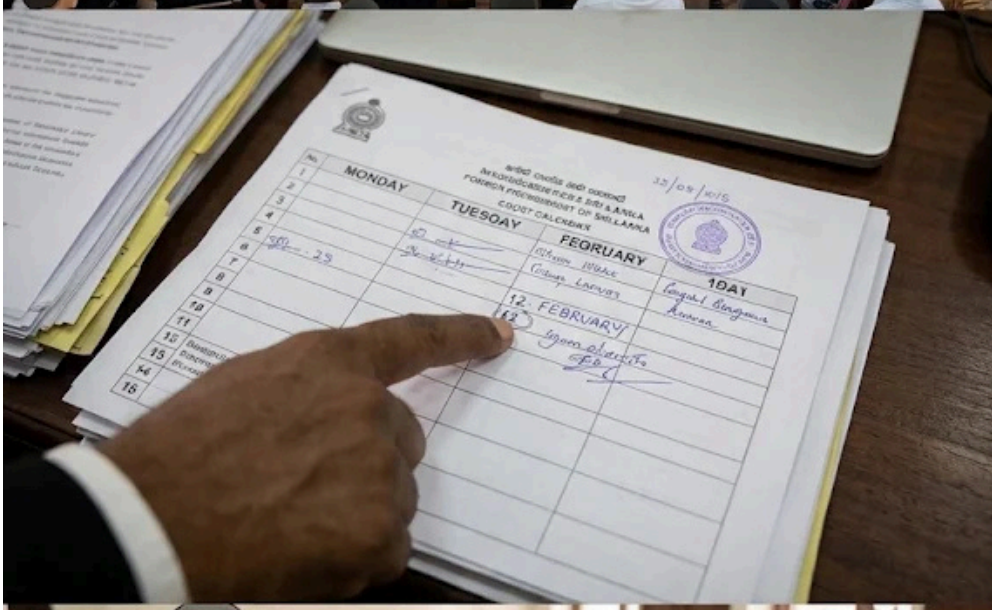
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COURT DEFERS FURTHER EVIDENCE FROM GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA TO FEBRUARY IN LALITH-KUGAN CASE

The Jaffna Magistrate's Court yesterday fixed February 12, 2027, for the recording of further evidence from former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in connection with the long-running judicial inquiry into the 2011 disappearance of political activists Lalith Kumar Weeraraj and Kugan Muruganandhan in Jaffna. Rajapaksa appeared before the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court online this afternoon, giving testimony via video conferencing from around 1.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. as his statements were formally recorded by the Jaffna court.

Yesterday's virtual session marks the latest chapter in a legal battle that has stretched across more than a decade without yielding accountability for the missing men. Weeraraj and Muruganandhan, both active in human rights advocacy and grassroots political organizing in the Northern Province, vanished in Jaffna on December 9, 2011.

At the time of their disappearance, the two activists were preparing to hold a press conference in Jaffna ahead of International Human Rights Day to highlight the plight of enforced disappearance victims and families searching for missing relatives in the post-war north. Their whereabouts have remained unknown ever since, turning the case into one of Sri Lanka's most closely watched emblems of post-conflict impunity.

Habeas corpus proceedings into the disappearances began in September 2012 after the families petitioned the courts seeking answers from state security authorities. Because Gotabaya Rajapaksa served as Secretary to the Ministry of Defence at the time the two men went missing, petitioners sought his testimony regarding state knowledge, military oversight, and official statements made in the aftermath of the incident.

In 2017, Rajapaksa was formally added to the list of witnesses in the Jaffna Magistrate's Court inquiry.

For years, however, securing his physical presence in the northern court proved contentious. Rajapaksa repeatedly informed the court through legal counsel that he could not travel to Jaffna due to security concerns, leading to prolonged delays and appellate challenges over whether he should be compelled to testify in person.

Following a ruling in August 2026 directing him to appear via video link from Colombo, Rajapaksa began giving testimony before the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court on September 29, 2026, before returning yesterday for further examination.

Legal observers and rights advocates continue to watch whether the remote proceedings will finally clarify lines of command and state responsibility in a disappearance that has remained unresolved for fifteen years.

NINE MONTHS UNDER THE PTA, ZERO INDICTMENTS: COURT POSTPONES SURESH SALLAY RULING TO JANUARY 28

The Court of Appeal today deferred until January 28, 2027, its threshold decision on whether to grant leave to proceed with a writ application filed by former State Intelligence Service (SIS) Director Major General (Retd.) Suresh Sallay, challenging his arrest and prolonged detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). The petition, which seeks interim relief to suspend the PTA detention order and stay further proceedings before the Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court in connection with the 2019 Easter Sunday terror attacks, was scheduled for order today before Justice Priyantha Fernando announced the two-month postponement.

Through President's Counsel Sanjeeva Jayawardhena, Sallay has dragged the apex of Sri Lanka's investigative and judicial machinery into the dock as respondents, naming Inspector General of Police Priyantha Weerasuriya, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Director Shani Abeysekera, the Colombo Fort Magistrate, and the Attorney General, represented today by Deputy Solicitor General Suharshi Herath. Yet that two-month adjournment does far more than pause a procedural writ. It leaves Sri Lanka's most high-profile intelligence detainee suspended inside the PTA's sweeping executive detention regime right as explosive, competing narratives over what happened behind closed CID doors, and what happened prior to April 21, 2019, have collided in open court.

Arrested in Peliyagoda on February 25, 2026, Sallay has already spent nine months in custody without a formal indictment being tested at trial, following a 90-day detention extension granted in August and a contentious hospital stay that ended in early October. Just twenty-four hours before today's Court of Appeal deferral, proceedings before the Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court laid bare the bitter evidentiary battle surrounding his confinement.

A five-member specialist medical panel submitted a 31-page report examining allegations of custodial mistreatment.

