



# **UNDERSTANDING PRESS COVERAGE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

**#MINORMATTERS**

**PERIOD COVERED : AUGUST 2020**

## 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 more recently in Kurunegala/Minuwangoda (May 2019)<sup>5</sup> demonstrate the extent and frequency of this type of violence.

This report is the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 Sinhala and Tamil to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights.

Press coverage is assessed by observing 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.

This 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.

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

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Daily FT, *Digana turns divisive* (2018) at <http://www.ft.lk/top-story/Digana-turns-divisive-/26-650661> [Last accessed 11 December 2018].

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

## METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, religious freedom is understood as:

- ✦ 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 August 2020 were monitored. The following 10 daily and weekend newspapers in the 2 local languages (Sinhala and Tamil) were examined (see table below).

| Sinhala Newspapers                  | Tamil Newspapers                     |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Lankadeepa/Sunday Lankadeepa</i> | <i>Virakesari/ Sunday Virakesari</i> |
| <i>Divaina/Sunday Divaina</i>       | <i>Thinakaran/ Sunday Thinakaran</i> |
| <i>Dinamina/Silumina</i>            | <i>Uthayan</i>                       |
| <i>Anidda</i>                       |                                      |

These 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 among the daily Sinhala and Tamil newspapers respectively. *Divaina* has the second highest readership among the daily Sinhala newspapers. Meanwhile, *Dinamina* and *Silumina* were selected on the basis of them being state-owned newspapers.

Despite the absence of readership data, the weekly publication *Anidda* was selected as its content generally differs from coverage in the mainstream press and can be considered to provide alternative insights into events.

<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.

Likewise, *Uthayan*, a Jaffna-based publication, was selected, despite the absence of its readership data, as it is a regional publication. As a state-owned newspaper was included for the Sinhala sample, *Thinakaran* was selected to represent a state-owned Tamil newspaper to maintain consistency, despite it having relatively low readership. Since Covid-19, most newspapers have been published as e-papers in addition to the physical copies. The newspapers monitored for the month of August were e-versions.

In these newspapers, articles that **had a bearing on religious freedom** were selected to assess the tonality of the 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; and
- ✦ Articles that discussed court cases, laws or regulations pertaining to religious freedom.

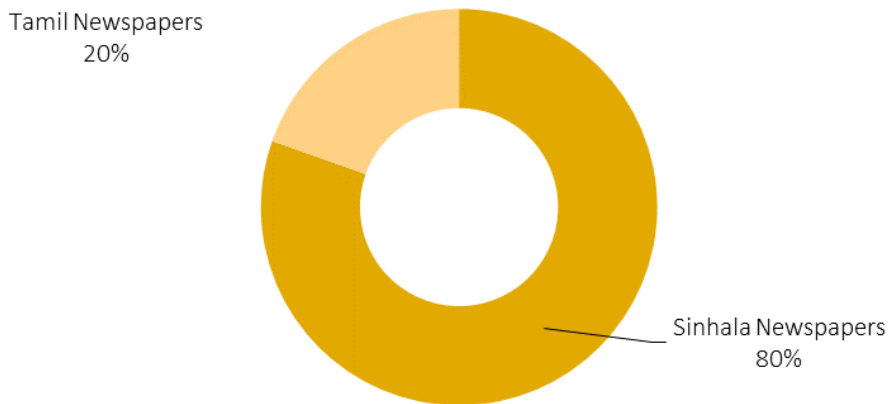
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<sup>10</sup> NB: the aforementioned list is only illustrative and not exhaustive.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Overview

Percentage of Articles by Language

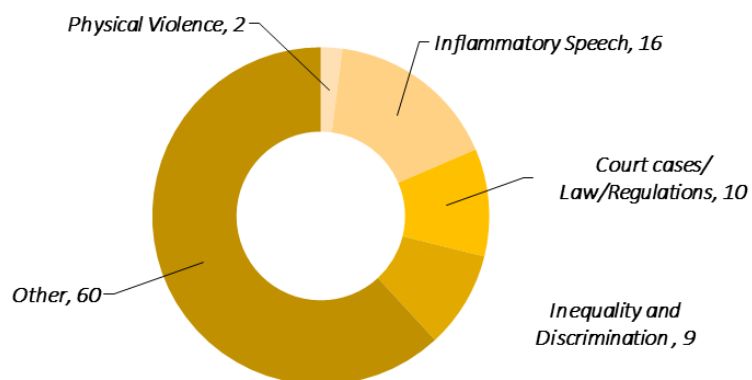


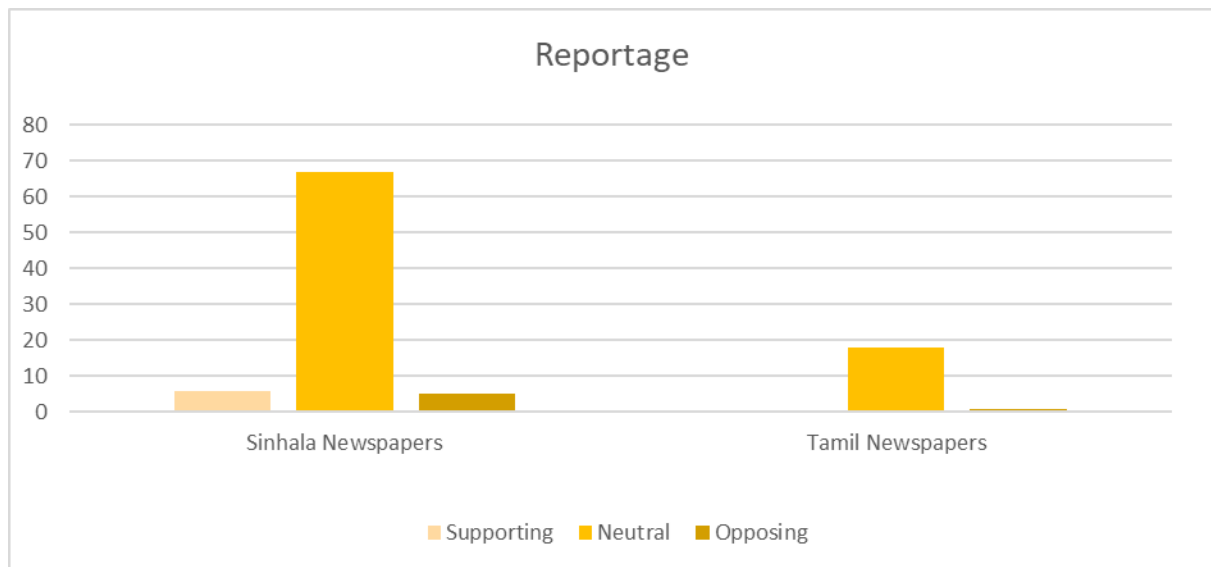
In August 2020, the Sinhala and Tamil newspapers monitored carried a total of 97 articles relating to religious freedom. Out of these, 80 per cent (78 articles) were carried in the Sinhala newspapers. Meanwhile, Tamil newspapers accounted for 20 per cent (19 articles) of the coverage.

Religious freedom was discussed under the following five themes:

- ✦ Physical violence;
- ✦ Inflammatory speech;
- ✦ Court cases/law/regulations;
- ✦ Inequality and discrimination; and
- ✦ Other related reporting

Number of articles pertaining to religious freedom by theme

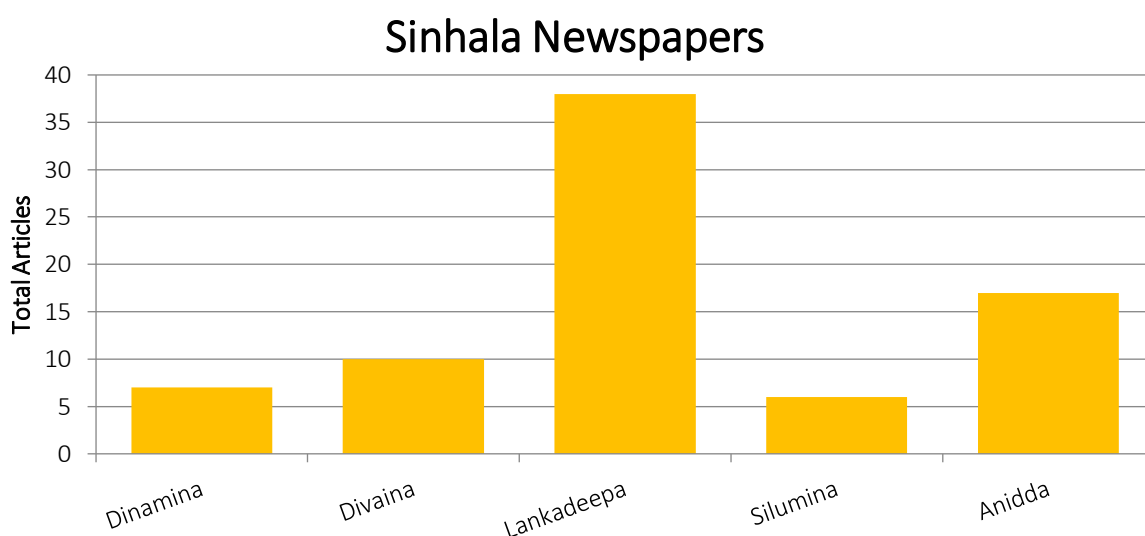




- ✦ Of the 78 articles in the Sinhala newspapers, five articles supported religious freedom, 68 articles were neutral, and five articles opposed religious freedom.
- ✦ Of the 19 articles in the Tamil newspapers, one article supported religious freedom, and 18 articles were neutral.

Coverage in Sinhala newspapers

| Sinhala Newspapers | No. of Articles | Reportage  |           |          |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|----------|
|                    |                 | Supporting | Neutral   | Opposing |
| <i>Dinamina</i>    | 7               | 0          | 7         | 0        |
| <i>Divaina</i>     | 10              | 0          | 9         | 1        |
| <i>Lankadeepa</i>  | 38              | 1          | 34        | 3        |
| <i>Silumina</i>    | 6               | 0          | 5         | 1        |
| <i>Anidda</i>      | 17              | 4          | 13        | 0        |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>78</b>       | <b>5</b>   | <b>68</b> | <b>5</b> |



The Sinhala press featured 78 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. Five articles supported religious freedom, 68 articles were neutral, and five articles opposed religious freedom.

The **five articles that supported religious freedom** are as follows:

- ✦ A long opinion piece on former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's statements about the UNP's history and aims. Wickremesinghe stated that according to D.S. Senanayake, the party aims to unite all communities such as Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. He stated that they worked hard to protect every religious place. The article notes that Wickremesinghe's idea is that the only party for all ethnicities is the UNP.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 1, p. 8.

- ✦ A long opinion piece criticising the Rajapaksas and their supporters for defending the destruction of the historical building in Kurunegala and for 'igniting anti-Muslim sentiments' to make people forget their problems. The opinion notes that the LTTE was strengthened because of similar activities during Black July.
- ✦ An opinion piece noting that the usually very vocal monks who spoke up during the presidential election were uncharacteristically quiet during the general election. The author states that they believe that this election was a clean one, and that the people have spoken. It states that it is the duty of the government to ensure the safety of the country and its races and religions for the people.<sup>12</sup>
- ✦ An opinion piece on the public's expectations of the new government. It discusses alleviating poverty, equal application of the law regardless of social status or wealth, and ensuring the country treats all races, religions and languages equally, in the hopes of creating a balanced and harmonious society. It states that the people do not want the country to be blindsided by Western patterns of thinking, economic or otherwise.<sup>13</sup>
- ✦ An opinion piece criticising the president for propagating the statement 'one country, one law', while acting in opposition to this principle. The author specifically notes the pardoning of former Sergeant Sunil Ratnayake from death row, the people at Thondaman's funeral not adhering to COVID-19 restrictions, and the decimated building in Kurunegala as such examples. The article also notes that after the Easter attacks, the Muslim community was side-lined, and their laws were changed. The article claims that 'One country, one law' is just a phrase that is meant to oppress Muslims that the current government propagated in order to rise to power.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the **five articles that opposed religious freedom** are as follows:

- ✦ A long opinion states that though Minister Udaya Gammanpila says Ranil Wickremesinghe is destroying the UNP by closely associating with Tamil separatists and Muslim extremists, 'Muslim extremists like Rishad Bathiudeen and separatists like M.A. Sumanthiran' are not really with Ranil Wickremesinghe but with Sajith Premadasa. It claims that a vote given to the Samagi Jana Balawegaya is a vote for Tamil separatism and Muslim extremism.<sup>15</sup>
- ✦ An interview with candidate of the Puttalam District People's Front Arundika Fernando where he says that arrangements are being made to defeat former MPs and ministers of the *Yahapaalana* government and 'extremist candidates' who were rejected by the people at the general election. He claims the people of the country know that the Muslim political leadership in Puttalam have supported and aided extremist Muslim

