forefront to rescue the Muslim community from this mechanical process that triggers people to materialize the expectations by killing people. The involvement of the Buddhist, Hindu and Catholic clergy should also be procured to create the requisite discussion. There should be due guidance from the government in this regard. But even today it cannot be seen.<sup>553</sup>

**Extremists have no ethnicity, birth or a religion** – Duminda Dissanayake (by H.M.P.G. Perera) - National Organiser of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Duminda Dissanayake stated that the extremists cannot be allowed to handle the country according to their whims and fancies. He also stated that as Buddhists we condemn the Easter Sunday attacks. Noting that Muslim extremists were involved in the Easter Sunday attacks, Dissanayake also noted that it is the Buddhist extremists who carried out attacks targeting Muslim Mosques, Muslim boutiques. Noting that the SLFP is also against it, Dissanayake noted that extremists have no ethnicity, birth or religion. Referring to the fact that there are separate Buddhist religious affairs ministries, Hindu religious affairs ministries, Muslim religious affairs ministries and even the Christian religious affairs ministries, Dissanayake noted that when different ministers are appointed for different religions, the law on establishing places of religious worship and Dhamma schools vary between the ministers appointed. He also noted that therefore the SLFP has proposed that there should be only one religious affairs ministry in the country. He also emphasised that particular ministry should be under the head of the state and added that then the head of the state is under a responsibility to treat adherents of all faith in an identical manner and that then the need to monitor everyone in the same manner and to treat all under the same law. Dissanayake stressed that the procedure adopted when setting up a temple should be adopted even when setting up a Christian Church, Muslim Mosque, and Hindu Kovil. He also noted that allegations that there are this many Mosques in this village and that there are this many Mosques in this town had emerged because we allowed the perpetuation of different method of implementation of law with regard to different communities. He noted that therefore as the SLFP we are taking necessary actions to rectify all those mistakes. He also noted that he made the remark in the parliament that if certain people cannot work according to the law of this country and that if they cannot abide by the law of the country and if they cannot acknowledge the fraternity within this country, it is ok for them to go to a country that is suitable to them and added that his statement is not a racist statement.<sup>554</sup>

<sup>553</sup> Divaina, May 29, p. 8.

<sup>554</sup> Divaina, May 29, p. 9.





**Muslims should integrate with the Sinhala-Tamil general society after getting rid of Arabian farces** – Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thero – The General Secretary of the BBS Galabodaaththe Gnanasara thero noted that the Muslim society should unconditionally integrate with the Sinhala society after immediately getting rid of Arabian religious and cultural farces that have been imposed on the conventional Muslim society. Thero also noted that we have the potential to remedy this Wahabbist maniac extremism. Thero also noted that the Wahabbists possess a huge capital. Noting that this is not akin to the LTTE issue, Thero noted that Wahabbists demand sacrifices of life. Thero also noted that Salafism is more serious than the Wahhabism and that Iqwan extremism is more serious than those two and added that iqwan extremism is being operated in relation to this state mechanism. 555

**The bail order of the head of the Mahason Balakaya is to be given today** (by Nimanthi Ranasinghe)- The Additional Magistrate of Colombo stated yesterday (28) that the bail order of the Amith Weerasinghe accused of conducting with the intention of dismantling the public peace and sabotaging the religious reconciliation would be declared today. The police briefed the court that it has been unravelled through the telephone records that this accused has made various addresses in areas where there were tense situations.556

**Though we talked about the sterilization from 2012 no government took any action** (by Muditha Dayananda)- General Secretary of the BBS stated that there is a separate programme to build Wahhabism in Sri Lanka. Delving further, thero noted that instead of one leader many leaders are nurtured for that. Emphasising that there are 50 organisations in this regard, thero noted that the classification as National Thowheed Jama'ath, Ceylon Thowheed Jama'ath has come in that manner. Thero stressed that there are good teachings in the Quran and added that, but it is slightly different when it comes to Hadith. Noting that there are some parts like that, Thero urged the Muslim religious leaders to use one Quran. Thero noting that the BBS is preparing a series of proposals on this added that there should be laws on burqa, halal and madrasas. 557

**Wisdom before incident** (by Agalakada Sirisumana Thero)- It was the Gnanasara thero who collected all information about Islamic extremism. He was the person who revealed to the nation as to how even the Sinhalese businessmen too received money under the halal guarantee. He was the person who accurately revealed about the names and whereabouts of the suicide bombers. He told the nation that this would be a centre to teach Sharia law and that this centre is something that creates the angels of Allah. It was the thero who voiced concerns against the Madrasa Arabic schools. Thero also queries as to which leader is facing the consequences for the disaster for deeming those who voiced concerns against the subjection of Buddhist archaeological sites like Devanagala, Kuragala and Muhudu Maha viharaya to Islamic extremism as Buddhist extremists. Thero

555 Divaina, May 29, p. 10.

556 Lankadeepa, May 29, p. 2.

557 Lankadeepa, May 29, p. 10



also noted that the extremist terrorists who are keen on creating an Asian Islamic zone are eyeing at Buddhist countries. He also notes that they can examine that even Myanmar and Thailand have become victims to it.<sup>558</sup>

**Amith Weerasinghe re-remanded** (by T. Farook Thajudeen) - Mahasohon Balakaya leader Amith Weerasinghe was re-remanded till May 29 by Colombo Additional Magistrate Shalani Perera today. The SCIU said the suspect had posted anti-Muslim messages on Facebook and had held meetings at Hettipola and Digana where he made anti-Muslim speeches. The magistrate ordered the police to submit a summary of the evidence gathered from witnesses.<sup>559</sup>