While Additional Solicitor General Dileepa Peiris insisted the report showed no physical torture or psychological distress, Sallay's defence counsel countered that the panel documented CID officers lowering his trousers during an examination, made four recommendations including a further probe into an alleged indecent act, and exposed a glaring accountability gap, why CCTV footage inside the CID detention facility is automatically deleted after roughly 30 days. Even United Nations Special Rapporteurs have intervened, raising alarm over alleged pressure to confess, restricted confidential legal access in hospital, and the continued deployment of the PTA despite government pledges to repeal or replace it.



In that very while, the state's investigative net is widening rapidly around the Easter Sunday conspiracy itself. During yesterday's magisterial hearing, the Additional Solicitor General stunned the courtroom by stating that, in his view, sufficient evidence exists to name former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa as a suspect, leaving any arrest decision to investigating officers, while confirming probes into a former Deputy Inspector General of Police. Earlier witness statements cited in the inquiry have alleged panic phone calls after the bombings, inquiries regarding church locations in Negombo, and interference with prior investigations, all of which Sallay has flatly denied, maintaining he was overseas in Malaysia and India at the time.

All of this forces hard, uncomfortable questions that neither the state nor the judiciary can afford to dodge while the calendar turns to January 28. If prosecutors possess compelling evidence linking a former intelligence chief, and potentially a former head of state, to the deadliest terror attack in Sri Lankan history, why has the state relied for nine months on executive PTA detention orders rather than filing indictments before a Trial-at-Bar?

Conversely, how can a government elected on promises to abolish the Prevention of Terrorism Act justify holding a detainee under its most draconian provisions while 30-day CCTV retention policies conveniently erase footage of his custody? And when an appellate court defers even a preliminary leave-to-proceed ruling for another two months, does judicial caution risk turning preventive detention into punishment before trial, or shielding high-stakes investigations from premature disruption?

Seven and a half years after 269 lives were shattered on Easter Sunday, Sri Lankans are watching a defining test of institutional nerve.

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FROM DEPORTEES TO VISITING OFFENDERS: HOW SRI LANKA CAN SEAL ITS CHILD PROTECTION GAPS

When a Sri Lankan national convicted of sexual abuse overseas finishes a prison sentence and is deported back to Colombo, domestic police frequently receive no formal record of the crime. Because foreign convictions do not automatically appear on local registers, a convicted offender can step back into neighbourhoods and workplaces with what looks like a clean slate. That vulnerability took centre stage in Parliament on Monday, November 23, 2026, when the Women Parliamentarians' Caucus and its Subcommittee met under the chairmanship of Minister of Women and Child Affairs Saroja Savithri Paulraj to close this legal blind spot.

Addressing the joint committee alongside senior officials from the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, the Attorney General's Department, the National Child Protection Authority, the Government Analyst's Department, the Sri Lanka Police, and the Ministry of Health and Mass Media, Paulraj warned that relevant domestic authorities are routinely left uninformed when deportees arrive following foreign sexual abuse convictions. Without official notification or statutory mechanisms to log those convictions, such individuals can reintegrate without scrutiny, creating an acute risk of repeat offences against women and children.

The legal problem runs deep into how territorial criminal jurisdiction operates in Sri Lanka. Under existing penal and evidentiary statutes, a conviction handed down by a foreign court does not automatically register on the Sri Lanka Police criminal record database or trigger domestic post-release supervision unless specific statutory recognition, mutual legal assistance, or treaty mechanisms apply.

Even where deportation takes place on immigration grounds after a foreign sentence is completed, immigration removal is an administrative act by the sending state rather than a judicial transfer under the Extradition Law or the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, meaning criminal dossiers often never cross between ministries.

To close that gap, the Caucus explored recognizing and enforcing foreign court judgments in sexual offence cases, building an international coordination channel to obtain verified conviction data on Sri Lankan nationals abroad, and establishing legal and technical protocols to integrate those records directly into police databases.

Equally critical is workplace and institutional screening. The Caucus called for mandatory criminal background checks for anyone recruited to institutions working with children, alongside a legally authorized, risk-based monitoring system to deter recidivism.

That push builds on broader child protection efforts initiated earlier in 2026, including moves by the National Child Protection Authority and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs to enforce fingerprint-based vetting and child-offence clearance certificates across state-sector institutions. Yet without linking foreign conviction intelligence to domestic fingerprint and police clearance registries, a deported offender could still pass a local background check and secure employment in schools, tuition centres, orphanages, sports academies, or transport services.

Looking beyond returning Sri Lankan nationals, lawmakers and security agencies also face an equally pressing question: how to screen, bar, or monitor registered foreign sex offenders entering Sri Lanka as tourists, consultants, volunteers, or long-term residents. International experience offers concrete tools Sri Lanka can adopt through legislative amendment and border integration.

First, immigration and police authorities could establish direct, automated data-sharing protocols with foreign tracking hubs such as the United States Angel Watch Center under International Megan's Law, which issues advance travel notifications and passport identifiers for convicted child sex offenders, alongside systematic use of INTERPOL Green Notices and the I-24/7 network at Bandaranaike International Airport and seaports to flag travelling offenders before boarding or upon arrival.



Second, Sri Lanka could amend the Immigrants and Emigrants Act to make prior foreign sexual offence convictions an explicit statutory ground for visa refusal, entry denial, or immediate deportation, backed by mandatory disclosure on electronic travel authorization forms where false declarations carry criminal penalties.

Third, for any foreign national permitted to enter or reside in the country despite a historical conviction, Parliament can introduce civil preventive orders modeled on the United Kingdom's Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and foreign-conviction notification notices, empowering courts or senior police officers to compel in-person registration of addresses, passports, and financial accounts within days of arrival, bar contact with minors or entry near schools and child-care facilities, and criminalize any breach.

Regional precedents across Southeast Asia show how quickly tourism economies can become magnets for transnational predators when border screening lags behind visitor growth. In the Philippines, the Bureau of Immigration actively enforces its #ShieldKids campaign alongside advance passenger notices under International Megan's Law, routinely intercepting and blacklisting convicted foreign sex offenders at airports before they can enter the country. Thailand has similarly tightened digital border controls and pre-arrival screening systems after decades of battling foreign exploitation networks in coastal and urban tourist hubs. Both countries learned the hard way that once a destination gains a reputation for weak border vetting or lax enforcement, organized exploitation networks and travelling offenders quickly follow.