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<sup>12</sup> *Anidda*, August 9, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 1, p. 5.



terrorist activities such as blasts in the Kalachchikudi area and damaging the Buddha statues in Mawanella.<sup>16</sup>

- ✦ An interview with Ven. Gnanasara Thera who stated that they should be in the Parliament to save this country from 'Islamic invaders'. He claims that if the Muslim community in the country is not supportive enough, Sinhala people will only have two choices—to convert to Islam or to die. He added that it is pathetic that even the traditional Muslims in this country fall prey to Arabic culture and that Madrasa schools, niqabs and extremist teachings must completely be eradicated from the country as 'anything that threatens national security should be removed'. He adds that he firmly believes that patriotism should be spread instead of extremism and that laws should be brought in to control the population. He claims that extremist groups and politicians are being armed, enriched and strengthened through various political parties and that the 'real Sinhalese' should be awakening to struggle with this danger.<sup>17</sup>
- ✦ An editorial quotes Minister of Industries Wimal Weerawansa stating that parliamentarians such as Angajan Ramanathan from Jaffna and A.L.M. Athaulla from the East, who came to parliament amidst many difficulties 'having discarded racism', need to be given ministerial positions. The editorial suggests that as 'racist Tamil leaders such as Wigneswaran and Ponnambalam' have their seats in Parliament and are supported by the Tamil diaspora, Weerawansa's suggestion holds weight. The editorial says that those who 'reject racism' as a political way of life need to be rewarded for their righteous thinking. It approvingly notes that the voting trends in the North show that people are 'declining racist leadership' and are 'embracing anti-racism' and an SLFP leader getting a seat in the North for the first time ever, is indicative of the progress.<sup>18</sup>
- ✦ A news report on the statement by Leader of the Tamil National People's Alliance C.V. Wigneswaran about a 'Tamil homeland'. The report discusses the debate on whether to remove Wigneswaran's statement from the Hansard for being 'racist'. The report notes that others said that Wigneswaran's statement was unconstitutional and legal methods need to be followed to remove it from the Hansard, and that the statement goes against the vow that MPs made to protect the unity of the country, and that therefore, Wigneswaran needs to be removed from parliament.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Silumina*, August 2, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> *Divaina*, August 2, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p. 6.

Coverage in Tamil newspapers

| Tamil Newspapers  | No. of Articles | Reportage  |           |          |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|----------|
|                   |                 | Supporting | Neutral   | Opposing |
| <i>Thinakaran</i> | 3               | 0          | 3         | 0        |
| <i>Virakesari</i> | 9               | 1          | 8         | 0        |
| <i>Uthayan</i>    | 7               | 0          | 7         | 0        |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>19</b>       | <b>1</b>   | <b>18</b> | <b>0</b> |

Tamil Newspapers



The Tamil press featured 19 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. One article supported religious freedom and 18 were neutral.

The **one article that supported religious freedom** is as follows:

- ✦ A news report on Viharadhikari Ven. Meegahajandure Siri Vimala Thera of the Sri Naga Vihara, Jaffna stating that if everyone lives with the guidance of religion, the country would be beautiful and harmonious. He called on everyone to collaborate to live together in peace.



**QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

The 97 articles monitored during the month of August 2020 can be categorised under four overarching themes pertaining to religious freedom. These themes are *physical violence towards people and/or property; 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 these overarching themes. These events/issues are selected on the basis of the volume of coverage they received in editorials, opinion articles, feature articles and statements made by political and non-political actors/groups. Only novel events/issues that received coverage were selected for in-depth qualitative analysis in this report.

One overarching issue was selected for the month of August: the aftermath of the 2020 General Election. Due to the wide variety of topics discussed by candidates for the election, related reporting fell under more than one theme.

The majority of reportage on this issue falls under the theme of *other related reporting*.

| Overarching themes      | Events/ Issues                         |
|-------------------------|--|
| Other related reporting | Aftermath of the 2020 General Election |

## Other related reporting

### Aftermath of the 2020 General Election

Other related reporting covers all reportage in relation to religious freedom that cannot be brought under any of the other themes. In the monitoring period, reporting on the aftermath of the 2020 General Election fell under this theme and had the highest number of articles.

This report aims to unpack how the press viewed the results and the aftermath of the 2020 General Election through an ethno-religious lens. In addition to the wider discussion on the results of the election, this period was marked by two events that arose as a result of the election: 1) the statement made by C.V. Wigneswaran in his maiden speech in parliament, and 2) the internal conflict within the Our Power of People's Party (OPPP). Discussions on the election results and on these two ensuing events each revealed a different perspective on Sinhala-Buddhist ideology or issues. Reporting on these three topics can be analysed using a comparison of the past and the present.

Reporting on all three topics appeared primarily in the Sinhala press. However, the Tamil press also carried some reportage on the election results and Wigneswaran's speech.

### *Results of the 2020 General Election*

The Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna's decisive victory at the election was perceived by the press as a triumph for Sinhala-Buddhist ideology. **The mainstream Sinhala press primarily viewed the outcome as a rightful re-establishment of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony, while the Tamil press viewed the outcome with a renewed fear of Sinhala-Buddhist majoritarianism.**

In the past, as noted in our report for October & November 2019 on the Presidential Election, the press 'interpreted the victory of SLPP candidate Gotabaya Rajapaksa as a reinforcement of the hegemonic positioning of Sinhala-Buddhism in the country.'<sup>20</sup> Reporting on the results of the 2019 Presidential Election also featured narratives on how the result was achieved without minority support. Reporting also highlighted the President's symbolic choice of location for his inauguration—the Ruwanweli Maha Seya in Anuradhapura, a Buddhist temple.<sup>21</sup>

In the present, the victory of the SLPP at the general election was interpreted and reported along similar lines by the Sinhala press. For example, articles in the Sinhala press noted how the victory had been achieved without the help of minorities,<sup>22</sup> and that the idea that 'the help

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<sup>20</sup> Verité Research, Understanding Press Coverage on Religious Freedom (October & November 2019) at <http://www.minormatters.org/en/media-pdfs> [Last accessed on 27 August 2020].

<sup>21</sup> Please see Verité Research, *Report on Understanding press coverage on religious freedom for the month of October and November 2019* at <http://www.minormatters.org/en/media-pdfs> [last accessed 22 September 2020].

<sup>22</sup> *Anidda*, August 9, front page; *Divaina*, August 11, p. 11; *Lankadeepa*, August 12, p. 4.

of minorities in this country is necessary has been shattered'.<sup>23</sup> This contrasted with reportage in the Tamil press, which stressed that the two-thirds majority achieved by the SLPP could not have been achieved without the help of minority parties.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, press reporting on the swearing in of the prime minister and cabinet at the Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara and the Temple of the Tooth further strengthened the idea that Buddhist ideology and symbols would be protected under the new government.<sup>25</sup>

The mainstream Sinhala press also highlighted the different ways the outcome of the election would benefit the country, noting that President Rajapaksa expected 'the guidance of the Buddhist clergy in acts of state policy-making,' and that he promised to protect Buddhist schools and monks.<sup>26</sup> While the Tamil press also reported on the new government's promises to protect and promote Buddhism, it also critically highlighted MP Sarath Weerasekara's statement that the SLPP had formed a government that could 'protect military personnel and Buddhist principles'.<sup>27</sup> The election results were accordingly portrayed as a 'victory of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism'.<sup>28</sup>

It is notable, however, that the alternative Sinhala press did not support the larger narrative put forward in mainstream reporting. Several articles from *Anidda* featured criticisms of the newly-elected government for 'using racism to maintain power'<sup>29</sup> and militarisation.<sup>30</sup> These criticisms were echoed in the Tamil press.<sup>31</sup> However, this narrative did not gain traction in the mainstream Sinhala press.

This contrast in reporting reflects the polarised perceptions of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony explored in previous reports. These interpretations feed into the host-guest narrative explored in earlier reports—the idea that Sinhala-Buddhists are the primary citizens in the country who allow the minorities to exist as 'guests', as long as they support the existing power structures to ensure Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony.

### ***Wigneswaran's statement in parliament***

In his first speech in parliament, Leader of the Tamil National People's Alliance C.V. Wigneswaran referred to Tamil as 'the language of the first indigenous inhabitants of this country.' This statement was reported on extensively in the press in all three languages and sparked significant controversy.

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<sup>23</sup> *Divaina*, August 11, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> See *The Media Analysis*, Vol.10, #32 and #33, *Thinakkural*, August 9, p.6; *Virakesari*, August 16, Editorial, p.4.

<sup>25</sup> See *The Media Analysis*, Vol.10, #32 and #33.

<sup>26</sup> *Lankadeep*, August 24, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Virakesari*, August 12, front page.

<sup>28</sup> *Virakesari*, August 16, p. 5

<sup>29</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, p. 4; *Anidda*, August 23, p. 16; *Anidda*, August 30, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> *Virakesari*, August 16, p. 5

In the past, appealing to minority interests and questioning Sri Lanka's identity and history as a Sinhala-Buddhist nation have been portrayed as 'racist', 'extremist' or 'separatist' in some of the Sinhala press. Claims such as Wigneswaran's are **seen as a threat to or attack on the entrenched belief held by some segments of the Sinhala-Buddhist population that they hold a legitimate historical claim to the country.** For example, when former Minister of Finance Mangala Samaraweera stated that 'Sri Lanka is not a Sinhala Buddhist country but rather a country that belongs to all Sri Lankans,' he was strongly criticised by the press.<sup>32</sup>

In the present, the Sinhala press featured MPs and others criticising or dismissing Wigneswaran's statement as 'racist' or 'extremist'.<sup>33</sup> One article even claimed that Wigneswaran's statement was unconstitutional.<sup>34</sup> This is in line with past reporting on similar topics.

In contrast to some of the Sinhala press reaction, the Tamil press did not view Wigneswaran's statement as racist. Yet his statement still garnered some criticism for deviating away from more pressing concerns for the Tamil community.<sup>35</sup> The Tamil press also criticised those who condemned Wigneswaran, claiming that they themselves are racist.<sup>36</sup>

While Wigneswaran's statement was not directly linked to religious freedom, the criticism levelled against him in the Sinhala press revealed, through contrast, the exception made for Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. In the past, similarly nationalistic statements claiming that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala-Buddhist country with Sinhala-Buddhist history (as opposed to a Tamil country) have not received criticisms of this nature. In this context, the concept of 'racism' is subject to interpretation and statements that promote Sinhala-Buddhist ideology are seen as an exception and as positive or a statement of fact. For example, as discussed in our report for July, in the lead up to the election, the SJB was criticised for perpetuating 'narrow minded communalism in politics' and framed as separatist for addressing minority concerns. Meanwhile, the SJB was not criticised for assuring that priority given to Buddhism would be maintained.<sup>37</sup>

This perspective also draws from the 'host-guest' narrative of Sri Lanka that positions 'Sinhala-Buddhist' as synonymous with 'Sri Lankan'.<sup>38</sup> As the 'host', Sinhala-Buddhist identity is equated with the Sri Lankan identity, and minority groups, as 'guests', are not part of that identity and cannot question or present alternate views to the parameters set by the majority.

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<sup>32</sup> See *The Media Analysis* Vol.09, #18 & #19.

<sup>33</sup> *Dinamina*, August 17, Front Page; *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 10; *Divaina*, August 25, p. 9; *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p. 4; *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> See *The Media Analysis* Vol.10, #35 & #36; *Thinakaran*, August 30, p.6; *Thinakaran*, September 6, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> *Thinakkural*, September 3, p.12.

<sup>37</sup> *Lankadeepa*, July 6, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Please see Verité Research, *Report on Understanding press coverage on religious freedom for the month of July 2020* at <http://www.minormatters.org/en/media-pdfs> [last accessed 22 September 2020].

### *Internal conflict within the OPDP*

Following the election, the media in both languages reported on the internal conflict within the OPDP over who should be appointed to their single seat on the national list. Reporting on this issue in the Sinhala press was entirely critical of this internal conflict. This **reportage reflected a marked shift in the portrayal of the Buddhist clergy in the press.**

In the past, reporting in the Sinhala press on Buddhist monks revered them and hardly criticised them, even when they were involved in acts of religious violence.<sup>39</sup> For example, when Ven. Gnanasara Thera was convicted of criminal intimidation in court of Sandhya Ekneligoda, the spouse of disappeared journalist Prageeth Ekneligoda, press reporting on the issue did not criticise him but provided him with an exception due to his status as a monk.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the press also often positively highlighted the involvement of the clergy in political decision making.<sup>41</sup> For example, as noted above, reportage positively highlighted that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa expected 'the guidance and insight of the Buddhist clergy in the act of State policy making.'<sup>42</sup>

However, in the present, the infighting between Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera and Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera over the party's national list seat was strongly criticised for bringing 'disgrace to the Buddha Sasana.'<sup>43</sup> In this context, the press rejected the involvement of the clergy in politics.<sup>44</sup> One article reported that Ven. Sobitha Thera implored the election commissioner to 'take away the parliamentary seat offered to the party.'<sup>45</sup>

Press reporting on this event reflects a significant shift in how the public and the press perceive the involvement of the clergy in politics. It is possible that this new narrative emerged due to the internal nature of this conflict, requiring those who typically unwaveringly support the clergy to take sides.