**Easter Sunday terror attacks: Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe demands independent probe committee** (by Ajith Siriwardana) - Claiming that the police failed to implement the law against those responsible for the Easter Sunday terror attacks, MP Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe had requested that the president hand over investigations into the incident to an independent team comprising of honest and trustworthy officials of the police department. He claimed that during the course of investigations into several incidents, such as the vandalising of Buddha statues, the CID had recovered a training camp operated by terrorist Zahran in Wanathawilluwa, as well as a stock of explosives. Additionally, the two suspects who were the suicide bombers of Shangri -La and Cinnamon Grand hotels, were earlier arrested in connection with the vandal charges, but Minister Rishad Bathiudeen and Governor Azath Salley had forced the CID to release them.<sup>560</sup>

**Wahhabism, Sunni, Shia, they aren't our enemies, terrorism is** (by Vishwamithra) - Sri Lanka is a well-known soft target for terrorist attacks - heavily indebted to the rest of the rich world, with soldiers already exhausted from a long civil war. While a placid non- Muslim population helplessly looked on, a grossly distorted version of Islam and its advance by way of terror and fear-mongering have taken deep root in modern global society. Unfortunately, Sri Lanka happened to be en route to this cruel carnage. Wahhabism or fundamentalism of any religion is not the pure and true teachings of the religious leaders. The Buddha never preached violence; neither did Mohamed. Yet, blind followers of both these religions could be persuaded to take up arms against their own brethren; Buddhists by way of retaliation and Muslims by promise of 72 virgins waiting on the other side of heaven. Failure to differentiate between belief and the practice of that belief in violent and destructive fashion in order to achieve political objectives has cost the country. Repetition of such mistakes may result in Sri Lanka being a 'failed state'.<sup>561</sup>

**Ven. Gnanasara's release and the death knell of good governance** (by Sanjeewa Fernando) - Ven. Gnanasara has been granted a presidential pardon. The monk is known

<sup>558</sup> Lankadeepa, May 29, p. 14.

<sup>559</sup> Daily Mirror, May 29, p A3.

<sup>560</sup> Daily Mirror, May 29, p. A4.

<sup>561</sup> Daily Mirror, May 29, p. A9.



for his anti-minority rhetoric and active instigation of Sinhala Buddhist extremist elements against Muslims, especially during the Aluthgama riots under the watch of the Rajapakse regime. It was an act of contempt of court that landed Gnanasara in prison, including threatening the Homagama Magistrate, calling the judge and the prosecution counsel ‘eunuchs’, threatening the wife of a journalist and calling the law itself, as the law of the ‘suddas’, not applicable to him. The race between the PM and the president in the past year in visiting places of Buddhist worship and being in the ‘good books’ of the leading monks should mean that this presidential pardon is no surprise. There is hardly any perceptible justification available for the government on the release of Gnanasara. The UNP as well as the SLFP components of the yahapalana government have abandoned the good governance mandate somewhere down the line and the presidential pardon simply spells this out.<sup>562</sup>

**Spotlight on Ven. Gnanasara: When patriotism blurs spiritual vision** (by Ravi Nagahawatte) - Ven. Gnanasara’s early release from prison, thanks to a presidential pardon, has given the monk celebrity status. This is likely to encourage other monks who have threatened to take the law into their hands. What’s disturbing is the monk’s rhetoric, which he has not toned down, despite the fact that he was released from prison just a few days ago. His call is to rally supporters in the event that the government fails in the ‘national cause’. There is no room for anyone opposing him to compromise, argue and present logic or reasoning. Gnanasara came under the spotlight in politics when he teamed up with Sinhala hard liners and helped them form the political party Jathika Hela Urumaya. But he soon fell out with them and helped another group form the Bodu Bala Sena. Ven. Gnanasara says he had issued warnings about groups like the one that carries out the Easter Sunday bombings, but adds that the authorities didn’t take him seriously. There is a similarity between Ven. Gnanasara and an extremist Muslim. Both are trying to reform the society which they both feel have gone off track.<sup>563</sup>

**Ministry to issue dress code for public sector** (by Amali Mallawaarachchi) – The Public Administration Ministry will soon issue a circular on the dress code for government employees in accordance with the draft gazette banning all garments which cover the face and affect the process of identifying a person, Public Administration Minister Ranjith Maddumabandara yesterday said. Minister Maddumabandara said the circular will request public officers to come to their respective workplaces “without covering the face.” Reading out from the draft extraordinary gazette which offered clarification on the “full face,” Minister Maddumabandara said government workers will be requested not to cover their faces from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the chin as a part of their dress. Minister Maddumabandara said the present dress code for public servants clearly defines that the public officers should wear trouser and shirt or the national dress if male, and a sari or an osariya if female. The minister also said that the ‘hijab’ is under no

<sup>562</sup> Daily Mirror, May 29, p. A10.

<sup>563</sup> Daily Mirror, May 29, p. A11.



restriction. The minister was speaking at a press brief to inform media on the security situation in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks, at the Government Information Department, May 28 afternoon.<sup>564</sup>

**Amith Weerasinghe re-remanded till today** (by Shavini Madhara) – Mahason Balakaya leader Amith Weerasinghe who was arrested in the Teldeniya area was remanded till tomorrow by Colombo Additional Magistrate Shalini Perera. He was arrested for allegedly posting content promoting racial and religious hatred on social media. Police stated that the suspect had allegedly expressed opinions and published photographs on social media which hinder religious and national coexistence in the country.<sup>565</sup>