For Sri Lanka, which is banking heavily on high-yield tourism to anchor its economic recovery, leaving these legal and border loopholes open carries severe social and economic risks. Coastal towns, wildlife circuits, and boutique hospitality hubs thrive on international arrivals, yet past child protection studies have repeatedly warned that unchecked tourism corridors can expose vulnerable children and young people to commercial sexual exploitation. When other regional destinations slam their doors shut on registered sex offenders through real-time intelligence sharing and strict visa bars, any neighbouring country without matching safeguards risks becoming the path of least resistance.

Beyond the immediate harm to victims, failing to seal these gaps threatens the very high-value tourism brand Sri Lanka is trying to build. High-spending family travellers, reputable international tour operators, and global hospitality investors increasingly scrutinize destination safety and child protection standards. Closing the border loophole for both deported nationals and visiting foreign offenders is therefore not just a matter of criminal justice, but an urgent safeguard for Sri Lanka's communities and its economic credibility.

Ultimately, legislative amendments alone will only protect communities if diplomatic missions, border control, child protection authorities, and local police operate on a single shared intelligence loop. Whether an offender is a deported citizen returning home or a registered foreign national arriving at the border, public safety depends on ensuring that a conviction recorded across an ocean never disappears upon landing in Sri Lanka.

STANDARDIZE OR FALL BEHIND: HOW CHINA'S EV DOMINANCE FORCED TOYOTA, HONDA AND NISSAN INTO A RARE TRUCE

Japan's automotive titans built global dominance on fierce domestic competition and bespoke engineering, guarding every bolt, alloy, and circuit specification as proprietary armour. That era effectively ended this week when 14 Japanese vehicle manufacturers, including Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Mazda, and Subaru, joined forces under the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association (JAMA) and the Japan Auto Parts Industries Association to standardize core vehicle components and materials. Announced by JAMA Chairman and Toyota Vice Chairman Koji Sato, the pact targets steel grades, recycled plastics, and wiring harnesses in a bid to slash manufacturing costs, automate assembly lines, and free up capital against a relentless Chinese automotive offensive.

The numbers behind Japan's urgency are stark. According to Sato, Japanese automakers currently rely on roughly 70,000 different specifications for wiring harnesses alone. Every minor variation forces parts suppliers to maintain separate molds, assembly boards, and manual instruction sheets, turning

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factory automation into an expensive nightmare. By consolidating low-volume steel grades, establishing unified protocols for recycled resins, and cutting wire-harness varieties while expanding aluminum wiring, Japan's carmakers are trying to strip out self-inflicted complexity. Yet the deeper question hanging over Tokyo is unavoidable: why did an industry renowned for lean manufacturing wait until now to fix 70,000 duplicate wire specifications, and can cost-cutting on legacy hardware alone close a widening technological gap?

That gap has been carved open by China's extraordinary global expansion. Data from the China Passenger Car Association shows China's exports of new energy passenger vehicles surged 139.7% year over year to 4.472 million units in the first ten months of 2026 alone. Across the global market in the first half of 2026, three Chinese groups broke into the world's top ten automakers by market share, with Geely Holding Group climbing to 4.6% from 1.5% a decade ago and Chery matching Ford at 4.1% after sitting at just 0.8% ten years earlier.



Even more alarming for Tokyo, Chinese brands have already overtaken Japanese rivals in market share across 39 countries, eating directly into traditional Japanese strongholds across Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The supply chain tells an equally sobering story: Bain & Company analysis published this month reveals that US and Japanese auto parts suppliers have ceded 21 percentage points of global market share over the past two decades, representing more than €200 billion in lost revenue, while Chinese suppliers have climbed from near-obscurity to capture 13% of global top-100 supplier revenue.

China did not become a stronghold by accident; it monetized the very trends legacy automakers hesitated to embrace. While Japanese giants doubled down on hybrids and gradual incrementalism, Beijing poured state-backed industrial policy, subsidized credit, and vertical supply-chain integration into batteries, power electronics, and software-defined vehicles. By controlling the lion's share of lithium refining, cathode manufacturing, and battery cell production, where giants like CATL command roughly 40% of China's power battery market, Chinese automakers compressed vehicle development cycles from the traditional four or five years down to 18 to 24 months. Across the globe, electric vehicles reached 68% of China's passenger car market share by October 2026, creating a hyper-competitive domestic testing ground that forced firms like BYD, Geely, and Chery to master scale, software integration, and aggressive pricing before exporting those efficiencies worldwide.

Western automakers in Europe and the United States are caught in the same vice, though they have responded differently.

Rather than relying purely on pre-competitive parts standardization, Washington and Brussels erected tariff walls to buy time for domestic manufacturers such as Volkswagen, Stellantis, Ford, and General Motors. Even so, the International Energy Agency's Global EV Outlook 2026 warns that over one in four electric cars sold in advanced economies will be made in China by 2035, up from 15% in 2025, with Chinese vehicles projected to capture more than two-thirds of European Union EV imports. In the United Kingdom, where Chinese brands are not blocked by punitive tariffs, they have already captured a record 14% market share.

Japan's 14-brand alliance stops short of corporate mergers, preserving brand competition on the showroom floor while pooling scale behind the factory wall. Still, the move raises hard strategic questions for the global industry. If Western tariffs merely delay Chinese market entry while legacy giants struggle with high cost bases, and if Japan's standardization drive only lowers the cost of steel, plastics, and copper wiring, who will match China's speed in battery chemistry, autonomous software, and digital cockpits? Tokyo's historic truce proves that no single Japanese automaker can survive the new era alone, yet standardizing the skeleton of a car will only matter if Japan and the West can also win the race for its electric and digital brain.