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<sup>39</sup> See *The Media Analysis* Vol.06, #04 and Vol.08, #24.

<sup>40</sup> See *The Media Analysis* Vol.08, #24.

<sup>41</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 30, p. 4; *Anidda*, August 30, p. 9; *Virakesari*, August 13, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 22, p. 7; *Anidda*, August 30, p. 9; *Lankadeepa*, August 30, p. 4; *Virakesari*, August 13, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 22, p. 7.

## CONCLUSION

This report was based on media reportage featured during the month of August 2020 on issues related to religious freedom. The reportage was carried in newspapers in the two national languages—Sinhala and Tamil. The analysis in this report took into account 97 articles dealing with religious freedom under five overarching themes. The events/issues that were qualitatively analysed in this report related to two of these five themes, i.e., religious inequality and discrimination, and other related reporting. The articles selected for analysis were chosen on the basis that they featured new events/issues, which gained traction in the Tamil and/or Sinhala press. These articles were analysed by taking into consideration the sentiment expressed towards religious freedom. The sentiment was identified through the content, perspectives, and tone of reporting in these respective articles.

The qualitative analysis of press reporting on religious freedom focused on press commentary regarding election results, Wigneswaran's statement, and the OPDP's internal conflict. The analysis of such commentary revealed three perspectives on Sinhala-Buddhist issues and ideology: 1) the 'triumph' of Sinhala-Buddhist ideology in the re-establishment of hegemony; 2) Presenting an alternate history being seen as a threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist claim to the country and therefore as 'extremist'; and 3) a shift in the perception of Buddhist clerical involvement in politics. The first two perspectives were similar to perspectives in the past, while the third showed a marked shift from past perceptions.



## RELATED REPORTING

**Ranil and Sajith division is a lie. Their aim is to unite after the election. Udaya Gammanpila says the MCC agreement will not be signed in a government with Wimal, Udaya and Vasu.** - (Diana Udayangani) - MP Gammanpila says they have been accusing Ranil Wickremesinghe for 25 years of destroying the UNP by closely associating with the Tamil separatists and Muslim extremists. In fact, Muslim extremists like Rishad Bathiudeen and separatists like M.A. Sumanthiran are not really with Ranil Wickramasinghe but with Sajith Premadasa. Therefore, it is clear that a vote for the ‘Samagi Jana Balawegaya’ is a vote for Tamil separatism and Muslim extremism.<sup>46</sup>

**UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe says everyone in the country today is wondering whether they will die from corona or from starvation.** - (Anjula Mahika Weeraratne and Tissa Kotinkaduwa) - According to D.S. Senanayake, the Sinhala majority in the UNP emerged as leaders and the party aims to unite all communities such as Sinhala, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. Ranil Wickremesinghe said the Whites tried to divide the Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil communities, but people have to unite as one country, surpassing ethnic division. Wickremesinghe related the stories with D.S. Senanayake where D.S. did a great service to create unity among communities. His opinion was that their party continues uniting nations, just like in the past. He further stated that they will not allow anyone to violate the rights of Sinhalese and the other communities like Tamils, Muslims and Burghers. Then he said that they worked hard to protect every religious place. Ranil Wickremesinghe’s idea was that the only party for all—Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims—is the UNP.<sup>47</sup>

**Hajj, the festival commemorating Islamic history** - (Mohomed Asik) - Hajj is a commemoration of a donation made to commemorate several important events in the history of Islam and to see the places where those events took place. The article relates the ancient stories of the Islamic religion and beliefs. This year, it was only a limited group who were selected for the Hajj pilgrimage due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>48</sup>

**Former intelligence director testifies that Hizbullah supported ‘Sunnath Wal Jamath’ organization involved in the Kanthankudi conflict and Ameer Ali supported Thowheed Jamath** - (Muditha Dayananda) - Former Intelligence Director and the Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police in charge of the Eastern Province Nilantha Jayawardana testified in front of the Presidential Commission on the Easter Sunday attacks that the former Minister Hizbullah supported the ‘Sunnath Wal Jamath’ organization involved in the Kanthankudi conflict on March 10, 2017 and former MP Ameer Ali supported the Thowheed Jamath organization. He was questioned by a senior lawyer in the Attorney General’s Department. There, Nilantha Jayawardana revealed the details which were there in the letter he sent to the minister of

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<sup>46</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 01, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 01, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 01, p. 15.

defense and the inspector general of police. It said that Abdul Rasik highly criticized Ven. Gnanasara Thera because the Thera spoke against Muslim extremism. The letter further includes an attack on the Buddhist and Hindu shrines of Sabaragamuwa, Central and North Western Province. He was questioned on whether it would be worthy if the people knew about Zahran before and his idea was that it would not be easy to handle our people and there may be huge violence against Muslims. Mister Jayawardana further declared that he had sent another letter asking to increase the security of Ven. Gnanasara Thera. He revealed that they reported many extremists' groups and proposed the government take relevant measures in March 2011 but nothing was done. In the next letter from Jayawardana, he reported about an Indian named Sakir and he informed the secretary of defense as this Sakir is a Muslim extremist.<sup>49</sup>

**The last hour before an accident** - (Thisarani Gunasekara) - It is reported that the mayor of Sri Lanka People's Front in Kurunegala is responsible for the destruction of a building of archeological value in Kurunegala. The Rajapaksas are rallying to defend this illegal activity. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa sought to shut it down, claiming that King Buwanekaba II was also a Muslim queen and that the destruction of the antiquities was an anti-Muslim act. When questioned by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa about the incident, he responded with a few meaningless words. Police have still failed to arrest the Kurunegala mayor who committed the act. Ven. Gnanasara Thera and Ven. Rathana Thera, who supported Gotabaya Rajapaksa in the presidential election, have stated that Madrasa schools, burqas and halal will be banned after the general election. LTTE and separatism were very strong because of Black July. An armed struggle developed into a great war. What the old governments did was incite racism to make the people forget their problems and Rajapaksas are doing the same. They ignite anti-Muslim sentiments to make people forget their problems.<sup>50</sup>

**Have you been caught by cyber thieves?** - (Mudhitha Dayananda, Nimala Kodituwakku, Bimal Shyaman Jayasinghe) - Police have arrested a Muslim man on charges of internet fraud and running a place that forges driving licenses and rubber stamps on the top floor of a two story house in Wellampitiya. The man was found in possession of forged driving licenses and other equipment, including a laptop and rubber stamps with the State emblem on it which were used for the forgery. It has been revealed that most of the forged driving licenses were made for Muslims in the Eastern Province so it is suspected that this suspect was helping a terrorist group.<sup>51</sup>

**This is how Moulavi, who claims to be the real leader of Thowheed Jamaath, was caught by the police** - (Kanchana Kumara Ariyadasa) - One of the inspectors of police in Dambulla received information over the phone that two suspects who had alighted from a bus traveling from

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<sup>49</sup> *Lankadeepa* August 01, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> *Anidda*, August 02, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 02, p. 3.

Colombo to Polonnaruwa in the afternoon on the same day after the Easter Sunday attack had boarded a three-wheeler from Dambulla to a resort in Kurunegala. The police had heard contradictory statements from the two suspects after their arrest. After being handed over to the CID, further investigations revealed that the two suspects were Naufar Moulavi, a theologian of the National Thowheed Jamath and the suspect of the case of damaging Buddha statues in Mawanella.<sup>52</sup>

**No disciplinary action was taken against Sajith at that time as young leadership should be allowed – UNP Leader and Colombo District Candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe** - (Jayasuriya Udukumbura) - During an interview while Ranil Wickremesinghe was questioned about whether it is true that he had not been informed about the Easter Sunday attack beforehand, he replied that he had not received any prior information about it. In his opinion, he held that the government as a whole should be held responsible. That is the reason why a proper investigation should be carried out into the incident. He further said that there are no plans of turning this country into a secular state under their government. Buddhism is respected as paramount and all political parties including the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) have accepted that. So, everyone in this country has the right to practice any religion they want.<sup>53</sup>

**The politics of "Good Governance" emerged from Easter attacks** - (Tharaka Wickramasekera) - Senior DIG Nilantha Jayawardena testified at the Presidential Commission on the Easter Sunday attack that the State Intelligence Service had great potential and power before 2015. He also stated that a clear report had been submitted to the IGP regarding the damage to Buddha statues in 2018 and information was given to the responsible authorities on the extremist movement of Zahran, who was trying to convert Sri Lanka to an Islamic country, but no investigations had taken place. Former Court of Appeal Judge Mohammad Mohideen Abdul Gafoor testified before the Commission and revealed details about a young man who is affiliated with ISIS and his continuation of work with the organization. Although he told then Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera about the incident and Minister Sagala Ratnayaka, no action was taken until the Easter attack. Assistant Superintendent of Police in charge of Western Intelligence B.I.I. Prasanna stated at the Commission that according to MP Wijeyadasa Rajapakse's statement on Islamic extremism active in this country, a man named Abdul Amin was arrested in Dharga town for posting extremist and ISIS thoughts on his Facebook account. The authorities were alerted to such extremist activities and State Intelligence conducted further investigations to identify possible threats to national security posed by Islamic extremists. Even though the Parliamentary Select Committee report did not satisfy the aggrieved parties of the Easter attack, it also revealed many details. Based on the finding of swords and other weapons, Mosques denied it saying that those were kept to clear the jungle.

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<sup>52</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 02, p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> *Silumina*, August 02, p. 10.

Finally it was held that the police, as well as the Intelligence Services, are responsible for not taking immediate actions to prevent the attack.<sup>54</sup>

**We are going to have a great victory in Puttalam - Former Minister and Candidate of the Puttalam District People's Front, Arundika Fernando** - (Bhakthi Mendis) - Arrangements are being made to defeat the former MPs and ministers of the Good Governance government and extremist candidates who were rejected by the people, at this upcoming election. It is fully understood how Zahran's extremist faction was centered in the Puttalam District. The people of the country knows that the Muslim political leadership in the Puttalam area has supported and aided the extremist Muslim terrorist activities as blasts were carried out by Muslim extremists in the Kalachchikudi area and Buddha statues were damaged in Mawanella<sup>55</sup>

**We know how to find solutions to these problems if we get a chance to enter the Parliament - Ven. Galagodaththe Gnanasara Thera** - (Sirimantha Rathnasekera) - Ven. Gnanasara Thera stated that they should be in the Parliament not because of any other reason but to save this country from Islamic invaders. He continued to state – If the Muslim community in this country is not supportive enough, Sinhala people will only have two choices according to him—to convert into Islam or to die. When the Commission continued examining the Easter attack, people were able to understand that this country is at a risk. Up to date, there is has been no bill passed for the protection of Sinhala Buddhists. The main reason for this is the lack of proper political agenda in the country. He further stated that it is pathetic that even the traditional Muslims in this country fall prey to an Arabic culture. So Madrasa schools, niqabs and extremist teachings must completely be eradicated from the country as anything that threatens national security should be removed. He believes that patriotism should be spread instead of extremism. Moreover, he was of the opinion that laws should be brought soon to control the population. The extremist groups and politicians are being armed, enriched and strengthened through various political parties. The 'real Sinhalese' should be awakened to struggle with this danger.<sup>56</sup>

**There is evidence that the Wigamwehera Dagaba treasured the right tooth relic of the Buddha. Somanuwara could be the site of the temple, says Dr. Thantrige, Director of Archeology in Trincomalee** - (Sugath Baddeggedara) - In the opinion of the Acting Director General of the Central Cultural Fund Prof. Gamini Adikari, the present president has established a Presidential Task Force to ensure scientific places of worship islandwide and the STF is actively doing a service. The article relates the excavations of Welgamwehera Buddhists' place of worship in our country.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Silumina*, August 02, p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> *Silumina*, August 02, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> *Divaina*, August 02, p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 04, p. 15.