**A great sacrifice** – In this editorial in the Daily News, the sacrifice of those who died in the Easter Sunday attacks is noted as an act that made them martyrs. They did not die in vain, they exposed Zaharan and his jihadist network – potentially sparing the country a far, far greater attack. The editorial suggests this attack could have been so great it would have been a “foreign invasion...similar to that of Syria”. The editorial continues; “Not only that, the mass killing of Catholics on Easter Sunday also helped unravel other dangers confronting the nation. Assuming it is true, the alleged plot to sterilise females so that they may not bear children in the future would have also continued unabated with no one the wiser. The alleged nexus between jihadists and certain politicians too would have continued unbroken. It is as a direct consequence of the Easter Sunday sacrifice that the government is taking steps to regulate the madrasas, some of which had foreign clerics with extremist views. The same goes for Sharia schools and universities which would have continued. For all that, the memory of those who sacrificed their lives and rendered disabled appear to be gradually receding to the background, being upstaged by other issues, the latest being the focus of public attention on the alleged rouge doctor from Kurunegala.” The editorial goes on to state that those who died should not be forgotten, and that Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith should take the lead in ensuring they remain in the public conscience.<sup>566</sup>

**Doctors, nurses, staff decide not to give evidence against Dr Shafi** (by Chamikara Weerasinghe) – The doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and support staff of the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital yesterday decided not to give evidence against Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi who was arrested for allegedly performing illegal sterilisation procedures on unsuspecting mothers who come to the hospital to deliver babies. Minister Rajitha Senaratna said that the doctor in question has allegedly amassed large sums of money and assets through whatever means and the police will determine how he acquired such wealth through their investigations. Dr. Weerabandara said that the hospital staff had decided not to talk about anything to do with Dr. Shafi with the Health Minister’s committee. When we asked what was preventing them from giving such important evidence to a committee of health professionals regarding a highly sensitive

<sup>564</sup> Daily News, May 29, p. 2.

<sup>565</sup> Daily News, May 29, p. 3.

<sup>566</sup> Daily News, May 29, p. 6.



issue, Dr. Weerabandara said it was the decision of the hospital's trade union. Asked if they were doing anything about allegations levelled against Dr. Shafi's illicit sterilisations, Dr. Weerabandara said they have initially started a process of collecting complaints from the parties which were saying that Dr. Shafi performed sterilisations on them without their consent.<sup>567</sup>

**Private Member's Motion to convert Batticaloa Sharia Campus to a State Defence University** (by Chamikara Weerasinghe) – Former Deputy Speaker and parliamentarian Thilanga Sumathipala yesterday expressed his expectation that the government will present a private member's motion submitted by him to convert the Sharia University in Batticaloa to a state defence university. Sumathipala asked that the Batticaloa Sharia University (Batticaloa Campus Pvt Ltd.) be converted to a state defence university to establish the confidence and security of the majority of non- Muslims in the country and to protect the country on the whole against those who advocate extremism. Meanwhile, UNP MP Dr. Kavinda Jayawardena has told the government in a private member's bill to convert the Sharia University in Batticaloa to a state university, stating that students of all religions and ethnic groups should be allowed to study there. He said that creating religious-based universities destroys peace and causes disharmony.<sup>568</sup>

**Severe action if even one woman was sterilised** (by Lawrence Selvanayagam) - Minister Ranjith Madduma Bandara stated that severe action would be taken against the doctor of the Kurunegala hospital if he had sterilised even one woman.<sup>569</sup>

**Bodu Bala Sena will work towards eradicating Islamic fundamentalism** (by Leo Nirosh Dharshan) - General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena, Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera said he would work tirelessly to eradicate Muslim fundamentalism from the country.<sup>570</sup>

**Building a Buddhist temple by forcibly taking over an ancient Vinayagar temple is illegal** - The Hindu Council has condemned the building of a Buddhist temple by forcibly taking over the ancient Kanniya Venneerootru Vinayagar temple. The council stated that in the years that have gone by, suppression towards Hindus have continued. The council claimed that several pieces of land belonging to ancient Hindu temples were being taken over by the Department of Archeology and that Buddhist temples were being built in those plots. The council pointed out that the same fate had befallen the Kanniya Vinayagar temple, which has been taken over by the department.<sup>571</sup>

<sup>567</sup> Daily News, May 29, p. 9.

<sup>568</sup> Daily News, May 29, p. 10.

<sup>569</sup> Thinakaran, May 29, p. 1.

<sup>570</sup> Virakesari, May 29, p. 1.

<sup>571</sup> Virakesari, May 29. p. 3.



**Efforts to destroy the foundation of the Kanniya Venneerootru Vinayagar temple** - The Kaiyilai South chief priest has accused the Department of Archeology of not treating Hinduism and Buddhism equally. He stated that the department was working towards destroying the foundation of the Kanniya Venneerootru Vinayagar temple, and allowing the construction of a Buddhist temple in the premises. He questioned how reconciliation would be effective when departments show such discrimination.<sup>572</sup>

**Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple renamed** - The name of the Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple, previously changed to Ganadevi by a Buddhist monk, was renamed the Neeraviyadi Pillayar temple, according to the ruling of the Mullaitivu District court. It was reported that the court order was not carried out by the police for over 20 days and that the monk had placed CCTV cameras in the premises. The magistrate who inquired about the developments instructed authorities that the name board should be changed to Neeraviyadi temple.<sup>573</sup>

**Muslim people themselves demolish a Thowheed Jamaath Mosque in Madatugama, Kekirawa (Sigiriya special)** – Muslim people in Madatugama and a group of members of the Grand Mosque there took steps to demolish a Mosque used by a group in Thowheed Jama'ath organisation in Madatugama, Kekirawa. It could be observed as to how the residents of the Madatugama demolished the Mosque using tools and how the plaque of the Mosque written in Arabic letters had been demolished. A resident of the area noted that this particular Mosque that was demolished had no name and that it was called Muslim Mosque and that Thowheed Jama'ath group prayed here; he added that anyone can pray at the main Mosque.<sup>574</sup>