CPC CUTS 1,261 JOBS WITH AI WHILE KEY STATE WATCHDOGS REMAIN UNDERSTAFFED

Sri Lanka's public sector is slimming down, though whether that diet represents strategic modernization or administrative drift depends entirely on which corridor of Colombo you inspect. On one side sits the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, which has trimmed its headcount by more than 38% since 2024, falling from 3,292 employees to 2,031, by handing routine administration, translation, and bowser scheduling over to artificial intelligence and SAP enterprise software. On the other sits the wider public service, where newly released 2026 cadre figures reveal an uneven contraction that leaves vital oversight bodies understaffed while certain ministries quietly operate above their approved limits.

Speaking at the WION Digital Sri Lanka Summit 2026 in Colombo, CPC and Ceylon Petroleum Storage Terminals Limited Managing Director Dr. Mayura Neththikumarage offered a blunt case study in targeted automation. Gone are the days of handwritten departmental memos passed down a chain of typists and translators, or mismatched spare-part ledgers slowing maintenance. Fuel station operators now place orders and transfer payments via a mobile application wired directly into SAP, triggering automatic invoicing at 6:00 a.m. daily in a fully paperless workflow. More notably, an automated AI queue now governs fuel bowser dispatch strictly by order timestamp, neutralizing the time-honoured Sri Lankan tradition of influential callers leaning on staff to jump the line. Having first adopted SAP in 2010, CPC is now migrating to a cloud-based SAP S/4HANA RISE platform.

Across the broader state apparatus, however, headcount reductions look far less algorithmic and considerably more lopsided. Even after excluding anomalies at the Judicial Service Commission and the Presidential Secretariat, the public service shed roughly 18,700 employees over the past year. Yet the losses have hit frontline delivery and accountability institutions hardest. National schools lost 1,208 staff, the Samurdhi Department dropped by 1,448, and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority shed 441 employees during a year marked by Colombo port congestion.

Uniformed security personnel fell by 856 against an approved cadre of 102,112, despite Cabinet assurances in March that defence and public security would absorb the bulk of 15,839 approved vacancies.



Nowhere is the staffing mismatch sharper than in institutions tasked with enforcing the law and policing the state.

Despite Treasury pledges under the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2025-2029 to bolster institutional capacity, the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption operates with just 223 staff against an approved cadre of 972, down from 238 a year earlier, having filled only four of its 463 tertiary-level posts.

The Attorney General's Department carries 218 senior officers against 548 approved positions. Meanwhile, flagship regulators exist largely on paper. The Gambling Regulatory Authority reports zero staff for its 23 approved posts, and the Data Protection Authority left all 41 positions vacant in 2025 with no updated headcount reported this year.

At the same time, austerity appears selective. Fifteen state institutions, excluding the Rural Development Ministry, employ 973 people above their approved ceilings, including the Ministry of Transport, Highways and Urban Development, which carries 531 staff against 457 approved posts, and the Court of Appeal with 139 against 132.

Lanka Sathosa, having exceeded its cap by 608 employees in 2025, simply had its approved cadre expanded by 1,238 to 4,246.

Adding further fog to the ledger, the Judicial Service Commission's reported staff plunged from 9,251 to 5,256, with primary-grade workers dropping from 4,002 to 557, even as its approved cadre jumped to 15,058, while the Presidential Secretariat listed 1,130 approved posts without disclosing actual headcount.

CPC's experience demonstrates that cutting bureaucracy works when technology replaces discretion and paper shuffling.

Elsewhere in government, shrinking the payroll without filling prosecutorial benches, regulatory desks, or port shifts risks trading bloated inefficiency for institutional paralysis.

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SRI LANKA CERT ISSUES CRITICAL WARNING AFTER GLOBAL JAVASCRIPT ATTACK HITS 178 ORGANISATIONS

Online shoppers, banking customers, and everyday web users in Sri Lanka could face silent data theft when visiting websites that rely on compromised third-party marketing tools, prompting the country's national cybersecurity authority to issue an urgent advisory this week. Sri Lanka CERT has called on local businesses, banks, and digital platforms to audit their websites immediately following a global software supply chain attack identified on November 16 that hit 178 organisations worldwide.

The breach targeted Optimizely Web Experimentation, a popular cloud tool companies use to test webpage layouts and run digital experiments. Instead of breaking directly into company servers, attackers impersonated customer administrators and slipped malicious JavaScript into legitimate website scripts hosted on Optimizely's trusted delivery network. Because browsers recognize that network as safe, standard security filters allow the code to run unnoticed. Once loaded on a visitor's screen, the hidden script can quietly skim credit card numbers during online checkout, steal active login sessions, alter cryptocurrency wallet addresses, and push exploit code toward vulnerable iPhones and iPads.



While Sri Lanka CERT confirmed there is no verified evidence yet that a Sri Lankan government website has been affected, any local e-commerce store, bank, hotel, or service portal using Optimizely or similar externally hosted scripts remains vulnerable. For everyday users, the danger lies in invisibility. A compromised webpage looks and functions normally even as personal passwords and payment details are copied in the background.

To shut down that risk, Sri Lanka CERT has urged website operators to review all external JavaScript services, confirm directly with Optimizely whether their accounts were altered, and inspect historical code changes and network logs for suspicious outbound traffic. Organisations handling online payments and customer logins have been told to enforce strict Content Security Policy rules that block unauthorized scripts from reading sensitive form fields. Where tampering is found, companies must immediately reset passwords, log out active user sessions, preserve evidence, and report the breach via the CERT website or hotline 101.

The incident reinforces the value of basic digital hygiene such as enabling multi-factor authentication on banking and shopping accounts, keeping mobile browsers updated, and watching for unexpected login alerts. For Sri Lankan businesses, it underscores that protecting customer trust means policing not only internal servers, but every third-party script running inside a visitor's browser.

CLONED PORTAL, STOLEN MILLION: DATA ENTRY OPERATOR ARRESTED IN RAGAMA OVER FAKE BANK WEBSITE FRAUD

A 25-year-old data entry operator from Ragama has been arrested by cybercrime investigators over the alleged theft of Rs. 1 million from a customer's account using a cloned website designed to mimic the official online portal of a Sri Lankan private bank. Officers attached to the Wariyapola Computer Crime Investigation Division took the suspect into custody yesterday afternoon, November 26, following a forensic probe into how the victim's digital banking credentials were harvested and drained.