**Today marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre of Muslims at the Kattankudy Mosque** - (T.L. Jawferkhan) - Thirty years have passed since the death of innocent Muslims who were praying at night in a Kattankudy mosque in Batticaloa. This anniversary of this event was commemorated. The LTTE bombed the innocents and some were brutally shot and severely injured during the night prayer. Relatives of the victims were also present at the event.<sup>58</sup>

**If we go in the right path, we will win** - (Chaminda Munasinghe) - The rise of extremist and racist groups is evident. The Easter attack was one of its consequences. No government in power can control these beyond the framework of democracy. So, there is the challenge of taming extremist and racist groups by acting democratically. It is clear that racism and extremism exists as parties and civil activists are influencing people's normal lives. Therefore, this challenge must be overcome after thorough study and good preparation by the government.<sup>59</sup>

**He was passionate about the country, race and religion: The loss of the services of Ven. Narangoda Sirinivasa Nayaka Thera at such a time is a great loss to the country - Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa says at the cremation ceremony** - () - Ven. Sirinivasa Thera made a great commitment to protect and maintain the shrine with the Temple of Tooth Relic built by King Vijayabahu at that time. During the last days of the Kotte period, the Portuguese and Dutch who came to Sri Lanka under the influence of European nations caused a great decline in the Buddha Sasana. Back in the Kandyan era, Ven. Welivita Saranankara Sangharaja Thera intervened and saved the Buddha Sasana. As a result, monks began to study the Dhamma. The prime minister expressed his condolences for Ven. Sirinivasa Nayaka Thera's passing away and appreciated his long service to the development of the Sambuddha Sasana.<sup>60</sup>

**The Holy Buddhist Grounds of Kuragala will be protected for the future generations - Governor of Sabaragamuwa Province Tikiri Kobbekaduwa** - () - Governor of the Sabaragamuwa Province Tikiri Kobbekaduwa has vowed to protect the holy Buddhist grounds at Kuragala, Balangoda for the future generation. His statement comes as one representing the views of the president and prime minister. He also stated that it was the duty of the government to protect the sites of national heritage in the country, for the people.<sup>61</sup>

**Priest who asked man not to burn his garbage near the church wall, hit on head with stone** - (Athula Bandara) - An individual who threw a stone at a priest at the Anuradhapura St. Joseph church is being searched for by Anuradhapura Police. The individual, who lives close to the church premises, had been asked not to burn his garbage by the church wall by the priest. The

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<sup>58</sup> *Dinamina*, August 04, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 06, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 06, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Dinamina*, August 07, p. 8.

man was incensed by the priest's advice and hit him on the head with a stone - the priest is currently receiving treatment.<sup>62</sup>

**Former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen's request for an injunction against being arrested is denied by Supreme Court** - (A. J. A. Abeynayake) - The petition that was filed by former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen requesting the Supreme Court to issue an injunction against his being arrested with regard to the Easter Sunday attacks, has been rejected by the Supreme Court. The reason cited for the rejection of Bathiudeen's human rights petition was that it would be withholding proper investigation, if one suspect is barred from being investigated.<sup>63</sup>

**Rishad's petition not filed, rejected** - (Thilina de Silva, Ranjan Katugampola) - The human rights petition forwarded by former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen to the Supreme Court requesting an injunction be granted against his arrest has been denied by the court. This petition was forwarded due to Bathiudeen wanting to prevent his arrest with relation to the Easter Sunday attacks and other terrorist activities, which he claims are false statements. Deputy Solicitor General Nerin Pulle reasoned that if such injunctions are granted for every suspect being investigated, it would hinder the supremacy of the law.<sup>64</sup>

**The SLPP victory and the UNP defeat** - (Upul Wickremesinghe) - The election results that have come in so far have indicate that the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna is in the lead. Professor Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri breaks down the reasons why the political climate of the country as it is now has led to the SLPP victory. Voter behaviour, political parties' stances are imperative to be understood. The SLPP's foundation is Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. The UNP only has one leader now: Patali Champika Ranawaka. The SLFP-UNP era of politics in this country has come to a definite end as well.<sup>65</sup>

**The country's future after the people's choice** - (Upul Wickremesinghe) - Political critic Kusal Perera points out that the Rajapaksa camp operates on the idea of supremacy of Sinhala Buddhism, and that no other party has offered an alternate idea in that vein of opinion, and that therefore, the Sinhala Buddhist supremacy ideology has become commonplace. He believes that during this election season, no party offered real solutions to the crises that the country is facing, and that finding and implementing solutions to these crises is the test that the government will have to undergo when it is established.<sup>66</sup>

**The 30 percent of Sinhalese** - (Shiral Lakthilake, Attorney-at-Law) - No Sinhala votes were given to parties opposing Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Only 30 percent voted against Rajapaksa - this faction of voters do not need to be separated as Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim etc. Ranil Wickremesinghe and

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<sup>62</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 07, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> *Divaina*, August 08, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 08, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 09, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 09, p. 23.

the new JVP need to ponder on the fact that they only have 30 percent of voters against Rajapaksa, but those people also look at the Samagi Jana Balawegaya as the solution.<sup>67</sup>

**The Wonder of the Green Pastures! (Sinhala Song Lyrics)** - (Prof. Sarath Wijesuriya) - The author breaks down the recent political developments in the country, including the revelations that the people's choice for parliament has brought forward, Ranil Wickremesinghe's stepping down from politics, Anura Kumara Disanayake and Wimal Weerawansa etc.<sup>68</sup>

**The wonder of the green pastures! (Sinhala Song Lyrics) continued** - (Prof. Sarath Wijesuriya) - The usually very vocal monks who spoke up during the presidential election were uncharacteristically quiet during this election. It is as if the Buddhist clergy were not even considered a strong force during this election. We believe that this election was a clean one, and that the people have spoken. It is the duty of the government to ensure the safety of the country, races and religions, for the people. If the government succeeds, we can only imagine how green the pastures will be in the future.<sup>69</sup>

**What do we want from our new government?** - (Tharindu Uduwaragedara) - Attorney-at-Law Prashanthlal de Alwis speaks to the need for youth empowerment in the country and how young people need to come forward, and says that this election was a decisive one. Athula Vithanawasam says that democracy needs to be embraced, and that the people have no trust in the government mechanism anymore, which is a problem for democracy. He also says that the racism issue in the country needs to be solved soon. Prof. Aminda Methsila stresses on the importance of getting the economy back on track so that the people can afford to eat again. Sumith Chaminda says that the power struggle in place now is a new challenge to overcome.<sup>70</sup>

**From the "Pirith" string to the "Washee" Ball (Religious Accessories)** - (Thilak Senasinghe) - It has become a political ploy employed by certain individuals, to wear 'pirith nul' or blessed string that is meant to grant blessings on the wearer, to many major political appearances. While the significance of this string which is tied on the wrist is debated, Buddhists believe that these strings carry blessings for 36 hours only. If one was to look into why these politicians wear these strings, one would find that it is yet another attempt at misleading the people of the country. This and other religious accessories carry meaning for different factions of society. Another popular accessory, the 'sura', which is worn on the person, usually hidden from sight, has been seen displayed on the bodies of certain individuals as well. There is evidence that Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has worn many religious paraphernalia when addressing the nation

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<sup>67</sup> *Anidda*, August 09, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Anidda*, August 09, p.9.

<sup>69</sup> *Anidda*, August 09, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> *Anidda*, August 09, p. 15.

as well as at different live events. The Rajapaksa brother and his family are all guilty of this performativity.<sup>71</sup>

**A great conspiracy is underway to stall Gnanasara Thera's journey to parliament, says Leader of the Ape Janabala Pakshaya Saman Perera** - (Sirimantha Ratnasekara) - Leader of the Ape Janabala Pakshaya Saman Perera has stated that there is a massive conspiracy underway to prevent Ven. Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera from being a representative in parliament. However, the party's national list entrant to the parliament will be Gnanasara Thera, as decided by party officials, and therefore, he will take his seat at parliament.<sup>72</sup>

**The Dehiwela bomber was questioned about terrorism prior to the bombing, he went into hiding after that** - (Muditha Dayananda) - Former Intelligence Director Nilantha Jayawardena has stated that the bomber, who set off the suicide bomb at a hotel in Dehiwela during the Easter attacks, was investigated prior to the incident on suspicions of terrorist activity by the Terrorism Investigation Unit. He said that Abdul Lateef Mohammed Jamil, who set off the bomb in Dehiwela, then went into hiding and started working in secret.<sup>73</sup>

**Persons who broke Buddhist statues remanded until 18th** - (Sumithra Kumarihami) - Three suspects brought forward with relation to the breaking of Buddhist statues around a Bo tree in the Serunuwara town, have been brought to court and have been sentenced to be held in protective custody until the 18th.<sup>74</sup>

**Persons who broke Buddhist statues remanded until 18th** - (W. M. Wickremesinghe) - Three suspects brought forward with relation to the breaking of Buddhist statues around a Bo tree in the Serunuwara town, have been brought to court and have been sentenced to be held in protective custody until the 18th.<sup>75</sup>

**The Tamil people are stranded and helpless in the North** - (Dinasena Rathugamage) - What the results of this general election has shown, is that the notion that the help of the minorities in this country is necessary for its development has been shattered. Parties that represent Tamil people in this country have always proclaimed that their party is the only party that can help the people. The election results from the North indicates that there is no attempt being made to look past racist ideologies in lieu of building a unified country, and that is concerning. The seven ministerial positions from Jaffna have been spread between five parties. There is evidence that the Tamil citizen is not for the policies that are being put forward by the TNA,

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<sup>71</sup> *Anidda*, August 09, p. 19.

<sup>72</sup> *Divaina*, August 10, p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 10, p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> *Dinamina*, August 11, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> *Divaina*, August 11, p. 3.



because they are mistrusting of the party. A huge portion of the Tamil citizens in the North are stranded and helpless because of the actions or inactions of the parties concerned.<sup>76</sup>

**The message that the people gave through the election** - (Senior Prof. Sudantha Liyanage) - When looking at the voting numbers at this election, it is clear that the representatives of minorities in the country are at a considerable level, but nonetheless is a reduction from before. This may have been because of who the minorities voted for. However, it cannot be ignored that the minorities' representatives are in the opposition. The impact of this will be realised in the future.<sup>77</sup>

**The MPs representing the Tamil citizens need to stand against Sinhala Buddhist racism** - (Lakshman Jayakody) - The members of parliament selected from the North and East regions of the country this time have to rise up and stand against Sinhala Buddhist racism, says C.V. Wigneswaran. He stated that it is imperative for MPs to work against racism by employing policies. After thanking those who voted him into parliament, he stated that the TNA is now filled with the wrong people, and that the right people need to be let in if the party is to survive. He stated that all Tamil representatives in parliament need to work for the wellbeing and betterment of Tamil citizens of the country.<sup>78</sup>

**Former Minister Rishad questioned for 6 hours** - (Indika Ramanayake, Augustin Fernando) - The Criminal Investigation Department stated that former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen was taken in for questioning and gave statements for around six hours yesterday (12<sup>th</sup>), with relation to the investigation being done on the Easter Sunday attacks.<sup>79</sup>

**The competition between the CID and the Terrorism Investigation Department led to not catching zahran on time** - (Muditha Dayananda) - Deputy Chief of Police Gayan Rathnayake, from the CID unit for the investigation of extremists, stated that there was a competition that came about between the CID and the Terrorism Investigation Unit when investigating terrorism in the country, which may have been the reason why the likes of Zahran were not caught and their plans foiled, earlier.<sup>80</sup>

**Victory and Defeat** - (Dhamma Dissanayake) - It has been a week since the general election, and it would be worthwhile to look into the factors that led to the victory of the SLPP during the election. In order, there are three factors that influenced the SLPP's ultimate win: Gotabaya influenced the futuristic visions of the people and represented a prosperous future; Mahinda reminded people of the past and inspired their patriotic feelings to bubble to the surface; Basil took the aforementioned factors and got people to mobilize and vote for the ideals that they

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<sup>76</sup> *Divaina*, August 11, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 12, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 13, p. 11.