**Benevolent society that does not know the faith** (by Daham Balasuriya) – If the faith taught by religious leaders of all faiths is realised properly, reconciliation would not be an uphill task. If that is the case, there would have been less work for the clergy too. When our Bhikkhus become Sinhala Buddhists, how are the people of other religions understand Buddhism. If the Buddhist Bhikkhus learn Tamil and conduct sermons in Tamil, Tamil and Muslim masses too should realise the value of Dhamma; suspicion and fear would disappear. If at least the Bhikkhus in North-East conduct themselves in Tamil that would be a help to redress the grievances of the Tamil and Muslim masses; a strong link would be created between the North and the South. <sup>575</sup>

**The Leader of Mahason Balakaya Amith Weerasinghe further remanded** (by A.J.A. Abeynayake) – The Additional Magistrate of Colombo Shalani Perera ordered to imprison the leader of the Mahason Balakaya Amith Weerasinghe further until the next 04th. She

<sup>572</sup> Virakesari, May 29, p. 8.

<sup>573</sup> Virakesari, May 29, p. 9.

<sup>574</sup> Dinamina, May 30, p. 6.

<sup>575</sup> Dinamina, May 30, p. 9.



made that order stating that orders on the bail order of the suspect would be given on that day.<sup>576</sup>

**Muslims themselves demolish a Thawheed Mosque** (by Kanchana Kumara Ariyadasa) - Muslim people in Madatugama and a group of members of the Grand Mosque there took steps to demolish a Mosque used by a group in Thowheed Jama'ath organisation in Madatugama, Kekirawa. It could be observed as to how the residents of the Madatugama demolished the Mosque using tools and how the plaque of the Mosque written in Arabic letters had been demolished. A resident of the area noted that this particular Mosque that was demolished had no name and that it was called Muslim Mosque and that Thowheed Jama'ath group prayed here; he added that anyone can pray at the main Mosque.<sup>577</sup>

**A precedent for reconciliation** (by Wimal Weerasekera) – The religious reconciliation was clearly reflected as the Vesak was celebrated recently as people from all religions including the Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and the Islam celebrated Vesak together. It is actually like a response depicted by the main four religions of Sri Lanka for the brutal attack that was launched targeting the Catholic Churches and tourist hotels on Easter Sunday. We know that our religious leader Lord Buddha stated that no other religion or the teacher of another religion should be condemned. It is the same with regard to the religious leaders of other religious faiths too. It is a salient incident to note that Baddegama Samitha thero was there to repair the Church in Katuwapitiya, Negombo that was attacked. When God Allah had pointed out the need to foster fraternity and reconciliation, the fact that Islamic extremists conduct violent acts is a non-compliance with the teachings of him.<sup>578</sup>

**A group had come and had installed Kovil nameboards in the Gurukanda vihara premises** (by Romesh Madushanka) – The head Priest of the Gurukanda Viharaya in Mullaitivu stated that a group who came yesterday to the Gurukanda vihara premises forcibly installed name boards of a Kovil with the name “Neeravi Pullayar Kovil”. Mullaitivu Magistrate S. Lenin Kumar stated, while giving the order on the case of the Gurukanda Rajamaha Viharaya that the naming within the devalaya in the Gurukanda Viharaya in Mullaitivu as Neerai Pullayar Kovil should be done with the participation of the Mullaitivu Police. But a name board was installed near in front of the main Buddhist statue in Gurukanda Rajamaha viharaya in Mullaitivu and the other name board was placed in the end of the land of the temple premises.<sup>579</sup>

**Number of complaints shoots up to 236** (by Pushpakumara Jayaratne and Kanchana Kumara Ariyadasa) – The number of complaints received by the Kurunegala General Hospital and the Dambulla Hospital against gynaecologist Dr. Segu Siyabdeen Mohamed Shafi has soared to 236 as of yesterday, hospital sources said. Sources said that the

<sup>576</sup> Divaina, May 30, p. 7.

<sup>577</sup> Lankadeepa, May 30, p. 6.

<sup>578</sup> Lankadeepa, May 30, p. 1(II).

<sup>579</sup> Lankadeepa, May 30, p. 10.





Kurunegala General Hospital had received 202 complaints while 34 complaints had been received by the Dambulla Hospital as of May 29. The complaints made by the latter had been received by the women's and children's bureau of the Dambulla Police. Complainants are mothers who have given birth to their children through caesarean operations performed by the said doctor in 2013 and 2015. Complaining that the doctor performed such surgeries within 10 to 15 minutes, they said they continued channelling several physicians and engaged in rituals due to infertility.<sup>580</sup>

**NTJ Mosque in Kekirawa demolished by Muslims** (by Kanchana Kumara Ariyadasa) – A mosque used by the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) at Madatugama in Kekirawa was yesterday demolished by the local Muslims and devotees of the main mosque. Trustee of the main mosque, M.H.M. Akbar Khan said the mosque used by the NTJ was built with the funds of an organisation based in a foreign country. He said they had decided to demolish the mosque considering the current situation in the country and said there was no need for two mosques.<sup>581</sup>

**46 arrested over Minuwangoda, Nattandiya violence released on bail** – 46 suspects who were arrested over recent violent incidents in Minuwangoda and Nattandiya were released on bail yesterday. Accordingly, 15 suspects were released on bail by the Minuwangoda Magistrate's Court, while 31 suspects who were arrested for causing unrest at Koswatta in Nattandiya were released on bail by the Marawila District Court. Minuwangoda Magistrate Kesara Samaradivakara ordered the release of 15 suspects on a surety bail of Rs. 200,000 each.<sup>582</sup>

