

The Daily News Line by Faraz



A Real Life Story from Inside The Gaza

The Skeik building, in a quiet road off Omar al-Mukhtar Street in western Gaza City, was a familiar sight to Gaza's lovers. The tree-lined street that ran beside it was once a favourite place for courting couples, eager to avoid Gaza's socially conservative gaze.

But the road nicknamed "Lovers' Street" – and the six-storey building that overlooks it – is now surrounded by rubble. There are few residents left who remember the old days. Those hiding here now are not running from Gaza's disapproval, but from Israeli tanks.

Gaza's war has left this once-glitzy neighbourhood in ruins. The smart shops and restaurants running down to the beach are now pockmarked with shrapnel and bullet holes, the park with its French-manicured trees, is buried under grey rubble.



The Skeik building itself is still standing, but its walls are now splattered by shrapnel and a large artillery-sized hole has punched through an upper floor. Its pre-war faces replaced by an ever-changing confetti of displaced people.

Two years after Gaza's war began, this one building offers a snapshot of how the conflict has eroded ties to home and community among Gaza's people,

and what impact that has had.

The previous tenants of the Skeik building are long gone. Above the boarded-up storerooms on the ground floor, eight of the building's 10 apartments have become temporary homes for families displaced by the war.

Hadeel Daban - fourth floor



Twenty-six-year-old Hadeel Daban lives on the fourth floor with her husband and three young children: nine-year-old Judi, six-year-old Murad and two-year-old Mohammad.

The family arrived here two months ago, paying 1,000 shekels (\$305; £227) a month to camp in the empty rooms.

"The people who were here before us left because it was dangerous," Hadeel said. "Shrapnel hits the walls here, but it's still better than a tent."

The family's few belongings are neatly stashed in piles of bags along the walls. Torn sheets cover the gaping holes where the windows used to be.

It's the 12th place the family has moved to.

"When loading our belongings on a cart, I put my children on top of it all and tell them to play with the items, like the kitchen stuff," Hadeel told me. "I tell them we're going to live a different life, a bit away from the one we had."

The family home stands less than a mile away, in Gaza City's al-Tuffah neighbourhood. They fled in the first week of the war, after a relative's apartment above theirs was hit. They returned a few months later. But on 15 March 2024, a strike on the building next door to them killed Hadeel's mother-in-law, injured the three children and buried Hadeel's husband alive.

"We spent hours searching for him, and found him under the rubble," she said.

Her husband, Izz el-Din, was unconscious. They took him to al-Shifa hospital, where Hadeel says she was told her husband had a skull fracture and was in a coma.

Three days later, he was still being treated when Israel sealed the hospital and began a two-week military operation there, to root out Hamas command posts, it said.

It was only when Israeli forces finally withdrew that Hadeel was reunited with her husband, fragile but alive.

Hadeel told us he still needed regular medical checks. "I used to take him to a neurologist [in Gaza City], but six weeks ago all the doctors moved to the south," she said.

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The Anti Corruption Programme

President Anura Kumara Disanayake's stated election promise was to bring accountability to the fore. To that end the Bribery Commission and the Sri Lanka Police appear to be delivering progress.

The arrest of Shasheendra Rajapaksa on charges of criminal misappropriation did send shock waves as of course did the remanding of former President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Two former Ministers have already been convicted of misappropriation of public funds and received hefty jail sentences of 20 and 25 years.

The remanding of the former president was unprecedented in this country's history. It was not only the former president who was apparently shocked at the turn of events but the general public too. In terms of political PR value undoubtedly the NPP-JVP combine scored heavily.

The repeal of the Former Presidents Entitlement Act brought in its wake a seemingly huge wave of sympathy for Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Positivity was not the sole preserve of the NPP/JVP combine; in fact within the context of a disparate and fractured Opposition and almost incongruously, the Opposition appeared to have struck gold: the Remanding of Ranil (soon to be the title of a made for Social Media documentary) and the legal ejection of Mahinda Rajapaksa, Chandrika Kumaratunga and Maithripala Sirisena, seen together with the withdrawal of the security provided to Mahinda Rajapaksa, gave the collective Opposition a modicum of hope of fielding an united Opposition at whatever election comes next.



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GAMING LEVIES INCREASED TO 18%

The government has published the **Gazette on Betting and Gambling Levy (Amendment)**, which came into effect on **October 1, 2025**.

Under the new regulations, the **tax on gross collections** from gambling businesses — including bookmakers and gambling operators — has been **increased from 15% to 18%**.

In addition, the **casino entry fee** payable by **Sri Lankan citizens** has been **doubled to 100 US dollars**, marking a **100% increase** from the previous rate.

The move is part of the government's broader fiscal measures aimed at boosting state revenue from the gaming and entertainment sectors.



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Real life story of Gaza...

A home is not just shelter or belongings. And all three families we spoke to in the Skeik building had moved multiple times.