<sup>79</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 13, p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 13, p. 12.

stood for. Now, it is up to this dynasty to address the issues of the country and work towards making this season of rule one that benefits all factions and all peoples of the nation. Attention needs to be given to parliamentary activities as well.<sup>81</sup>

**No Land or Police Power to be Given to the North, says State Minister Sarath Weerasekara** - (Keerthi Warnakulasuriya) - Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara, the current State Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government, stated that he would in no way allow for the Northern Provincial Council to receive any powers over land or police - he stated that if police powers were given to the Council, the police department would fragment and regional police chiefs would emerge as a result.<sup>82</sup>

**The Revolution in the North for the Election** - (M. S. M. Ayoob) - When it comes to the election season in Sri Lanka, it can be observed that both candidates and voters tend to gravitate towards race-based campaigning and preferences, with the proportional system in place. Before, when it was the single-seat system, people would look towards the candidate's party affiliation more than their religion, race or caste status. This election, it was curious to see that the TNA, despite being the Tamil party that racks up the most votes, has won significantly less seats in parliament. It is notable that many of the people in the North have become more politically aware and have voted in favour of the Rajapaksas. What this shows is plain disdain for the TNA leaders whose war slogans, courses of action and demands have been unchanging since the war. Meanwhile, the 19th Amendment and the provincial councils are bound to play a big role in the days to come. While the SLPP was clear on wanting to abolish the 19th Amendment, Minister of Justice Ali Sabry recently stated that since provincial councils were brought about as a result of an international agreement, it is a responsibility owed to the international community to keep them up and running.<sup>83</sup>

**Monk Remanded for Allegedly Hitting Father-of-two with Iron Pole** - (Charana Ananda E. Jayakody) - The Attanagalle Magistrate ordered for a monk, suspected to have beaten a father-of-four with an iron pole, to be held on remand until the 17th of this month. The incident allegedly occurred at a temple in Dumunnegedara. The monk had apparently caused grave injuries to the man, and there had been two lay people at the incident who have since fled the premises. The monk is currently in protective custody and will be produced before courts on the 17th.<sup>84</sup>

**When the First News about the Easter Attacks was Communicated, it was Understood that Zahran and Co. were Planning Something Big** - (Nimanthi Ranasinghe) - At the meeting of the presidential committee probing the Easter attacks, former leader of local intelligence, Nilantha Jayawardena, stated that when they were alerted to the Easter attack, they immediately knew

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<sup>81</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 14, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Divaina*, August 14, p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 15, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 15, p. 7.

that Zahran Hashim was capable of carrying out an operation of that magnitude. Other officials gave evidence attesting to the type of information that they received prior to the attacks. The main takeaway is that the information that was given on the 4th of March 2019 was enough to ascertain that an attack as big as the Easter attack could be carried out by Zahran and co.<sup>85</sup>

**Even Without Ministerial Positions, the National Campaign being Carried Out for the Sinhala Buddhist People will Continue, says General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena, Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera** - (Nimale Koduthuwakku) - The General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena confirmed that irrespective of whether he has a Ministerial position or not, he will keep fighting and carrying out the campaign that was started for the wellbeing of Sinhala Buddhists in this country. He stated that the only reason he wanted a Ministerial position was so that he could have legal statutes enacted against Islamic extremism. He also said that even before the election, the fight for the protection of Buddhism in this country was being carried out.<sup>86</sup>

**A Bold Statement from the Minister of Justice!** - () - Newly appointed Minister of Justice Ali Sabry has made a statement that the entire nation needs to pay attention to. The essence of this statement can be broken down into four points: first, he stated that none of the people that were involved in the Easter Sunday attack will be able to escape the law; second, he stated that all steps need to be taken in order to destroy extremism in the country; third, he stated that he has a deep desire to defeat extremism and; fourth, he stated that he would take all measures necessary to make this country peaceful and harmonious. The article points out that the people to blame for the Easter attacks have still not been reprimanded, and also points out that, while Ali Sabry is new to politics, he is prolific in the field of law.<sup>87</sup>

**The Positive Features of Appointing a New Cabinet of Ministers** - (Professor Sarath Wijesuriya) – It is clear through the new Cabinet of Ministers that has been appointed, that the minority race leaders appointed in are those that align themselves with the Rajapaksa's vision for the country. The reason why minority races had to be dealt with, is because there was a quota system in place for minority race parliamentary representatives. The positive aspects of a new Cabinet of Ministers are that there are many new faces that have been given entrance to power, and that some people who are shady characters have been sent home. Sirisena cannot be forgotten in the mix as well, although there is significant opposition to his being given a "good" position within parliament. The issue with Wijedasa Rajapaksa not getting a Ministerial position is also a factor to pay attention to.<sup>88</sup>

**What is the Future of the Government Looking Like?** - (Tharindu Uduwaragedara) - According to Vakandawala Rahula Thera, the fact that the President and the Prime Minister swore in to their respective titles at iconic Buddhist sites of worship is indicative of the religious standing

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<sup>85</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 15, p. 12.

<sup>86</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 15, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Dinamina*, August 15, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 9.

of the leaders in the country. Rather than understanding the ideology of the religion, it is being used to promote political agendas. What this shows is that religious principles have been ignored. The politics of today show a very clear degradation of the religion.<sup>89</sup>

**Votes Reduced due to Divisions** - (Rekha Nilukshi Herath) - MP from the Samagi Jana Balawegaya, Mujibur Rahuman, states that the SJB was unable to get the amount of votes that he hoped it would get, and cited the separation from the UNP as a decisive factor. He also stated that the majority of Sinhalese votes went to the SLPP, although the SJB had some Sinhalese votes. The current government used racist and religious opposition in order to come into power. He also stated that he had said from the beginning that there would be family rule in the government, given the fact that the Rajapaksa brothers are in government.<sup>90</sup>

**How Many Votes Didn't UNP-SJB Get?** - (Rekha Nilukshi Herath) - It is clear that the main opposition parties that split before the election are to blame for the SLPP getting the chance to have a two-thirds majority in parliament. Although the SLPP only got approximately 59 percent of the total votes, they were able to secure 66 seats in parliament. Other parties missed out on seats because the SLPP got a majority of seats, which is because the opposition did not present a unified front.<sup>91</sup>

**The Feudal System that the Public Chose Begins** - () - From the outset, looking at the Cabinet of Ministers, it is clear that minorities are not adequately represented and have therefore been distanced. The majority votes as well as the blessings of the Buddhist clergy exhibit that they are not concerned that a family dynasty is being created. The commissions have been reduced to ones that are not independent and only exist for the sake of existing. Since most of the country's educated and wise people voted for a Rajapaksa dynasty, everyone is being forced to take a step back and watch it unfold.<sup>92</sup>

**Gnanasara Thera's Seat** - () - Because an issue has come about regarding the national list entrant to parliament from the Ape Janabala Pakshaya, no name that has been nominated for the position will be gazetted, says the Elections Commission. Vediniyagama Vimalatissa Thera had forwarded his name to the commission for the position, only to be removed from his secretary position within the party by the Party Leader Saman Perera. Accordingly, there was competition between Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera and Athuraliye Rathana Thera for the seat, before Vimalatissa Thera forwarded his name for consideration. Vimalatissa Thera, claiming that there is a conspiracy to nab the position from him, has gone into hiding.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 5.

**A Monk in Hospital as a Result of a Fight for the Flag Symbol** - (Rekha Nilukshi Herath) - A member of the Ape Janabala Pakshaya, Arambepola Rathanasara Thera, has been hospitalised following a fight that happened relating to the national list seat position that the party has obtained. A few monks had gone in search of the General Secretary Thera, who was in hiding, and had struck him. However, Vimalatissa Thera released a video to social media claiming that the national list seat belongs to him.<sup>94</sup>

**The Ape Janabala Pakshaya Conflict goes to Attorney General** - (Lasantha Ruhunage) - The Elections Commission has requested the advice of the Attorney General in solving the 'crisis' that has taken place regarding the Ape Janabala Pakshaya (headed by Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera) and the position of the general secretary of the party, which seems to be in issue. The Attorney General was looped in, owing to the conflict surrounding the naming of different individuals as general secretary by different members of the party. Vimalatissa Thera forwarded himself as the national list entrant from the party, while Samantha Perera, the leader of the AJP, was also nominated for the same. This is what led to the conflict.<sup>95</sup>

**The Fate of the UNP, Now Stuck in the Mud** - (Bigun Menaka Gamage) - The UNP has failed to come to a decision with regards to its leadership crisis, even after Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that he would be stepping down. Stories began circulating in the media about reorganisation of the party after Wickremesinghe announced his retirement. The issues that have arisen are similar to those that came about during the election time: should the vote go for the telephone or the elephant? While that problem ended with the birth of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya as well as the UNP being limited to just one seat in parliament, the question remains whether the UNP has identified the core of their voter base yet. While speculators can talk about who will step forward to take the UNP back up, the funny thing is that the power to do anything of that sort resides with Ranil Wickremesinghe. It cannot be said yet what the likes of Karu Jayasuriya will do for the party.<sup>96</sup>

**Why Did the Tamil Alliance Decline in Voter Power in the North?** - (Romesh Madhushanka) - This parliamentary election put an end to most of the power struggles that political parties in the North and South were facing - while the parties fought on, the voters looked on, suppressing sighs of disgust. The issues in the North were different to those in the South. They had to handle the aftermath of a war, the attempt to establish a federal state and the attempt to label the people in the area as a different faction of society. Even after the war the North and East were idealised to be separated from the rest of the country, and conditions were bargained for, in this regard, by parties concerned. The TNA, which was the main party in power in the North, faced many problems with the advent of the coronavirus, natural disasters as well as the departure of many of the greats in the party. Right now, people are fighting for

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<sup>94</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> *Anidda*, August 16, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 16, p. 2.

remaining seats, while the people are fed up of it. If the North acted with the intention that everyone is equal despite their racial, religious and caste differences, then, by now, we would not be able to tell that it was a place ravaged by war. The people currently in power need to evolve from a war mindset and think from the perspective of those that survived the war.<sup>97</sup>

**The People's Wishes will be Fulfilled** - (Prasanna Sanjeewa Tennakoon) - Namal Rajapaksa was newly appointed to the cabinet of Ministers as Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports. He states that he is happy about his appointment and also that he is looking forward to the immense challenge that it poses. He stated that there are discrepancies regarding the distribution of equal opportunities among the youth in the country which need to be remedied. He said that the biggest problem faced by the youth of today is the uncertainty of the future. He says that there is no final verdict with regards to bringing in the 18th Amendment after voiding the 19th. He also talked about other members of the cCabinet, leaders who were potentially snubbed, and about the majority votes that the SLPP received.<sup>98</sup>

**Wigneswaran's Inflammatory Statements that Promote Racism, should be Condemned, says deputy leader of the Asgiri Chapter, Vendaruwe Upali Thera** - (Asela Kuruluwansa) - Upali Thera states that the likes of Wigneswaran and other political leaders of the North, who are making racist statements even before Parliament is convened, need to be held accountable and such actions need to be condemned. Wigneswaran's statement that there is much Sinhala Buddhist extremism within the parliament, and that there should be a force that is brought up to counteract that, is a statement that stands to create issues for harmonisation and reconciliation efforts in the North. Upali Thera also mentioned that the president this time, unlike before, actually ventured into the public, talked to the people and provided solutions for their problems.<sup>99</sup>

**New UNP Leader after Provincial Council Elections, says UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe** - (Chaminda Silva) - Ranil Wickremesinghe has stated that after the upcoming Provincial Council elections, a young leader will be appointed for the UNP to carry on. He stated that there will be a mechanism in place to face the upcoming elections with special attention being given to younger people. He remarked that there should be no racial divide such as "greater race" and "minority race" and also remarked that the leader of the country should be a Sinhalese person, because that is the race of the majority of this country's population. He noted that the people selected from the SLPP are new faces, and that that stead will be followed in the future, for appointments to the UNP.<sup>100</sup>

**Is Being Sri Lankan going to Ruin Being Sinhalese?** - (Professor Kapila Abhayawansa) - There is opposition to the new proposed arrangement of having "Sri Lankan" as the identifier of

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<sup>97</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 16, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 16, p. 14.

<sup>99</sup> *Dinamina*, August 17, Front Page.

<sup>100</sup> *Divaina*, August 17, p. 4.

nationality in birth certificates, the news of which is being disseminated on social media. Some state that doing such a thing is an injustice to the Sinhalese race. The idea of nationality is one that seeks to unite all races that reside in a country under one united nation. Those who stay trapped in the confines of their race and religion are not embracing the journey towards overall unity that a country needs to travel on. In Buddhism, there are teachings that illustrate the destructive effects of staying trapped within one's ideas of superiority. One's race does not determine . The idea that the Sinhalese race is supreme comes not from history, but from the ties that the Sinhalese have put itself in, with Buddhism. It is not an insult to refer to Sinhalese people as Sri Lankans. Buddhism preaches kindness towards others, as well. The principle of unity and working together is one that is preached as important, to keep a nation moving forward. Buddhism states that as long as such principles are intact, there will not be destruction of any other Buddhist principles. It is clear that if people came forward to include Buddhism in their life journey instead of coming forward to blindly lay their lives for the religion, this country would be eons ahead.<sup>101</sup>

**It Is Disappointing to See Monks Fighting Over a MP Position, says Valavahangunawewe Dhammarathana Thera** - (Ranga Chathu) - Dhammarathana Thera states that Buddhist monks are meant to be the pinnacle of Buddhism that laypeople worship, in the world, but those who are running for parliament care more about the seats than about the religion, which is why he urged people not to show their faith towards the religion by voting for the Theras on the ballot, because that is not what Buddhism stands for. He stated that it is a disappointing reality that monks are squabbling over one MP seat.<sup>102</sup>

**I Had No Idea that Islamic Extremism was Spreading Across the Eastern Province, says former Senior Deputy Police Chief Kapila Jayasekara** - (Eric Gamini Jinapriya) - Former Senior Deputy Police Chief of the Eastern Province provided a statement to the presidential commission, stating that he did not know of the Islamic extremism that was spreading across the province. The commission questioned him as to whether he did not realise that extremism was spreading when people started to wear the burka. He stated that it was a common occurrence, and that once in 3 months the police chiefs of all divisions used to meet and conduct discussions, and that even in these sessions it was not noted that Islamic extremism was spreading. He also provided statements regarding how the dissemination of information works between intelligence agencies and the police.<sup>103</sup>