**Mayor urges unregistered mosques to be registered** – Colombo Mayor Rosy Senanayake requested moulavis to get unregistered mosques registered with the CMC considering the current situation prevailing in the country. She said this during an event held at the Municipal Council to award financial donations worth Rs. 50,000 each to 60 registered mosques in Colombo in view of the Ramadan festival. The programme was organised by the Public Assistance Department based on a concept by one time Mayor and now Speaker Karu Jayasuriya to donate funds to religious places of worship to upgrade their facilities. For the Vesak festival, 123 temples were given cheques worth Rs. 50,000 each two weeks ago. Speaking at the event, Mayor Senanayake said that they had selected 60 mosques, which were registered under the Muslim Religious and Cultural Affairs Department to award donations. "If there are unregistered mosques, it is vital to get such mosques registered considering the current situation. It is easier and important for both us and the mosques to have the mosques registered," she said. She said she hoped that this time too, Muslims could ceremoniously celebrate Ramadan regardless of the hardships they were facing in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks.<sup>583</sup>

<sup>580</sup> Daily Mirror, May 30, p. A1, A4.

<sup>581</sup> Daily Mirror, May 30, p. A1, A4.

<sup>582</sup> Daily Mirror, May 30, p. A1, A4.

<sup>583</sup> Daily Mirror, May 30, p. A6.

**Anti-Muslim attacks: Process of compensation causes trickle of unease** (by Piyumi Fonseka) –

In this feature piece, the author notes that violence caused by racism and extremism places a heavy cost on society. Despite a storied history of ethno-religious tension and violence, these remain in Sri Lankan society. It was “another black day in the history of Sri Lanka”, when “organised mob attacks were reported in Kurunegala and Gampaha districts on May 13 in a brutal retaliation over the alleged involvement of the ISIS terrorists and a group of local extremist Muslims in the Easter Sunday attacks”. The author notes similarities to the violence in Kandy, Digana and Teldeniya in 2018. Four ministers were put in charge of paying compensation in the aftermath and given four months to do so. Even after a year and two months the compensation process remains incomplete. For the Kandy riots, 178 million LKR is to be paid, and 23.6 million has been paid as of now. For the riots in Minuwangoda, 12 houses, 64 business, 1 place of worship, 9 vehicles and 4 casualties were reported. Data is not yet available for the unrest in the Kurunegala District. The unrest will, however, have a real and tangible cost for the country.<sup>584</sup>

**Clash of cultures and heartwarming stories** (by Ravi Nagahawatte) – Muslims in Sri Lanka are a battered race given that people who don’t practice Islam look at them with suspicion and hatred now. If the allegations in the past about Muslim eateries serving food to non-Muslims containing drugs which make one infertile were unsubstantiated, the news that a Muslim doctor from Kurunegala carried out a large number of abortions with the patients suffering severe side effects has refuelled the suspicions within the majority Sinhalese. Kurunegala is a city that’s about to explode in racial violence. The growing complaints from mothers who were operated on by this doctor, identified as Dr. Shafi, have added to the tensions existing between the Muslims and the Sinhalese. This issue has also opened the door to mischief-makers and opportunists to cause mayhem in the country. This situation is ideal for those lawmakers who wish to gain political mileage. The author sees this disquiet as caused by ignorance in the majority population regarding Islam. He notes that “we heard of a story of a female Muslim doctor employed at the Homagama Hospital tending her resignation because she was told to remove the burqa (a face veiling) she was wearing when on duty. There are also reports of Muslims with beards and women wearing the hijab being jeered at in public. For the record Minister Rishad Bathiudeen is a marked man now. Posters have come up in some areas featuring anti-Rishad rhetoric. One poster which came up in Wattala warns lawmakers not to step in this town if they don’t vote in favour of the no-confidence motion that’s to be moved against Bathiudeen.” Sri Lanka is well-known as a country where backlashes often takes place in the aftermath of violent incidents. Hence, the targeting of innocent Muslims should be “nipped in the bud before Sinhalese hardliners agitate and go on the rampage, again.” The author notes that in spite of the prevailing situation across the island, there are hopeful stories, such as Sinhala families providing shelter to Muslims during mob violence.<sup>585</sup>

<sup>584</sup> Daily Mirror, May 30, p. A11.

<sup>585</sup> Daily Mirror, May 30, p. A12.



**Police team in Kurunegala to probe doctor** (by Camelia Nathaniel) – A special investigation team headed by an ASP had been sent to Kurunegala to conduct investigations into allegations against Dr. Shafi of the Kurunegala Hospital. A high ranking police official told the Daily News that investigations are being carried out regarding the allegations made against the said doctor, and a team headed by the ASP had recorded statements from around 35 persons. Meanwhile, 65 more mothers who had their caesarian surgeries done at the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital under Dr. Shafi had filed complaints yesterday (28), increasing the total number of complaints to 116. Meanwhile, ten mothers who had undergone treatment under the said doctor while he was serving at the Dambulla Base Hospital had also lodged complaints at the Dambulla Police and the hospital, yesterday. The Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) has rejected the six member committee appointed by the Health Ministry to investigate allegations against Dr. Shafi. The doctors' and nurses' trade unions of the Kurunegala Hospital had notified the hospital director that they will not cooperate in providing information to the committee appointed by the Health Ministry to investigate Dr. Shafi.<sup>586</sup>

**Muslims demolish Thowheed mosque** (by Kanchana Ariyadasa) – A mosque used by the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) at Madatugama in Kekirawa was yesterday demolished by the local Muslims and devotees of the main mosque. A resident named Akbar Khan said the mosque used by the NTJ was built with the funds of an organisation based in a foreign country. He said that they had decided to demolish the mosque considering the current situation in the country and said there was no need for two mosques. The residents also destroyed a plaque written in Arabic – supposedly a list of names of the foreign donors who gave money to construct the mosque.<sup>587</sup>

**Mahason Balakaya leader remanded** (by Shavini Madhara) – Mahason Balakaya leader Amith Weerasinghe who was arrested in the Teldeniya area was remanded till tomorrow by Colombo Additional Magistrate Shalini Perera. He was arrested for allegedly posting content promoting racial and religious hatred on social media. Police stated that the suspect had allegedly expressed opinions and published photographs on social media which hinder religious and national coexistence in the country.<sup>588</sup>

<sup>586</sup> Daily News, May 30, p. 1, 8.