According to police investigators, the suspect, who works at a private institution, allegedly engineered a lookalike login page replicating the branding, layout, and authentication fields of the commercial bank. Once the unsuspecting customer entered confidential username and password details into the counterfeit interface, the credentials were captured and used to access the genuine account and transfer Rs. 1 million. Following a formal complaint lodged with the Wariyapola Computer Crime Investigation Division, officers traced the digital footprint of the fraudulent domain and fund movement, leading directly to the suspect's arrest in Ragama.



Further inquiries are continuing to determine whether the suspect operated alone, how the stolen funds were routed, and whether additional account holders fell into the same trap.

The Ragama arrest highlights a sharp escalation in credential-harvesting schemes targeting retail banking customers across Sri Lanka during 2026.

Cybersecurity advisories issued by Sri Lanka CERT and the Financial Sector Computer Security Incident Response Team (FinCSIRT) have repeatedly warned that fraudsters no longer rely solely on crude, spelling-riddled emails. Instead, perpetrators register domains differing by a single character or country extension from legitimate bank URLs, duplicate authentic login screens pixel for pixel, and promote the deceptive links through sponsored search engine advertisements, SMS alerts, or messaging platforms. Within seconds of a customer typing in login credentials and a one-time password, attackers mirror the session on the real banking server and sweep available balances before transaction alerts register.

Under Sri Lanka's Computer Crime Act No. 24 of 2007 and the Payment Devices Frauds Act, unauthorized access to computer systems, data interception, and electronic financial fraud carry severe custodial sentences and heavy fines, yet technical enforcement remains locked in a race against low-cost phishing kits. For everyday depositors, the Wariyapola investigation serves as an expensive reminder that a familiar bank logo on a browser screen is no guarantee of authenticity. Navigating exclusively through verified mobile banking applications or manually bookmarked web addresses, rather than clicking links in messages or top search results, remains the simplest barrier between a customer's savings and a cloned login page.

NO BAN ON MOBILE PHONES AT POLICE STATIONS, PUBLIC SECURITY MINISTER CLARIFIES

Rumours circulating across social media and local news outlets over recent days had left many citizens wondering whether walking into a police station to lodge a complaint or record a statement meant surrendering their mobile phones at the entrance. Those claims sparked immediate concern among ordinary Sri Lankans, legal practitioners, and rights observers who rely on mobile devices to store crucial evidence, digital correspondence, and emergency contacts when dealing with law enforcement. Addressing the confusion directly in Parliament, Public Security Minister Ananda Wijepala flatly refuted reports of a blanket prohibition, confirming that no government circular has been issued banning members of the public from carrying mobile phones into police stations.

Responding to a question raised in the House by Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) Parliamentarian Suranga Rathnayake, Minister Wijepala dismissed media reports suggesting that a new restriction had been imposed on visitors. He assured the public that citizens remain free to carry their mobile phones when visiting police stations across the country, drawing a sharp distinction between ordinary members of the public seeking police assistance and individuals taken into police custody. While visitors face no such ban, the Minister noted that restrictions may apply to suspects held inside police cells regarding the possession and use of mobile phones.

For everyday citizens, the ministerial clarification removes an unnecessary barrier at the front desk of local police stations. In practice, people visiting a police station routinely need their phones to retrieve identification documents,

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show digital transaction records, display photographs or video evidence relevant to a complaint, or contact family members and legal counsel. Had an informal or selective ban taken root at station gates, citizens could have found themselves cut off from vital information or forced to hand over personal devices containing private financial and personal data without clear legal authority.

At the same time, Minister Wijepala's distinction underscores why rules inside holding cells differ sharply from policies at the public counter. Preventing detained suspects from accessing mobile phones inside police lockups is standard custodial procedure aimed at stopping detainees from intimidating witnesses, tampering with ongoing investigations, or coordinating outside interference while under arrest.

Ordinary visitors entering a police station to seek help or conduct routine business retain the right to keep their mobile phones with them, ensuring that unverified rumours do not deter the public from approaching law enforcement when they need assistance most.

CALLED 'BIBI', 'GOAT' OR 'COW': TALIBAN AUTHORITIES IN BALKH STRIP WOMEN OF THEIR NAMES IN HOSPITALS AND STATE FILES

Taliban authorities in Afghanistan's northern Balkh province have ordered civil servants and healthcare workers to stop recording women's first names on official documents, hospital files, and medical prescriptions, replacing them instead with the generic title "Bibi". According to joint investigative reporting by Afghan exiled outlet Zan Times, The Guardian, and Spain's El País, the directive, quietly issued in May, has also seen women referred to in clinics and administrative records using animal terms such as "goat" and "cow".

The policy marks a stark new phase in the systematic removal of Afghan women from public and institutional life.

While "Bibi" is traditionally used across Afghan society as a respectful honorific for an older woman, making it a mandatory administrative substitute strips individual women of legal and personal recognition. More troubling still are testimonies gathered during the investigation showing that officials and staff have used animal labels when registering female patients. Afghan women's rights campaigner Lalah Osmany, who previously led the #WhereIsMyName campaign challenging taboos against speaking women's names in public, told El País that the Balkh order reflects a deliberate effort to dehumanize women.

In a society where many women are already identified publicly only through a male relative, and are frequently denied their own names even on gravestones, removing their names from state and medical records eliminates one of the last remaining markers of individual identity.

Beyond the assault on human dignity, medical professionals and rights advocates warn that anonymizing female patients inside hospitals creates immediate, life-threatening clinical risks. In busy provincial wards and pharmacies where dozens of case files, diagnostic test results, and drug prescriptions carry the identical label "Bibi" or an impersonal number, the likelihood of misdiagnosis, swapped laboratory reports, and dangerous medication errors increases sharply. Tracking chronic illnesses, managing maternal health histories, and ensuring accurate emergency care become severely compromised when patients cannot be reliably distinguished on paper.

The naming ban compounds a tightening network of healthcare restrictions already limiting women's access to medical treatment in northern Afghanistan.