**The Robes, Or the Defamation of Its Station** - (Priyantha Dharmawansa) - The writer laments about the fall of the Buddhist clergy. He talks about how the station of Buddhism, via its proponents and up-keepers, has fallen, because of the actions of certain Buddhist monks. He also stated that in the discipline, monks are forbidden from engaging in 32 types of talks, the

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<sup>101</sup> *Divaina*, August 17, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> *Divaina*, August 8, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> *Divaina*, August 18, p. 10.

first of them being talks about the King or ruler, because such talks elicit hatred. He states that certain monks have criticised monks in Parliament for not doing anything to protect the religion. He also states that if a seat in Parliament is more important than the religion, it is more suitable for those who think so to not don the sacred robes, and continue without them.<sup>104</sup>

**"Being Unable to Find Out what Zahran was Doing was Not a Weakness of the Intelligence Agencies", says former Senior Deputy Police Chief of Eastern Province, while Providing Evidence** - (Muditha Dayananda) - Former Senior Deputy Police Chief of the Eastern Province, Kapila Jayasekara, stated while giving evidence to the presidential commission probing the Easter attack, that it was not the fault of the intelligence agencies that they were unable to figure out what Zahran and Co. were up to. He said that the problem was with the lack of information received from the public and the discreet ways in which the terrorists carried out their activities. He stated that he did not know who Zahran was before the Easter attack took place, and that there had been an incident in 2017 that led to a warrant being out for Zahran's arrest, but that the matter had been dropped because he escaped the area. He further attested that he had received no information from his higher-ups about any extremist activities that Zahran and co. were involved. However, he did admit that the police cannot be absolved of their responsibility to probe incidents further and obtain information, of which there was a shortage during this time. He also said that he did not pay heed to an incident where a bomb on a bicycle had exploded, because small bomb explosions are common in the East, which was a part of the warzone during the civil war.<sup>105</sup>

**We Support the Government's Good Decisions, and Will Stand Firmly Against their Unfavourable Ones, says J. C. Alawathuwala of the Samagi Jana Balavegaya** - (Anjula Mahika Weeraratne) - Member of Parliament J.C. Alawathuwala stated at a media briefing recently that the Samagi Jana Balavegaya would support the government's good decisions that are favourable to the public and that the party would also stand firmly against any unfavourable decisions that the government takes. He stated that fulfilling the needs of the people is priority. He also remarked that the problem in Kurunegala and the demolition of an ancient heritage site (King Buwanekabahu II's assembly hall) has become the subject of national outcry and that those responsible have so far been let off the hook. He stated that his party stands against the taxpayers' money being used excessively for court proceedings. He said that he hopes the government will preserve the good that came with the 19th amendment to the constitution and only reform it to get rid of the unfavourable clauses, and that his party will be against any attempt to regress from the good that the amendment has already brought to the country. He further expressed his concerns over some sort of conspiracy being behind the recent energy

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<sup>104</sup> *Divaina*, August 18, p. 11.

<sup>105</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 19, p. 12.



crisis in the country, and stated his disappointment in the status of the United National Party. He believes that Ranil Wickremesinghe should take the national list seat of the UNP.<sup>106</sup>

**Monk on remand arrest for taking girl from dhamma school to a house** - (Kalutara Correspondent) - A Buddhist monk has been put in protected custody over his allegedly taking an underage girl who was present at the Sunday Dhamma school at his temple, to a house in Wadduwa. A witness had reported this to the National Child Protection agency, and the perpetrator had been arrested soon after.<sup>107</sup>

**Complaint that Robed Person Abused a Law Student** - (A. J. A. Abeynayake and Kasuni Rebecca) - Allegations that a robed person had sexually assaulted a female law student within law offices that were in front of the Supreme Court complex were brought to light, and the Colombo Chief Magistrate has requested for an officer from the Women and Children's department in Maradana Police to be sent to court to explain the way in which facts were presented in the case. The lawyers who represented the victim of the assault stated that there was a clear sweeping of evidence related to the assault due to the fact that it happened in a place close to courts.<sup>108</sup>

**Robed person who took the girl he romantically pursued, to his home, remanded** - (Wijayasiri Vidyasekara) - Acting Magistrate of Kalutara has ordered that a monk, who built up a romantic relationship with an underage girl who was attending the Sunday Dhamma school at his temple of residence and who took this girl to a house in Wadduwa, be remanded till the 24th in protective custody.<sup>109</sup>

**I Kindly Ask the Election Commissioner to Take Away the Parliamentary Seat Offered to the Our People of Power Party, Before a Thug in Monk's Clothing Uses it to Come from the Underworld to the Parliament, says Prof. Omalpe Sobitha Thera** - (Rohana Samaraweera) - Sobitha Thera says that there is still much contention over who gets the Our People of Power party seat in parliament, and that there is a high propensity for an underworld thug dressed in monk robes to come to parliament with that vacancy. He says that this is a conundrum and an insult to the Buddhist community at large, as well as the clergy, and he implores that the Election Commissioner immediately nullify the opportunity for that to happen, by taking away the parliamentary seat offered to the party.<sup>110</sup>

**Such Yearning to Serve the Public!** - (M. S. M. Ayoob) - There has been conflict within the SJB because of its national list seat, owing to the fact that none of the other MPs that have gone in are from the minority community representatives in the party. It can be said that the Muslim

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<sup>106</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 20, p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> *Dinamina*, August 21, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Divaina* August 21, p. 6.

<sup>109</sup> *Divaina*, August 21, p. 11.

<sup>110</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 22, p. 7.

Congress has suffered the most when it comes to issues with national list nominations. The party's history in this regard speaks for itself. The UNP has failed to make an impact. Most politicians say that they want to be of service to people, and the measure of this statement as truth or falsehood can be done before and after they become MPs.<sup>111</sup>

**Remove Viggys Statement from the Hansard, Manusha Requests** - (Thushan Subasinghe, Lakitha Perera) - MP Manusha Nanayakkara stated in Parliament that Wigneswaran's statement that claimed that Tamil was the first language in this country and that it was the first language of those who settled in this country first, should be removed from the Hansard. He stated that this was because the idea of homeland and ownership has been buried and a new path is being taken in that regard.<sup>112</sup>

**The "Big Talk" of certain politicians** - () - There were many instances of ministers giving "big talks" in parliament this time, much like other times in the past. No matter if the people who wanted a ministry got a ministry or not, the people in this country expect the parliament to work for the people and not mess up.<sup>113</sup>

**The Origins of the Easter Attack, that happened amidst 97 warnings** - (Tharaka Wickramasekara) - The Easter attack is one of the greatest tragedies that our country faced, and it is being unearthed today. So far, it has been revealed that there was knowledge about this attack that was floating around previously, and that there were warnings issued the day before the attack as well. The presidential commission probing this attack is getting out more and more information and with that all the insider dealings are being revealed.<sup>114</sup>

**Thondaman Family Mansion that was ravaged by fire** - (Suranga Rajanayake) - Saumyamoorthi Thondaman moved to Sri Lanka from India at 10 years of age. His bungalow in Kotmale housed 4 generations of people but it was sadly burned to the ground.<sup>115</sup>

**Does the Buddha need to Come Forward to Solve the Parliamentary Seat issue for OPOP Party?** - () - The issue surrounding the national list seat of the Our People of Power Party has escalated to an extent of major drama, akin to western blockbuster movies. It is the venerable Buddhist clergy that are to blame in this venture, and the responsibility for a solution has fallen on the Supreme Court. If the right decision is not taken, the people's trust in the system will be broken.<sup>116</sup>

**The Truth of the Matter, Swept Under the Rug** - (Dhamma Dissanayake, Jayani Abeysekara (Interviewer)) - Dissanayake claims that in respect for democracy, the people's choice at the

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<sup>111</sup> *Lankadeepa* August 22, p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> *Divaina*, August 22, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> *Silumina*, August 23, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Silumina*, August 23, p. 12.

<sup>115</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 23, p. 2.

<sup>116</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 23, p. 4.

general election should be given due credit and not be taken lightly. He believes that the opposition parties are to blame in the weakness of the opposition at parliament. The usual way that elections go is either the SLFP and SLPP win, making the UNP the strong opposition and vice versa. However, this time, the disharmony of the UNP has led to its downfall. He also states that of the 5 million people who did not vote this time, many of them could be disgruntled UNP supporters who no longer want to support a part in disarray. He states that a civil society needs to exist in the middle, between the government and opposition. He also stresses on the need for good civil societies or social organisations in society, and states that those in our country have had to seek funding from other countries and, thereby, fit into the paradigms of those countries. He admits that politics in this country is not clean, and that it never will be.<sup>117</sup>

**The Real Question, Swept Under the Rug - (Arjuna Parakrama)** - Parakrama says that we should not be surprised about the election turnout and result. He says that there needs to be a decision as to whether the politics in this country, moving forward, is going to be extremely racist, racist, or mildly racist. He also stated that while before the requisite needed from a leader was that he be Sinhala Buddhist and prioritise national security, now it has progressed to militarisation. He also noted that the general public attribute the winning of the war and handling the coronavirus to the army. He states that politicians have made themselves an economic class of their own. He stated that the environment right now lends itself to the creation of a civil society, but that the window of opportunity is small.<sup>118</sup>

**The Public's Expectations from the New Government - (Dalugama Jayasiri Samaratinga)** - Those who are in charge of making and implementing the laws meant to make the country better have just been chosen, and the most important thing here is the 40 percent of people that suffer in poverty have to benefit from at least 10 percent of the national income. Millions of daily wage earners, construction workers, farmers and estate workers who are suffering have built their hopes on new eras that will give them what they deserve. They want to build up social status and come up with retirement plans. Another major expectation is equal application of the law to everyone, despite their social status and wealth. People are also especially invested in making this country one that practices equality among all races and religions as well as languages, in the hopes of creating a balanced and harmonious society. The people do not want the country to be blindsided by western patterns of thinking, economic or otherwise.<sup>119</sup>

**The Ali Sabry - Sarath Weerasekara Phenomenon - ()** - This day (20th August) is special because a murderer that was sentenced to death is taking his seat in the prestigious national outfit that is the parliament. According to G.L. Peiris, unless the highest court has not found someone guilty of a crime, they are still innocent. Many more of those selected to parliament are

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<sup>117</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, p. 16.

<sup>118</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, p. 16.

<sup>119</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, p. 6.

defendants in upcoming court cases - in which case, the surprise would be if they were convicted of the crime. Another surprise is Pillaiyan, who is guilty of murdering a former MP and many more, also sitting in Parliament, in the same party as the aforementioned murderer. This country is a multiracial and multireligious country, and this is being used to manipulate people (both parties and the media) into voting for a certain party. There is also comparison and scrutiny between Ali Sabry being appointed as a cabinet minister and Sarath Weerasekara being appointed as a state minister, that is fuelled by race relations. It is ultimately not practical to use racism to maintain power in the country, although it may be used to gain it. This is the situation of the before and after of the general election. The seriousness of racism being used to fuel hate and conflict is real. However, these appointments should be taken out of the race context, because it can be said that race was not the reason for their being given their appointments. Sabry is a fixture in Gotabaya Rajapaksa's life and has represented him in court numerous times. He is also appealing to the Sinhala people by saying that although he is a Muslim man, he used the 'Gutthila Kavya' as inspiration. It has also become clear that Sabry represented Rajapaksa free of charge in the past, possibly with the payout of being appointed a cabinet minister - this would make the "Rajapaksa Politics" ideology very real. Weerasekara and Wimal Weerawansa both represent similar ideas along the lines of Sinhala Buddhist superiority. While he raked in most of the votes for the SLPP, there is no evidence to suggest that Sabry brought in any votes. However, Sabry is a cabinet minister now. This gives us much to think about in terms of influence and proper assignment of roles.<sup>120</sup>

**Firstly, 19 Will be Abolished** - (Anuranga Jayasinghe) - President Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced in his policy statement that steps will be taken to abolish the 19th Amendment to the constitution. He stated that this was carrying out the mandate of the 2/3 of the voters, and that a new constitution will be brought in soon. He stated that the uncertainties in the 19th Amendment will only lead to more problems and that a parliament that bows down to extremist influences will not work.<sup>121</sup>

**Guidance of Buddhist Clergy Expected by President in State Policymaking** - (Diana Udayanganee) - President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has stated that he expects the guidance and insight of the Buddhist clergy in the act of State policymaking and compilation. He also stated that a ministry was established to look into Buddhist dhamma schools, education of monks and Buddhist universities. Prominent monks present among the Buddhist consultants that the President met with, stated that a strong parliament with high moral values is essential, that teachers at Sunday dhamma schools need to be given assistance in the protection of the schools and that there should be an insurance scheme for Buddhist monks.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, p. 4.

<sup>121</sup> *Anidda*, August 23, Front Page.