<sup>587</sup> Daily News, May 30, p. 1.

<sup>588</sup> Daily News, May 30, p. 4.



**Buddhist extremism too serves the IS extremism** – Patali Champika Ranawaka (by Duminda Sampath) – Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that Madrasa schools and Arabic universities produced a group of people who were brainwashed according to Jihadism and who are of the opinion that other religious faiths should not exist. Ranawaka added that such groups should be made inactive immediately and added further that their further conduct should be controlled. Delving further, Ranawaka added that Thowheed Jama'ath organisation has been maintaining a conduct where the moderate Muslims are suppressed, and other religious faiths are insulted. Noting that though the Thowheed Jama'ath group is not violent, Ranawaka added that they are not democratic. He also stressed that both the Government and the Muslim society should de-radicalise them. He also noted that there is a group that took steps in furtherance of the Arabisation of the Muslim culture under the influence of Thowheed Jama'ath group and added that that particular group socialised the national clothes of Saudi Arabia, language and Halal. Noting that conventional Sri Lankan Muslims who belong to the Sufi Islam are the majority among the Sri Lankan Muslims, Ranawaka stated that they have been living peacefully with the other ethnic groups for centuries in this country. He emphasised that the society should strengthen them without pushing them to extremism. While acknowledging that there are certain extremist sectors in the Buddhist society, Ranawaka stated that actually those extremist Buddhist elements serve the ISIS extremism as opposed to the Buddhist society. He opined that the Muslim extremists utilise the presence of such extremist Buddhist extremist elements to lure Muslim youth to Muslim extremism. He posited the view that the thuggish acts of attacking the Muslim Mosques should be dealt with legally. 589

**An analysis on the post-Easter Sunday Catastrophe** (by Tharaka Warapitiya) – The writer opines that the Jihad terrorists should be ruthlessly eliminated and that they cannot be rehabilitated and that the suppression of them would therefore not be a smooth process as opposed to a violent process. He also notes that the failure to avert a catastrophe like the Easter Sunday attacks lies within the Muslim society and the lethargic attitude adopted by the Muslim society in the face of the new Wahab culture. He also noted that it was also opined by him that the need to pressurise the Muslim society to reform had arisen due to that reason. Noting that the writer was in an exhilarated mode due to the absence of any communal disturbances in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks, he notes that all those joys vanished due to the communal disturbances that occurred in several areas in the island. He also notes that there would be a vicious cycle if the Jihad-type terrorists carry out an attack in a Buddhist country in retaliation. He stresses that we should capitalise on the space created with the inclination of the Muslim society to a certain reformist programme. He also emphasises that the entire Muslim society should be induced to do away with the “iron curtains that segregate the society” such as burqa permanently. The conducive background should be created with the leadership of the Muslim intellectuals to get rid of their other cultural maladies. The writer notes it is likely to lose this opportunity due to the unsubstantiated anti-Muslim sentiment in the Sinhala society.590

589 Dinamina, May 31, p. 4.

590 Dinamina, May 31, p. 9.



**Remove the Thowheed Mosque in Vavuniya- Tamil organisations urge the Muslim religious heads** (by Dinasena Rathugamage) – A number of Tamil organisations has requested the Muslim religious heads to immediately remove a Thowheed Mosque in Vavuniya recently (30). These Tamil organisations have pointed out that as the Thowheed Organisation had been banned by the Government in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks, the presence of a Mosque that belongs to that organisation in the Pattanichur area in Vavuniya is likely to trigger a huge crisis. The Tamil organisations have urged the Muslim clergy to take a decision on this particular Mosque as the Mosque that was removed in Kekirawa too was a Mosque that belongs to this particular Thowheed Organisation.<sup>591</sup>

**An Arabian name has been put to the Pothuvil Muhudu Maha Vihara Road-** (Manampitiya Nimal Jayaratne) – The Chief Prelate of the Pothuvil Muhudu Maha Viharaya Warakapola Indrasiri Thero stated that a group of Muslim extremists have taken steps to place sign boards with Arabic names in every lane of the Pothuvil town including the Pothuvil Muhudu Maha Vihara Road. Thero further noted that 55 acres of the 72 acres that belong to the temple in the archaeological site of Muhudu Maha Viharaya was forcibly captured by Muslim extremists. Thero further noted that the government is silent on this and that court cases are not accepted and ordered not to bring court cases in Sinhala but in Tamil. Thero further stated that the Sinhala Buddhist community has been relegated into the third place in Eastern Province.<sup>592</sup>

**Ammunition- Arabic language posters:** Two including the Chairman of a Kalpitiya Mosque arrested (by Padma Kumari Kankanamage) – Kalpitiya Police stated that two who kept posters with references to Buddha statues in Arabic languages and a Bank Manager who was in possession of bullets used for T-12 weapons had been arrested. The Bank- Manager who was arrested is a Chairman of a Mosque in Kalpitiya. <sup>593</sup>

**A pardon with precedent** (by Lakdev Liyanagama) – This long opinion notes that in a not entirely surprising move, President Sirisena pardoned Venerable Galagodaaththe Gnanasara. This article provides a short descriptive account of why he was incarcerated. The piece then notes that the monk has a ‘reputation for his anti-Muslim rhetoric’, having addressed crowds in Aluthgama before racial riots in 2014 that led to the death of four individuals. He was “not shy to promote his brand of militant Sinhala Buddhist supremacist ideology”. Following the Easter Sunday attacks, some sections of the press noted that he had predicted the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Meanwhile, some on social media opined that the predictor of Islamism languished in jail, while those alleged to have links to Islamic terrorists remained free. The author then describes notable examples of presidential pardons in Sri Lanka’s history. He notes that the pardon of Gnanasara is unlikely to earn plaudits like his quashing of Sarath Fonseka’s conviction. Many parties and organisations have spoken out against the pardoning and what it means

<sup>591</sup> Divaina, May 31, p. 15.