According to hospital accounts cited in the investigation, male doctors in government facilities are prohibited from directly examining female patients, even during urgent consultations or medical emergencies, unless female medical personnel are present. Yet because the Taliban have barred girls and women from secondary schools, universities, and medical training institutes since returning to power in August 2021, Afghanistan faces an acute shortage of female physicians, nurses, and midwives.

Women are left caught in a fatal bind: forbidden from receiving care from male doctors, barred from the education required to train female replacements, and now stripped even of their names on the prescription pad.



Although the directive has so far been documented specifically in Balkh province and enforcement varies across local offices, human rights observers caution against viewing it as an isolated local measure.

As Zubaida Akbar, head of the Afghanistan program at the women's rights organization Femena, noted to El País, several of the Taliban's harshest nationwide decrees originated as localized provincial orders before being adopted across the country by Kabul's leadership.

More than five years after the Taliban returned to power, restrictions on Afghan women have expanded from barring them from classrooms, workplaces, and public spaces to erasing their very names from hospital charts and state ledgers.

In Balkh, reducing millions of women to a single generic word or an animal label turns a basic record of human existence into an instrument of erasure, with direct consequences for both dignity and survival.

ONE YEAR AFTER CYCLONE DITWAH: SILENCE IN PARLIAMENT, UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ON THE GROUND

A moment of silence was observed in Parliament yesterday in remembrance of those who lost their lives and those injured due to Cyclone Ditwah, which battered Sri Lanka on November 27, 2025. Making an announcement in the House, Speaker Jagath Wickramaratne said the commemoration was held to remember those affected by the disaster, marking one full year since the tragedy. Across the chamber, Members of Parliament, including the Speaker, rose in solemn tribute to the victims. Yet once the two-minute tribute ended, parliamentary debate quickly exposed a sharper divide over whether state recovery has truly reached survivors or stalled in bureaucratic delay. Twelve months after a catastrophe that killed more than 640 people, affected roughly 2.2 million citizens across all 25 districts, and inflicted over Rs 1.03 trillion in combined physical damages and economic losses, hard questions remain over execution, accountability, and readiness for the next storm.

That tension surfaced directly in the chamber when Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa argued that Cyclone Ditwah proved Sri Lanka's disaster management framework had failed, urging a decisive shift from reactive relief toward long-term disaster resilience. Premadasa pointed to incomplete reconstruction and pending compensation despite an initial Rs 50 billion supplementary estimate approved last year. Responding as Leader of the House and Transport Minister, Bimal Ratnayake pledged to expedite rehabilitation and outlined specific funding lines, including Rs 125 billion for a two-year programme to rebuild roads, bridges, and transport infrastructure, Rs 49,080 million for housing reconstruction, and Rs 29,537 million for relief and compensation.

Earlier official figures cited by Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya in October 2026 had placed the broader government recovery earmark around Rs 500 billion without new borrowing, routed through the National Disaster Relief Services Centre.

High payout percentages on initial grants, covering nearly all eligible families for the Rs 25,000 cleaning allowance and Rs 50,000 household goods grant as well as Rs 15,000 student grants, show that immediate cash support moved quickly to many households. Still, those payouts address survival rather than full restoration against a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment recovery bill exceeding Rs 1,022.5 billion, leaving unanswered questions about actual expenditure rates, idle balances, and how the state will close a multi-hundred-billion-rupee gap.

Transparency also remains uneven across tiers of administration.

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ONE YEAR AFTER...

While Divisional Secretariats published beneficiary lists for small grants under a January 2026 Defence Ministry circular standardizing assessments, public visibility drops sharply around major infrastructure contracts, disbursement progress under the housing allocation, and international aid accounting. Under the UN-coordinated Humanitarian Priorities Plan, pledged or received funding reached only US23.4 million against a US35.3 million appeal, leaving agriculture and early recovery short of resources. Meanwhile, citizens and lawmakers still lack a clear, district-by-district accounting of how many of the 113,777 damaged or destroyed homes have been rebuilt or moved to safer ground.

Infrastructure timelines and system resilience remain central to that debate. With Post-Disaster Needs Assessment transport needs estimated at Rs 397.1 billion and housing and settlements at Rs 275 billion following over 1,800 landslides, 206 damaged major roads, and washed-out bridges, Ratnayake's two-year transport timetable signals that major road and bridge restoration will stretch well into 2028. Main highways and power lines saw quicker fixes, yet secondary rural roads, slope stabilization, and community water supplies serving more than 838,000 people have moved more slowly, alongside technical failures in rain gauges, river sensors, and early-warning links during flooding and blackouts.

Ultimately, the measure of policy shift lies with communities least able to absorb another shock. Across the central highlands, plantation workers in ageing estate line rooms faced heavy loss of life and displacement, yet insecure land tenure still slows permanent relocation away from landslide-prone slopes. In farming districts where nearly 110,000 hectares of paddy and over 31,000 hectares of food crops were lost, gaps in seed and fertilizer support have strained household finances, while displaced families have moved between closing safety centres, temporary shelters, and rented rooms without settled long-term housing. Honouring the dead in Parliament matters, but lasting resilience requires transparent spending audits, enforceable safe-building standards, upgraded warning sensors, and secure land for vulnerable families before the next monsoon arrives.

ZELENSKY CALLS TRUMP AND PUTIN FRIENDSHIP 'STRANGE' IN BBC INTERVIEW AS PEACE TALKS STALL

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has criticised United States President Donald Trump for calling Russian President Vladimir Putin his friend, describing the remark as "strange" in an interview with the BBC from Kyiv. The comments follow Trump's recent public displays of warmth toward the Russian leader, including referring to Putin as a friend at a summit in China and posting a handshake photograph captioned "My Friend" on social media.

Speaking in English, Zelensky said it was up to the US president what he said or posted, yet insisted Putin could not be considered a friend because he is an aggressor and a killer. Zelensky compared describing Putin as a good friend to calling Adolf Hitler a good friend during World War Two. His remarks reflect mounting strain between Kyiv and Washington over how the war should be brought to an end, even as Zelensky has weighed his words carefully since a difficult Oval Office encounter with Trump in 2025.