<sup>122</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 5.

**A Separate Investigation Needs to be Done for the Dehiwela Bomber as Well as the Taj Samudra Bomb that did not Go Off, says State Intelligence Agency Leader** - (Nimanthi Ranasinghe) - Deputy Police chief Nilantha Jayawardena said while giving evidence to the commission probing the Easter attack, that the Dehiwela bomber needs to be separately investigated and also that there needs to be an investigation into why the Taj Samudra hotel did not blow up along with the others. He also stated that no matter how hard he tried, there was no way to inform the president at the time about the attack. He insinuates that he tried everything, and that the only thing he didn't do is take to the streets with a gun in his hand.<sup>123</sup>

**After Bringing the "One Country, One Law" Ideology, We cannot Allow Different Nationalities to be Treated in Different Ways, says S. M. Marikkar** - (Muditha Dayananda) - MP from the SJB, S.M. Marikkar, stated that the party will not stand for any differentiation made between races in the application of the law henceforth, seeing as the "One Country, One Law" ideology was brought about to promote equality for Sinhala, Muslim, Tamil and all other races of people in this country. He also stated that just because the governing party got 2/3 majority in parliament, it does not mean that every decision that they take is right. He pointed flaws in the President's policy statement at the inaugural convening of the parliament, and noted that there are many more industries that need state attention.<sup>124</sup>

**Wigneswaran and Ponnambalam have taken oaths at Vellamulli cemetery before taking oaths at Parliament, says State Minister Prof. Sarath Weerasekara** - (Diana Udayanganee) - C. V. Wigneswaran and Gajendra Ponnambalam, who were elected from Jaffna to parliament, reportedly assumed duties and swore an oath at the Vellamulli Maikkal cemetery before doing the same at Parliament, according to State Minister Prof. Sarath Weerasekara. He says that this makes it clear that these individuals are of the mindset of separating the country, still. The cemetery grounds is where the terrorists and the army fought and it led to severe casualties from the terrorists' side. He also stated that Wigneswaran made a racist statement in Parliament when he welcomed the new Speaker, and that he could not stand up against it because Parliamentary tradition forbade interruptions at that time. However, Prof. Weerasekara hopes to have this discussion in Parliament at some point.<sup>125</sup>

**Two Cases at two courts to unentangle the Parliament seat problem of the Our People of Power Party** - (Muditha Dayananda) - The leader of the Our People of Power Party, Saman Perera, stated that in order to solve the issue pertaining to the national list parliament seat that the party has to fill, a case will be filed at the Supreme Court as well as the Colombo Magistrate Court. There is much internal turmoil in the party.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 8.

<sup>124</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 8.

<sup>125</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 10.

<sup>126</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 24, p. 12.

**Wakkumbure Dhammarathana Thera says that Zahran attempted to build a Centre near the Nelligala Buddhist Centre - ()** - The Thera claims that Zahran Hashim, who was responsible for the Easter attack, wanted to build a centre close to the Nelligala Buddhist Centre, and that he had threatened the monk over the phone several times. He claims that because of Zahran's operatives who are still freely roaming, he feels unsafe and threatened.<sup>127</sup>

**The People in the North are Rejecting Wigneswaran's and Sampanthan's Racist Politics, says Wimal Weerawansa - ()** - Minister Wimal Weerawansa stated that the racist politics of Wigneswaran and Sampanthan are being rejected by the people of the North, as seen by the voting percentage in the area. He further stated that Wigneswaran's speech at the parliament convention showed that he is just trying to become a hero to the Tamils, and he has failed already.<sup>128</sup>

**Wigneswaran's Familiar Rant at the Unfamiliar Parliament - (Dinasena Rathugamage)** - Wigneswaran is asking for a separatist ideology to be propagated, but the country will not let that happen. Douglas Devananda has obtained the only cabinet ministry for the North, and he claims to make everyone's lives better. The Tamil parties' splitting up into different parties has proven to be unfavourable for those involved. On a different note, various celebrations and traditional festivals are being celebrated in the North.<sup>129</sup>

**I received a letter last year with death threats, from Zahran and co, says Chief Incumbent of Nelligala temple - (Muditha Dayananda)** - Wakkumbure Dhammarathana Thera stated that in May of last year, he received letters with death threats from the National Thawheed Jamath, which was Zahran's organisation. He said this to the commission probing the Easter attack. He claimed that the land that the Nelligala temple is on is government property, and that he had received wind on a Muslim church being built there in 2014, which led him to take a group of young people with him to the site and destroy what had been made. He also stated that, in 2016, Zahran and co. were attempting to establish a Muslim church close by which he had not agreed to. He also claims that Zahran showed up to his temple with 50 Muslim youths and proceeded to talk about other religions. When he did this again, the Thera understood that he had extremist views and ideas. Zahran had engaged in many conversations over the phone with the Thera, and the last one of these led to Zahran scolding the monk. After the attack, the Thera received a letter from the organisation threatening his life.<sup>130</sup>

**Former Chief of Intelligence Agency says that the information about Zahran's plans for a second attack came to him two days after the suspected attack was supposed to happen - (Muditha Dayananda)** - A letter written by the Chief of Police to heads of Intelligence, warning of a possible second attack by Zahran and co. on the 28th and 29th of April made its rounds and

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<sup>127</sup> *Dinamina*, August 24, p. 10.

<sup>128</sup> *Divaina*, August 25, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> *Divaina* August 25, p. 11.

<sup>130</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 25, p. 6.

made its way to Senior Deputy Police Chief Nilantha Jayawardane two days after those predicted days. This information was received from a foreign intelligence agency and was signed off by the local powers that be on the 29th of April, on the day of the alleged second attack. He stated that a new technology needs to be used for faster dissemination of information.<sup>131</sup>

**Decision regarding issuing a warrant for the arrest of the Kurunegala mayor and five others in the "Buwaneka Hotel" incident to be decided today - (Thilina de Silva and Ranjan Katugampola)**

- The Kurunegala Magistrate court will decide whether or not warrants will be issued out for the arrest of the Kurunegala mayor and five other individuals involved in the demolition of the ancient site of King Buwanekabahu II's assembly hall, where the "Buwaneka Hotel" now stands. There has been a petition against this by those who claim that it is illegal for them to get to know of their arrest warrants through the media and that official channels had not been used to tell them of this.<sup>132</sup>

**Pay Attention to the Public that Rejected Racism - () - Minister of Industries Wimal Weerawansa**

stated that parliamentarians such as Angajan Ramanathan from Jaffna, SLFP and A.L.M. Athulla from the East, who came to parliament amidst many difficulties and having discarded racism, need to be given ministerial positions. Weerawansa's status as senior politicians gives this statement more weight. Seeing as the racist Tamil leaders such as Wigneswaran and Ponnambalam, who are leaders of the All Island Tamil Congress and Tamil People's National Alliance, have their seats in parliament and are supported by the Tamil international diaspora, Weerawansa's suggestion holds more weight. His idea is that those who reject racism as a political way of life need to be rewarded for their righteous thinking, so as to show the people that rejected racism that they did the right thing - this is important to Sri Lanka, as a country that has been destroyed due to racism. It is a great thing that the voting trends in the North are showing that the people are declining racist leadership and are embracing anti-racism. An SLFP leader getting a seat in the North for the first time ever is indicative of the progress.<sup>133</sup>

**Just Like National Security was Granted, the Government will also Fulfil the People's Socio-economic Wishes, says Dr. Ramesh Pathirana; The Crisis is that Government Expenditure is More Than Income, and Original Loan Payments cannot be Done, says Patali Champika Ranawaka - (Anjula Mahika Weeraratne and Sujith Hewajulige) - Minister Ramesh Pathirana** vows that the government will fulfil the wishes of the public regarding socio-economic stability, just like the government brought about national security. Pramitha Bandara Tennakoon says that examinations should be the same for all schools. Seetha Arambepola asks for help to get the youth of the country involved in the labour force. Manusha Nanayakkara claims that the idea of a separate state has been completely removed from the people's consciousness

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<sup>131</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 25, p. 10.

<sup>132</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 25, p. 12.

<sup>133</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p. 4.

collectively. Patali Champika Ranawaka questions the government's allocation and use of funds before the parliament was convened, and states that the country is heading into a crisis situation. The state minister of finance remarks that during the *Yahapalana* era the per capita income in Sri Lanka was lower, compared to that during the Mahinda Rajapaksa era. Minister of Tourism states that removing the 19th amendment is what the people want the government to do. State Minister Sarath Weerasekara stated that Wigneswaran's statement in parliament needs to be investigated; he further posited that if anyone is making destructive statements in parliament, that needs to be made public knowledge immediately. He also stated that if such statements actually lead to more racial tension, it would take a great deal of money to quell another war.<sup>134</sup>

**Parliament Heats Up for the Third Time Due to Wigneswaran's Statement** - (Anjula Mahika Weeraratne and Sujith Hewajulige) - Parliament sank into a state of debate and quarrel for the third time, over the controversial statement about 'Tamil homeland' that the leader of the Tamil National People's Alliance C. V. Wigneswaran made, in parliament. Parliamentarian Manusha Nanayakkara expressed his concern about this statement, which he mentioned was still in the Hansard. He also questioned whether the statement is believed to be true, since it is still in the Hansard. While the speaker stated that any MP is allowed to state his opinion, it was pointed out that racist statements had been removed from the Hansard before. Other said that Wigneswaran's statement is unconstitutional, that legal methods need to be followed to remove it from the Hansard, and that the statement goes against the vow that MPs made to protect the unity of the country, and that therefore, Wigneswaran needs to be removed from parliament.<sup>135</sup>

**25 Acres Full of Ruins in Kalvilan, Mullaitivu Needs Reconstruction** - (Upali Karunaratne) - Ellawala Medhananda Thera stated that there needs to be reconstruction of the 25 acres of archaeological ruins in Kalvilan, Mullaitivu. He claims that the people who are living on that land could be relocated for the time being, and that the land seems to have been home to a complex of shrines in the time Before Christ.<sup>136</sup>

**Police in Crisis Mode about Wimalatissa Thera** - (Rekha Nilukshi Herath) - The police are suspicious of whether a report regarding the abduction of the general secretary of the Our People of Power party, has any truth to it. This is due to the fact that the statements provided by the general secretary Ven. Wimalatissa Thera does not match up to the statement provided by the monks that are attached to his party - while the other monks claimed that Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera was involved in the abduction, the abductee did not mention him at all. Police stated that investigations will be conducted nevertheless.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p.12.

<sup>135</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 28, p. 6.

<sup>136</sup> *Dinamina*, August 28, p. 6.

<sup>137</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 2.



**What is the Problem with the 19th Amendment, that J. R.'s Constitution Did Not Have?** - (Gamini Viyangoda) - When J.R. Jayawardena introduced the executive presidency to the constitution, outside of his own party, every other political party wanted to remove it immediately. However, after the civil war, opinions regarding the post of executive president began to change. This was because society was made to embrace the idea that the war was won because of the executive presidency position. The truth of the matter is that with the end of the war, a family rule came into being in the country. After Mahinda Rajapaksa, his brother too came up the helm; however, owing to a plethora of factors, it cannot be stated that Gotabaya Rajapaksa's win can be counted towards the power of family rule. Gotabaya Rajapaksa's merits make it difficult to attribute his victory to a family rule mentality alone. What J.R. Jayawardene wanted out of the executive presidency was not a precursor for family rule but instead the role that does not bear responsibility towards the parliament and is based on imperialism. History has made clear that in a country where the president and parliament are voted in on separate elections, in the instance where the president and parliament majority are not from the same party, there is space for conflict. The issue lies not with the individuals, but with the claim for sovereign rights, which can be claimed by the president as well as MPs, who are voted in by the public.<sup>138</sup>

**Country's Rule According to Buddhist Teachings** - () - The president has stated that the structure of rule for all state ministries will be made taking into account Buddhist teachings and counsel. He also stated that he will make known the steps that he plans to take for the progress of the country, based on the counsel of Buddhist monks that he has received. He also said that he expects the insight of the Buddhist clergy in the future.<sup>139</sup>

**Rathana Thera has Disappeared** - () - The whereabouts of Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera have not been known for over a week. The reason for this disappearance is the recent allegations brought by the General Secretary of the Our People of Power Party Ven. Vedinigama Wimalatissa Thera, that Rathana Thera conspired to kidnap him. While Rathana Thera has promised to visit the police for this matter, he has yet to keep his promise.<sup>140</sup>

**Striking Wigneswaran** - () - Udaya Gammanpila has struck a blow against former Chief Minister of the Northern Provincial Council C.V. Wigneswaran, by challenging him to a public debate about Wigneswaran's statement at the inaugural convening of parliament. The statement in question was that Tamil settlers in history made Sri Lanka their homeland and that Tamil is the world's oldest language. Critics have also noted that before arriving at parliament that day, Wigneswaran visited the cemetery at Mullai Vaikkal. The writer of the article points out that no parliamentarian can make his vows outside of the parliament, and that people have the right to visit a cemetery. He further says that there are other people who take part in tributes