<sup>592</sup> Lankadeepa, May 31, p. 1, 6.

<sup>593</sup> Lankadeepa, May 31, p. 1, 6.



for the rule of law. The TNA, Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Bar Association of Sri Lanka have all critiqued the president. Since his release, he has lived up to his reputation as a 'firebrand'. He has reiterated his beliefs and "made statements to the effect that he would "resume his struggle to save the country" making specific accusations and claims against authorities". The pardon sends two messages. Firstly, that the "integrity and respect of the judiciary" can be subverted by the executive branch on personal whim. Secondly, there are fears that Gnanasara's release will impact a society that is "already a tinderbox of ethnic tensions". Bar the TNA, no major political parties have been vocal about his release.<sup>594</sup>

**Number of complaints soars to 377** (by Pushpakumara Jayarathne and Kanchana Kumara Ariyadasa) – The number of complaints received by the Kurunegala and Dambulla hospitals against Dr. Shafi, who is alleged to have engaged in sterilisation surgeries, has reached 377 as of yesterday, the spokespeople of both hospitals revealed. While the Kurunegala Hospital has received 99 complaints yesterday, the Dambulla Hospital has received 42. The mothers who lodged the complaints are residents in Narammala, Kuliypitiya, Gokarella, Polgahawela, Wellawa, Polpithigama, Barandana, Katupitiya, Mawathagama, Dambulla, Sigiriya and Galewela.<sup>595</sup>

**New laws to prevent emergence of new terror groups: PM** (by Yohan Perera) – New laws including legislation to control hate speech is essential to prevent the emergence of new terrorist groups in the future, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said today. "ISIS and National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) no longer exist in Sri Lanka anymore. However, new groups could always come up again. Therefore, the country needs new laws such as legislation to control hate speech, bio metric laws and laws to monitor and control those who enter Sri Lankan territory. New counter terrorism laws are needed to stop emergence of new terrorist groups," the prime minister said.<sup>596</sup>

**Wiping out religious fundamentalism, top priority of Govt. – Patali** (by Sandun A. Jayasekera) – One of the top priorities of the government is to enact legislation to wipe out religious fundamentalism from the soil of Sri Lanka, which is proliferating like a cancer, Megapolis and Western Development Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka said. It seems that the religious extremism or fundamentalism has already spread its vicious tentacles to many parts of the country. Therefore, the government must act sooner than later to put an end to this evil before it gets out of hand, he added. "The display and printing of name boards and sign boards to identify streets, roads, buildings or any other establishment in the Eastern Province cannot be tolerated under any circumstances because it violates the Constitution and the Official Language Act. It also against the ethics and values of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. Most importantly it promotes religious extremism. Hence, all local government bodies in the east must act fast to remove these

<sup>594</sup> Daily News, May 31, p. 6.

<sup>595</sup> Daily Mirror, May 31, p. A1, A2.

<sup>596</sup> Daily Mirror, May 31, p. A1, A2.



illegal name boards in their areas at once,” Minister Ranawaka said. The minister also discussed the need to take a “firm decision” on religious dress before the lapsing of emergency regulations.<sup>597</sup>

**The robe and Sri Lankan politics** – In light of the release of ‘firebrand monk’ Ven. Gnanasara Thera, this editorial takes a closer look at the role of the Buddhist monk in society. The monk has called for religious leaders to take the lead as politicians cannot be trusted. The piece notes the high point of the politicisation of the Buddhist clergy with the assassination of PM S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. The history of Sri Lanka is inseparable from the history of the Buddhist clergy, going back to the time of monarchs. Monks like Ven. Gnanasara want the clergy to play a bigger role in the administration of the country. It remains to be seen if this is what the people also want.<sup>598</sup>

**Racism, media terrorism and ISIS poachers** (by Ameen Izzadeen) – In this short opinion piece, the author notes that the security forces are doing commendable work in carrying out the necessary task of eradicating terrorism from the island. The author sees the government as incapable of preventing racial discord. This can be seen in the pardoning of Bodu Bala Sena Secretary Ven. Gnanasara Thera. This came “when the country was fast hurtling towards the abyss of racism’s hell”. Either the president is not cognisant of this, or he wishes to deliberately aggravate things in order to achieve his political goals. The author notes that certain segments of the media, “probably in cahoots with the main opposition elements, spew out venomous racism with their coverage of the security situation.” This is a “deliberate attempt to build anti-Muslim hatred in the Sinhalese minds.” Sri Lanka’s Muslims have become the collective target of hate crime. The author asks if the government is idling and waiting for “critical mass” and another Black July before taking action. He describes reporting on the arrest of a Muslim gynaecologist as “media terrorism” not journalism, that plays on the fears of demographic change. This media terrorism may be intended to bring the JO back to power on the strength of Sinhala votes alone. The author also laments Islamophobia in Sri Lanka, including the arrest of a woman wearing a kaftan with a picture of a ship’s wheel. Hundreds of Muslim youth have lost their jobs and many companies are struggling due to the campaign to boycott Muslim shops. Government leaders must step up and eliminate racism or this ostracisation could fuel criminalisation or terrorism.<sup>599</sup>

**Playing politics with terrorism** (by M.S.M. Ayub) – This long opinion piece decries the fact that “Media, both mainstream and social, and certain politicians have completely diverted the attention of the country and the authorities from the terrorism that wreaked havoc on Easter Sunday on April 21. The whole country is now chasing a perceived enemy totally forgetting the real enemy.” This perceived enemy is Muslims in their totality, not just terrorists – despite their stated intentions. This, the author argues, can be seen in violence against Muslims and the vilification of their language, clothing and education.