Zelensky argued that Washington must use its leverage and authority to press Moscow rather than adopting a stance of neutrality. He told the BBC that an overly neutral posture toward an aggressor amounts to supporting both the victims and the aggressor, adding that Ukraine wants a distinctly American position rather than signals echoing Moscow. Trump, responding to questions on Thursday about calling Putin a friend, said he wanted to stop the killing and make a deal, while also stating that he could say Putin is not a friend if needed to reach an agreement.



Frustration in Kyiv extends beyond rhetoric to negotiations and military support. Zelensky said the latest round of US-mediated talks in Abu Dhabi produced no clear breakthrough, remarking that the more Kyiv learns, the more problems emerge. While negotiations are expected to resume in December, he said it remains uncertain whether European negotiators will sit at the table. He also warned that delays in delivering Patriot air defense systems are costing Ukrainian lives and noted that Starlink and Starshield remain restricted in Russian-occupied areas.

Those warnings arrive as winter sets in and Russian strikes continue to target Ukrainian cities and energy infrastructure, with Zelensky cautioning that Moscow is preparing another major attack in the coming days. For Kyiv, the dispute is no longer just about diplomatic tone in Washington or social media posts; it centres on whether American mediation will squeeze Moscow hard enough or leave Ukraine carrying the cost of a compromise made on unfavourable terms.

SHADOW WAR RISES IN EUROPE AS SABOTAGE SURGES AND STRIKES REACH LIBYA AND BALTIC

Russian sabotage operations across Europe rose by 16 per cent in the year to September 2026, a new study from the International Institute for Strategic Studies warns, raising the prospect of a mass-casualty attack as covert conflict widens beyond Ukraine's borders. Covering October 2025 to September 2026, the IISS analysis finds that while overall recorded Russian activity eased slightly as reconnaissance declined, destructive sabotage surged and increasingly targeted states backing Kyiv. More than half of tracked operations hit military-industrial sites, transport hubs, and energy infrastructure, alongside cyber disruptions affecting supermarkets, blood banks, and airports.

Geographic pressure has concentrated heavily on frontline logistics corridors. In the latest August to September surge, Poland accounted for 24 per cent of recorded incidents, while Germany and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania each faced 20 per cent.

Violent methods have expanded sharply, with arson incidents doubling from seven to 14 and improvised explosive device cases rising from four to 11. According to the report, operatives acting for Moscow are no longer solely unskilled recruits; a more capable tier is deploying timed and remote detonators, illustrated by an explosives-laden drone recovered near a military supply aircraft at Leipzig/Halle Airport in August and incendiary devices defused in Bucharest.

Though no fatalities have been recorded from European sabotage so far, the IISS warns that the margin for miscalculation is shrinking. A single deadly strike or major rail disruption could spark fierce calls for retaliation while exposing policy rifts across European capitals.

The think tank criticizes European governments for responding "one incident at a time" without clear red lines, arguing that NATO members should publicly define what levels of harm trigger specific responses to alter Moscow's calculus. Moscow denies orchestrating sabotage campaigns.



Escalation is also spilling into maritime theaters far from the front line. In Benghazi, Libya, Ukrainian naval drones struck and sank the Russian Navy corvette Merkury at port, with Vantor satellite imagery showing the vessel largely capsized and smoking beside the pier. Ukrainian officials framed the strike on Russian military logistics in eastern Libya as lawful self-defense, while Moscow condemned it as a dangerous escalation.

The strike followed a Saturday drone attack in the Gulf of Finland that set the sanctioned Russian logistics cargo ship Sparta II ablaze before it drifted near Finnish waters, prompting Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo to warn that the war was spilling over.

Together, rising covert sabotage inside Europe and long-range strikes at sea show a conflict testing deterrence across multiple fronts at once. Without clearer collective thresholds in Brussels and Washington, European states risk being forced into reactive crisis management on terms set by a shock rather than strategy.

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PUMPKIN PIE, VANILLA ICE CREAM AND THE THANKSGIVING BILL AT THE AMERICAN TABLE

United States President Donald Trump has revealed his favourite Thanksgiving dessert, with one non-negotiable condition: pumpkin pie must be served with vanilla ice cream. Trump shared the preference during his annual Thanksgiving phone calls with American service members on Thursday, November 26, alongside First Lady Melania Trump, after Space Force Lieutenant Karina Ballesteros asked the couple what dessert they liked best for the holiday. Trump turned the question into a quip about his predecessor, calling it "a Joe Biden question" and adding, "So I like that question because that's an easy one."

Now flip the camera onto the average American,. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2026 Thanksgiving survey, the cost of a classic 10-person dinner rose 6 per cent over last year to an average of $58.63, marking the first annual increase since 2022. A 16-pound frozen turkey climbed 10 per cent to an average of $23.68, whole milk rose 8.6 per cent to $4.05 a gallon, fresh cranberries rose 8.8 per cent, and an expanded menu with ham, potatoes, and green beans reached $81.72.

A LendingTree survey found that 53 per cent of respondents said inflation was affecting their holiday plans or spending, while 62 per cent of potential hosts said they may need to borrow to pay for Thanksgiving, including 38 per cent turning to credit cards. "Nobody wants to cut back on something as meaningful as a gathering of family and friends on Thanksgiving because it costs too much, but that's what a lot of people are facing right now," said LendingTree chief consumer finance analyst Matt Schulz. Retired Philadelphia resident Andre Andrews put it more bluntly: "It's too high. Things are high, so much higher."

The irony of a world power defined by "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" where millions of households rely on credit cards or potluck rationing just to put poultry and pie on the table points straight to Washington's fiscal ledger. In fiscal year 2026, federal spending climbed to roughly $7.4 trillion against $5.4 trillion in revenue, leaving a budget deficit near $2 trillion and pushing public debt to roughly $32.3 trillion, or about 100 per cent of gross domestic product. Rather than easing household strain, trillions in borrowed money have gone toward giant entitlement programmes, defense, and a staggering debt-service bill: net interest on the national debt topped $1 trillion in fiscal 2026, surpassing defense spending and absorbing roughly 19 per cent of federal revenue.