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<sup>138</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 5.

for those who died battling against the government, but that nothing is said about them because they are Sinhalese. He also points out that if the Sinhala race is attributed to King Vijaya, the people in Sri Lanka before he came ashore could not have spoken the Sinhalese language, and that that must be admitted.<sup>141</sup>

**One Country, Law Operating at Different Levels** - (Aruna Jayawardena) - While the president and several of those who work with him have propagated the statement "one country, one law", it seems that the opposite of that principle is what is being followed. This discrepancy in application of civil and criminal law is obvious - the president pardoned former Sgt. Sunil Rathnayake from death row, but did not do the same for the other 143 people on it. At Arumugam Thondaman's funeral, none of the COVID-19 restrictions that the rest of the country was subject to were adhered to. The incident with the decimated building in Kurunegala is also indicative of special treatment. These occurrences are examples of how the law changes for the benefit of the government or those who have close ties. With the Easter attack, one community was sidelined in society: Muslim people. While some people spewed hate, those that knew better attempted another route to insult Muslims: changing their laws. "One country, one law" is clearly just a phrase that is meant to oppress Muslims, that the current government propagated in order to rise to power.<sup>142</sup>

**How Will the Buddha Sasana be Protected and Enriched?** - (Professor Sarath Wijesuriya) - The writer deems Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera and Ranil Wickremesinghe two sides of the same coin, in the sense that they both worked towards the downfall of the Buddha Sasana and UNP respectively, and will possibly sit in parliament due to the die-hard fanatics that voted for them. The writer questions how, with the Buddha Sasana in the state that it is in, the president is planning on nourishing and developing it. He points out the corruption in the system, and states that state funds can only improve temples, not the Sasana. The writer calls out monks who barely know the Dhamma, as engaging in politics while those who are actually learned look on. He comments that the country's politics is actually built on race, religion and caste conflicts. He comments on how the leader of the country who seems to want to uplift Buddhism, sets free a dangerous criminal to live freely, and how that means that in the face of politics, religious integrity takes a backseat. The writer states that the leader of the country making his religion a banner under which he plans to rule the country, is not a good move. He criticises the new opportunities that temples present to lay people, disguised as meritorious deeds, but nothing more than fluff, with no actual benefit other than that of money. Everything that is being done with the popular idea of developing the Buddha Sasana is not doing it any favours.<sup>143</sup>

**"Incendiary Words" that Reveal New Treasures** - (Kathleen Jayawardena) - The writer talks about a book of Osho teachings that Joe Seneviratne published, and how it tackles the idea of

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<sup>141</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 5.

<sup>142</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 6.

<sup>143</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 9.

Christ and Christianity as being foils of each other. The idea that Jesus Christ is a saviour but was not accepted as one, similar to the situation of the Buddha, shows that their lives were extremely impactful. The writer explains in much detail Osho's ideas surrounding Christ and the religion that his name founded.<sup>144</sup>

**There is Proof that Lanka was the Homeland of Tamils, Wigneswaran says again** - (Nishantha Kumara Bandara) - C.V. Wigneswaran has claimed, yet again, that there is evidence to prove that Tamil settlers made Sri Lanka their homeland, historically speaking, and also claims that he is not trying to incite racism and separatism through his comments. He says that he is prepared to discuss facts and provide aforementioned evidence.<sup>145</sup>

**This Is the Best Time to Bar Buddhist Monks for Contesting at Elections** - (Ven. Prof. Valavahanguwe Dhammarathana Thera) - Dhammarathana Thera expresses that seeing as the issue surrounding the national list seat for the Our People of Power party has still not been resolved, it only stands to bring more disgrace to the Buddha Sasana. He says that the monks who go to parliament only know how to eat their meals and yawn in parliament, and he begs for the national list seat to be given to a lay person. He says that the sacred nature of the Buddha Sasana is being destroyed by the actions of some monks and that it needs to be stopped, if Buddhism is to be preserved.<sup>146</sup>

**From the Presidential Commission Probing the Easter Attack: The Leaders that Looked Away after being Warned that an Attack Would Happen the Next Day** - (Muditha Dayananda and Nimantha Ranasinghe) - The international terrorist organisation ISIS carried out its terrorist activities via the National Thowheed Jamath through the leadership of Zahran Hashim, with the sole purpose of propagating the idea of an Islamic State and establishing one. The Easter attack shook not only our country, but the entire world. The current government launched their own investigation into the matter, and it has been revealed that the leaders of intelligence operations were aware of Zahran Hashim and his behaviour since 2015, and had been informed via WhatsApp by a foreign informant the day before the attack, that it would be carried out "tomorrow". It has been revealed that 347 alerts about Hashim had been sent to intelligence leaders since 2015, but no action had been taken. The writers of the article point out that those giving evidence to the presidential commission are simply trying to shift the blame on to others and that therefore, nobody will end up taking responsibility.<sup>147</sup>

**Silumina News Reporter Gives Evidence about Easter Attack** - (Bhakthi Dharmapriya Mendis) - Tharaka Wickramasekara, a news reporter for *Silumina* newspaper, wrote for the paper in 2015 that terrorist activity is afoot in Sri Lanka. His story contained evidence that a man from the Central Province had joined ISIS and died on American soil. He also wrote later about how

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<sup>144</sup> *Anidda*, August 30, p. 23.

<sup>145</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 30, Front Page.

<sup>146</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 30, p. 4.

<sup>147</sup> *Lankadeepa*, August 30, p. 6.

Muslim politicians were trying to remove army camps from Thirukkivil but that the Tamil citizens were against it. He wrote about the destruction of Buddhist statues in Mawanella and also interviewed the Army Chief after the Easter attack.<sup>148</sup>

**Child Marriage Does not Benefit Children, says Minister of Justice Ali Sabry to Chief Prelates of Asgiri Chapter** - (Asela Kuruluwansa) - Minister of Justice Ali Sabry stated to the leader of the Asgiri Chapter that Muslim child marriage does not benefit the children nor does it benefit the country. He says that he has discussed the issue with Muslim women's organisation and is taking the stance that child marriage needs to be abolished.<sup>149</sup>

**"Certain Buddhist chapters spread racism" – Yogeswaran** Tamil National Alliance (TNA) candidate S. Yogeswaran alleged that certain Buddhist chapters spread racism instead of good thoughts. He added that such chapters advise President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and pledged that no rights be given to the Tamil people.<sup>150</sup>

**Upali Thera in the PTF Anunayaka of the Asgiriya Chapter,** Venerable Vendaruwe Dharmakeerthi Sri Rathanapala Upali Thera has been appointed as a member of the Presidential Task Forces (PTFs) on archaeological Heritage Management in the Eastern Province<sup>151</sup>

**"Find the culprit behind the Easter attack" - Archbishop's House** The Archbishop's House in Colombo has urged the government to find the culprits behind the Easter Sunday attack.<sup>152</sup>

**"TNA lost one seat due to Saivite people front" – Dinesan** Attorney-at-law S. Dinesan alleged that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) had lost one parliamentary seat at the general election in Wannai District due to the independent group of the National Saivite People's Front which was formed by the Mannar Hindu Priests' Forum.<sup>153</sup>

**Three arrested for vandalising Buddha's statue** Three individuals were arrested for vandalising a Buddha's statue in Trincomalee.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> *Silumina*, August 30, p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> *Dinamina*, August 31, p. 5.

<sup>150</sup> *Uthayan*, August 2, p. 33.

<sup>151</sup> *Uthayan*, August 4, p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> *Uthayan*, August 11, p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> *Uthayan*, August 11, p. 8.

<sup>154</sup> *Uthayan*, August 11, p. 10.

**“A government which can protect Buddhist principles” – Weerasekara** (R. Yasi) Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) MP Sarath Weerasekara stated that they had formed a government which can protect the military personnel and Buddhist principles<sup>155</sup>

**“As a Sinhala government is formed, no issues hereafter” – Gnanasara** General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera stated that as the people have voted for a Sinhala government, there will not be any threat to Buddhism. He added that, however, the BBS would continue to work to ensure the rights of the Buddhists.<sup>156</sup>

**All religions under Mahinda Rajapaksa** Ministries of Hindu Religious Affairs, Islamic Religious Affairs and Christianity of the former government have been removed and all the religious institutions have been brought under Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in the new cabinet.<sup>157</sup>

**“We will protect the rights of Buddhism even if we do not get MP seat”- Gnanasara Thera** (R. Hashan) Ven. Gnanasara Thera stated that even if their party may not receive an MP seat, they would work to ensure the rights of Buddhist people. He added that they were to enter parliament in order to formulate laws to prevent Islamist terrorism.<sup>158</sup>

**The future of minority communities in the Rajapaksa Rajadhani** (Dr. Amir Ali) The two-thirds majority victory of the government is the victory of the Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism and its principles. Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism was initiated as Sinhala racism and became Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism after 2009. It was due to the divisions between the communities. The Tamils escalated racism to face Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism while the Muslims developed Islamist religious extremism on their part.<sup>159</sup>

**“Rathana Thera’s action should not be disrespectful to Buddha Charter”- Sinhala Ravaya** (M. Manochithra) Ven. Akmeemana Dayarathana Thera of the Sinhala Ravaya organization stated that former MP Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera and Ven. Gnanasara Thera should discuss the matter of nominating a national list MP. He added that they should not act in a way that is disrespectful to the Buddhist charter.<sup>160</sup>

**New year of the followers of Islam and the expectation of Sri Lankan people** Reyyaz Salley, Chairman of the Dewatagaha Masjid, said that the people of Islam celebrate the new years of

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<sup>155</sup> *Virakesari*, August 12, front page.

<sup>156</sup> *Uthayan*, August 12, p. 2.

<sup>157</sup> *Uthayan*, August 13, front page.

<sup>158</sup> *Virakesari*, August 16, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> *Virakesari*, August 16, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> *Virakesari*, August 17, p. 3.

other religions nowadays which is against Islam. He added that the followers of Islam should not celebrate the new years of other religions.<sup>161</sup>

**“We will treat all religions equally” – PM** Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa stated that his government would treat all religions equally while protecting the place given to Buddhism in the constitution.<sup>162</sup>

**"PM says Daham Pasal education should be compulsory" – PM** (M. Manochithra) "Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said yesterday that ‘Daham Pasal’ education should be made compulsory, to create a society with high moral values. He said only religious education could prevent incidents such as terrorism and the Easter Sunday attacks, and that no religion advocates violence. The Prime Minister said missionary education resulted in the decline in Buddhist education."<sup>163</sup>

**“Understand the Buddhist philosophy” – Karunakaran** Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP Govindan Karunakaram stated that everyone should understand the background of Lord Buddha and the Buddhist philosophy. He added that Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, had not proposed it as a religion. He added that Buddhism had been connected to Tamil long ago before it was connected to Sinhala. Basically, Buddha was a Hindu. He stated that the Buddhist literature had been translated in Tamil prior to Pali and Sinhala languages.<sup>164</sup>

**"Government cremates the victims of COVID-19 Spontaneously" – SJB** (S. Thenmoli) The Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) alleged that the government cremated the victims of COVID-19 spontaneously. SJB MP Mujibur Rahuman stated that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated that the bodies of the victims could be buried or cremated. He further added that the government cremated a victim’s body without consent of the family.<sup>165</sup>

**"Government is adamant on burying janazas" - Bathiudeen** Leader of the All Ceylon Makkal Congress (ACMC) Rishad Bathiudeen stated that the government is adamant on the cremation of janazas of the COVID-19 victims. He alleged that requests which had been made, were ignored and the janazas were cremated.<sup>166</sup>

**"PM says Daham Pasal education should be compulsory" – PM** "Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said yesterday that ‘Daham Pasal’ education should be made compulsory, to create a society with high moral values. He said only religious education could prevent incidents such

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<sup>161</sup> *Thinakaran*, August 21, p. 9.

<sup>162</sup> *Thinakaran*, August 24, p. 3.

<sup>163</sup> *Virakesari*, August 25, p. 3.

<sup>164</sup> *Virakesari*, August 26, p. 4.

<sup>165</sup> *Virakesari*, August 26, p. 7.

<sup>166</sup> *Virakesari*, August 26, p. 7.

as terrorism and the Easter Sunday attacks, and that no religion advocates violence. The prime minister said missionary education resulted in the decline in Buddhist education."<sup>167</sup>

**"Country would be beautiful and harmonious" – Vimala Thera** (M. Newton) Ven. Meegahajandure Siri Vimala Thera, Viharadhikari, Sri Naga Vihara, Jaffna stated that if everyone lives with the guidance of religions, the country would be beautiful and be harmonious. He called on everyone to collaborate to live together with peace.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *Thinakaran*, August 27, p. 2.

<sup>168</sup> *Virakesari*, August 28, p. 22.