<sup>597</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 31, p. A4.

<sup>598</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 31, p. A8.

<sup>599</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 31, p. A8.





Those targeting Muslims, have now found two more issues to keep the tempo on, the issues concerning Industry and Commerce Minister Rishad Bathiudeen and a gynaecologist at the Kurunegala General Hospital, Dr. Shafi. The author sees the investigation of Bathiudeen as politically motivated and divided on party or ethnic lines, not a genuine inquiry. This is “playing politics with terrorism”. The opposition strategy is clear. They seem to be convinced that the minority votes that had tilted en-masse towards the UNP at the last presidential and parliamentary elections have not changed and that they can ride purely on the Sinhalese votes. Now, they seem to play the patriotic card in order to further make inroads into the Sinhalese vote bank of the UNP.<sup>600</sup>

**Laws to curb emergence of terror groups needed - PM** (by Asela Liyanage and Damana Group Correspondent) - The PM said the NTJ and other groups supporting IS terrorism have been nabbed but new groups could emerge in future. He said therefore new laws to stop the emergence of new terrorist groups, including regulations to control hate speech, were necessary. Premier Wickremesinghe was speaking at a ceremony held in Ampara to distribute Samurdhi relief to over 600,000 families. He said the attorney general and the Justice Ministry was currently taking measures on the above matter.<sup>601</sup>

**‘Politicians shouldn’t solve problems on ethnic lines’** (by Rasula Dilhara Gamage) - Speaking at a press conference in Jaffna on Wednesday, Tamil National People’s Front (TNPf) leader Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam said it was regrettable to see a majority of politicians trying to find solutions to the Easter Sunday attacks according to a Sinhala Buddhist foundation. Ponnambalam said that although Tamils had placed their trust in the present government, it seemed no different to the previous administration. As such, Tamils including their leadership were losing their confidence in the government. Attempts made by the government to establish Sinhala Buddhist settlements in the North has angered the Tamils, he said.<sup>602</sup>

**WP to have ten multi-religious schools** - On an initiative made by Western Province Governor Azath Salley, 10 model schools will be set up to accommodate students from all faiths to enable them to study in an environment supported with goodwill and understanding. Salley spoke to an audience comprising Provincial Director of Education P. Sirilal Nonis, Education Secretary T. Wijebandu, principals of schools and representatives from school development societies. The schools that will be upgraded to the standard of model schools will include Lindsay Girls’ School; St Claire’s School; Arethusa College, Wellawatte; Kotahena President’s College; St. John’s College, Mattakuliya; St John’s College, Dematagoda; A.E. Gunasinghe Maha Viyalaya; St Mary’s College, Polwatte; S. De S. Jayasinghe Central College, Dehiwela; and Ilukovitha Vidyalaya, Homagama.<sup>603</sup>

<sup>600</sup> Daily Mirror, May 31, p. A9.

<sup>601</sup> Daily News, May 31, p. 1.

<sup>602</sup> Daily News, May 31, p. 2.

<sup>603</sup> Daily News, May 31, p. 2.



**Kurunegala doctor's case: Don't make hasty remarks, SLMA tells medical fraternity** - The Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) said yesterday that it is deeply concerned about the situation which has arisen following the allegations made against a medical professional from the Teaching Hospital in Kurunegala. The SLMA said it expects that the ongoing investigations will be conducted methodically by the relevant authorities and completed without delay. The SLMA urges all, especially the members of the medical profession, to refrain from making hasty and ill-considered statements until the true facts are established, the statement said.<sup>604</sup>

**A callous move** - According to this editorial piece, the joint opposition is to stage a massive protest campaign against the government for its alleged failure in handling the present crisis. This decision was taken at a meeting of the JO constituent parties presided over by Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapaksa on Wednesday. The editorial further states that the JO is using public resentment towards the government for their own political gain, especially given the fact that the attacks have allowed them to shift focus from the corrupt elements of the Rajapaksa regime that the Supreme High Courts are now trying. Any political protest at this juncture would only divert the attention of the forces from their job at a time when all security forces are needed for the anti-jihadist operation, the article states. The piece alludes to events, such as the release of Gnanasara, the Maha Sanga and Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith blaming the government for the Easter Sunday attacks, the Muslim doctor allegedly sterilising Sinhala women, and the perceived coddling of Muslim politicians with jihadist ties. It suggests that the JO is using these circumstances to their advantage.<sup>605</sup>

**If accusations against doctor are proven, he should be given the death sentence** (Rajadurai Hasan) - The women's wing of the Podujana Peramuna have stated that if the sterilisation accusations against Dr. Segu Mohamed Shafi are proven, he should be given the death sentence. The head of the wing, Kokila Harshini Gunawardena stated that even though the Health Ministry had appointed a committee to probe the allegations, she doubted the independent nature of the investigations.<sup>606</sup>

<sup>604</sup> Daily News, May 31, p. 3.

<sup>605</sup> Daily News, May 31, p. 8.

<sup>606</sup> Virakesari, May 31, p. 3.