"None of my neighbours are my neighbours anymore, because new people come every month," Hadeel said. "I don't even know where my original neighbours are – some went south, some were killed or injured. There are no neighbours anymore."

On the day our colleague met Hadeel, Gaza City was emptying again as hundreds of thousands of people headed for safer areas further south.

The Israeli army, advancing through the city, had issued "a last warning" to leave. But the families we spoke to were planning on staying put.

While Hadeel was talking to our cameraman, a series of explosions echoed through the apartment.

Through the windows, huge grey clouds rose in the middle distance.

Neither of her young sons even flinched.



The Skeik building was built in 2008, on the back of the construction boom that swept Gaza City in the mid-1990s. A prime location right next to the American International School and a block away from the Palestinian parliament – both now in ruins.

It was this central location, off the main Omar al-Mukhtar street, that put the Skeik building in the path of Israeli tanks during the first months of the war.

Al-Shifa hospital lies two blocks to the north. Within weeks of the invasion, Israel's army moved in to capture the complex, saying it was being used as a Hamas base.

Troops approached from several directions, including the roads around Omar al-Mukhtar street.

Near the back of the Skeik building, a large rectangular hole has been blown in the wall.

Inside, Hebrew graffiti reads, "the last Samurai" – a reference to a Hollywood film about a 19th Century Japanese warrior outgunned by modern weapons.

We asked Israel's army whether its forces had ever used the building or fought there. We received no reply. But the building's owner, Shaker Skeik, told us the block had been used as an observation post by Israeli troops during operations. And Israel said it had struck several compounds used by Palestinian snipers in the area in March.

Ground forces remained in Gaza City for months during the first months of the war, launching a second assault on al-Shifa hospital in March 2024, while Hadeel's husband was being treated inside.

With such a rapid turnover of residents, no one in the building now remembers what happened in those early months of the war.

But the fighting still continues around it.

Anti Corruption Programme...

However the near-missionary zeal of the AKD administration to seek accountability for what amounts to a wholesale dipping of hands into the Treasury's coffers, has gone from strength.

The NPP-JVP stance appears to be 'slowly slowly catchy monkey' meaning that matters will not reach the Court stage until and unless they have incontrovertible evidence which will stand the test of any trial.

It worries some that it is the Bribery Commission who are apparently leading the charge against legacy corruption, questioning why it is not the Attorney General's department.

Several people we spoke to, were satisfied about the progress on the accountability issue. Almost all told us that the 'Change' has not meant any financial betterment but were willing to 'bite the bullet' so to speak and grant the AKD administration more time to secure convictions, confiscate assets whilst grappling with the 'Big Question'. That being when will the cost of living, the basket of commodities, come tumbling down. Several Economists told us that prices will not come down in that much of a hurry. If ever.

(Faraz Shauketaly - www.shauketaly.com)



Sri Lanka's path to recovery remains woefully unfinished.

While analysts have pointed to signs of stabilization in 2024 and early 2025, the National People's Power (NPP) government's inconsistent handling of the IMF-backed reform agenda often overturning or diluting commitments inherited from past administrations threatens to erode hard-won gains. The result: growth remains below pre-crisis levels, poverty is entrenched, and investor confidence is fragile.



According to the World Bank's latest Sri Lanka Development Update, "Better Spending for All," the economy is projected to grow 4.6 percent in 2025 before slowing to 3.5 percent in 2026.

While that represents momentum, the report cautions that the recovery is "uneven and incomplete," with economic output still trailing 2018 levels and poverty stuck at nearly 24.5 percent of the population.

In 2024, Sri Lanka surprised many by achieving roughly 5 percent GDP growth, exceeding the IMF's earlier target.

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Shorts

Negotiations on Gaza between Israeli and Hamas teams will enter a third day today (8) in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh. They are to be joined by U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff and Qatari PM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani- newsfirst.lk

Piyal Manamperi, who was arrested in connection with the narcotics recovered from Middeniya, was further remanded until October 22.- newsfirst.lk

Sepalika Saman Kumari, former Director General of the Office of Reparations, who is now Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, has been arrested by the Bribery Commission for allegedly aiding and abetting criminal misappropriation, in a case related to former State Minister Shasheendra Rajapaksa- newsfirst.lk

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has decided to award the Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2025 to Susumu Kitagawa, Richard Robson and Omar M. Yaghi "for the development of metal-organic frameworks".- Hirunews.lk

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Sri Lanka's path...

Revenue mobilization improved significantly: the revenue-to-GDP ratio reportedly rose to 13.5 percent in 2024, up from just over 8 percent in 2022. Official reserves also rebounded, reaching about US\$6.5 billion by March 2025.

Yet by mid-2025, fragility had crept back in. A US State Department report flagged “policy inconsistency, regulatory uncertainty, bureaucratic delays and poor responsiveness” as key obstacles for foreign direct investment, noting that projects such as a planned USD 400 million wind farm by Adani were scrapped amid government hesitation over tariffs and rule changes.

Reuters analysts now expect growth in 2025 to hover between 4.0 and 4.5 percent, citing slippages in budget implementation and capital spending. Part of the challenge lies in how the NPP government has retreated from or reversed reforms championed by the previous administration and required by the IMF. For example, the NPP government announced the scrapping of the CEB Reforms Act of 2024, which had permitted private sector participation in electricity generation and aimed to ease the balance sheet burdens on the state.

That reversal directly conflicts with prior commitments in the IMF extended fund facility and was viewed as a major policy inconsistency by observers. At the same time, in June 2025 the government accepted IMF demands to raise electricity tariffs by 18.3 percent through December 2025, passing through significant costs to households and businesses already strained by inflation.

Though this move aligns with IMF structural conditions, the government's earlier rhetoric had suggested it would resist such austerity measures. The volte-face has prompted accusations of policy immaturity.

The NPP's approach to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) also exposes contradictions. While the government publicly expressed Marxist leanings and had criticized privatization, it has quietly resumed talks on restructuring the national airline and other entities under IMF pressure.



However, debates over ownership, social welfare of workers, and tariff regimes continue to stall real progress.

The IMF itself remains cautious. In April 2025, Sri Lankan authorities reached a staff-level agreement for the fourth review of the program, thus unlocking approximately US\$344 million upon Executive Board approval—but only after committing to prior actions such as restoring electricity cost-recovery pricing and instituting an automatic tariff adjustment mechanism. Yet in public statements, government officials have occasionally questioned or backtracked on the timing and sequencing of reforms.

Moreover, IMF officials warned in June that Sri Lanka “has no room for policy errors,” noting that half of its sixteen previous IMF programs ended prematurely due to weak commitment or reform fatigue.

Compounding the problem, the government pledged to raise public investment from 13 percent to 18 percent of total expenditure in 2025.

However, analysts caution that meeting IMF revenue targets could force capital spending to be cut. Meanwhile, interest payments alone are projected to consume 41 percent of government outlays in 2025, choking fiscal flexibility.

In sum, Sri Lanka remains caught in a limbo: macroeconomic stability has returned in part, and reform gains are visible, but the NPP government's policy reversals, capacity constraints, and mixed messaging risk undermining the recovery.

To avoid another cycle of crisis, the country needs coherent, consistent execution of reforms not rhetorical shifts. Absent that, growth may remain sluggish and development goals will remain beyond reach (LNW)

Joan Kennedy, Who Married Into a Dynasty, Dies at 89

The wife of Senator Edward Kennedy for a quarter of a century, she both basked and struggled in the reflected glare of a political family in the spotlight.

The former wife of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, known as Ted, Ms. Kennedy was shy and reserved compared with her competitive, athletic and often boisterous in-laws. Ill-prepared for life in the reflected glare of Kennedy klieg lights, and haunted by her own family history of alcoholism, she found herself caught up in high-stakes politics, a faithless marriage and an on-again, off-again struggle with her own drinking. For stretches at a time, however, she registered numerous triumphs. An accomplished pianist, she gave a recital with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1970 that won standing ovations and stellar reviews. Under the baton of Arthur Fiedler, she narrated stories, like Prokofiev's “Peter and the Wolf,” accompanied by the Boston Pops. She published a book,

The Joy of Classical Music: A Guide for You and Your Family” (1992), edited by her sister-in-law, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. And she devoted her later years to raising money for nonprofit organizations and charities in Boston.



But she was never interested in politics, the Kennedy family business. Her introduction to it came when her husband campaigned for and won a special election to the Senate in 1962, when he was just 30 and she was 27. By then, his brother John was president and his brother Robert was attorney general.

Within a few years, though, with the assassinations of John and Robert, pressure built on Senator Kennedy to take up their mantle despite his family's concern for his safety. He became less discreet about his infidelities and excessive drinking, and Joan, too, turned increasingly to alcohol.

She stood by her husband through considerable drama, most notably in 1969, when he drove off a one-lane bridge on Chappaquiddick Island, in Massachusetts, in an accident that killed his passenger, Mary Jo Kopechne, a 28-year-old former secretary to Robert F. Kennedy when he was a senator from New York.

Ms. Kennedy, who was pregnant at the time, had already endured two miscarriages and was on strict bed rest. With the Chappaquiddick drama threatening her husband's political future, she accompanied him to Ms. Kopechne's funeral and to court, where he pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of an accident.

Her drinking eventually became public, with repeated arrests on charges of drunken driving, starting in 1974, and orders to enter rehabilitation programs.

She and Mr. Kennedy had effectively separated before he ran for president unsuccessfully in 1980, but they kept up a united front during his campaign for the Democratic nomination; after he dropped out, the marriage officially dissolved.