Meanwhile, supply chain pressures, avian flu recovery in turkey flocks, fuel costs, and tariff friction on packaging and goods have kept pressure on everyday essentials, pushing overall consumer price inflation back up to 3.7 per cent in September from 2.3 per cent in April 2025. A single scoop of vanilla ice cream on top of a pumpkin pie costs pennies in isolation, yet across millions of strained household budgets it captures the wider divide in the world's richest economy between effortless comfort at the top and mounting financial friction for working families.

NEW DELHI CABINET CLEARS 50 PERCENT SEAT HIKE AND 2051 FREEZE

India's Union Cabinet approved a revised Constitution Amendment Bill on Friday to roll out a 33 percent reservation for women through delimitation, proposing a uniform 50 percent increase in Lok Sabha seats across all states while freezing the existing population based representation ratio until 2051. For Sri Lankan observers tracking neighbourhood politics, the decision marks a major recalibration in Indian federalism ahead of a special parliamentary sitting scheduled to open on November 30, following the defeat of an earlier version of the bill in April.



For decades, redrawing parliamentary boundaries has tested New Delhi's relationship with its southern states, whose politics and trade ties closely shape regional dynamics around the Indian Ocean. Southern states that stabilized population growth earlier have long warned that strict population weighting after a fresh census would reduce their share of seats in favour of faster growing northern states.

When the earlier Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill came before the Lok Sabha in April 2026, opposition unity defeated it by falling short of the two thirds majority required, with critics objecting to tying women's representation to census and delimitation timelines.

By pairing an across the board 50 percent expansion in state seats, which would lift the Lok Sabha toward roughly 850 members, with a 25 year freeze on inter state representation ratios anchored to the 1971 baseline, New Delhi is trying to ease southern resistance.

That formula directly mirrors demands pressed by regional parties such as Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK and Sharad Pawar's NCP faction, whose backing is vital if the ruling coalition is to clear the special majority threshold in Parliament.

Even so, the compromise introduces fresh constitutional questions for Sri Lanka's largest neighbour.

Freezing inter state seat proportions until 2051 while enlarging the lower house tests the balance between federal accommodation and voter equality, and raises questions about how a much larger Lok Sabha affects parliamentary weight relative to the Rajya Sabha and expands the upper limit on the union council of ministers. Critics have also continued to ask why implementing the 33 percent women's quota remains tied to delimitation rather than taking effect independently.

Political stability in New Delhi and bargaining power in southern states like Tamil Nadu routinely ripple across regional diplomacy. Whether a uniform seat increase and a quarter century freeze settle India's delimitation impasse or merely postpone a deeper federal debate will soon be tested on the floor of Parliament.

INDIA RESCUE OPERATION IN TELANGANA FREES TWENTY FIVE WORKERS, NINE CHILDREN FROM DECADE-LONG DEBT BONDAGE

Authorities in India's southern state of Telangana have rescued twenty five workers, including nine children, after several families were allegedly held in debt bondage for between ten and fourteen years. The operation followed alerts raised by social workers, prompting district officials to inspect the facilities after reports of physical abuse, withheld wages, and severe curbs on movement.

Across India, debt bondage remains one of the most persistent forms of coercive labour in informal sectors such as brick kilns, stone quarries, and small manufacturing units. Workers and their families typically take small upfront advances during medical emergencies, weddings, or seasonal lean periods, only to find the debt compounded by inflated deductions, low piece rate pay, and arbitrary fines. When wages are withheld or kept below subsistence levels, the original advance becomes nearly impossible to clear, turning families into unpaid labour across years and trapping children alongside their parents.



In Telangana, migrant and local labourers working in brick kilns and small worksites have repeatedly surfaced in enforcement drives and human rights reviews. While India's Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act outlaws debt bondage and mandates criminal prosecution, release certificates, and state rehabilitation support, activists and labour monitors often point to a wide gap between statutory promises and day to day enforcement. Poor documentation, delayed police cases, and uneven coordination across labour, revenue, and child welfare departments can leave survivors vulnerable even after a raid takes place.

For children caught in these arrangements, the cost stretches far beyond lost wages. Years spent inside worksites or makeshift shelters cut minors off from regular schooling, healthcare, and safe childhoods,

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while exposing them to hazardous physical conditions and exploitation. Ensuring that rescued families receive formal legal recognition, immediate financial assistance, safe transit, and long term rehabilitation is essential if they are not to be pulled back into debt out of sheer economic necessity.

Freeing workers from a site is only the first step in dismantling bonded labour. Strict prosecution of abusive employers, steady oversight of high risk industries, and durable economic alternatives for vulnerable households is a must for real change, before another decade slips away in servitude for the helpless.

FAMINE THREATENS PARTS OF AFRICA AS UN WARNS HUNGER WILL WORSEN IN 16 GLOBAL HOTSPOTS

Acute food insecurity is set to worsen sharply across 16 global hotspots between December 2026 and May 2027, with famine threatening parts of Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme warned on Friday in Rome. In their joint Hunger Hotspots early warning report, the two United Nations agencies placed Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, parts of northern Nigeria, and Yemen at the highest level of concern, driven by armed conflict, mass displacement, economic strain, and climate extremes.



The number of hunger hotspots climbed from 13 in June to 16 in the latest assessment, with newly added areas including Southern Africa, the Central American Dry Corridor, and northeastern Uganda, alongside Chad due to spillover from the war in neighbouring Sudan. Conflict and violence remain primary drivers across 12 of the 16 hotspots. Famine risks are flagged in 13 areas of North Darfur and South Kordofan in Sudan through January 2027, as well as in parts of South Sudan and among displaced populations around Baidoa in Somalia. In northern Nigeria and Yemen, ongoing insecurity, market disruptions, and fragile economies continue to push household food access toward crisis levels.

A developing El Niño pattern is compounding the crisis by swinging weather regimes toward drought and extreme heat in Southern Africa and Central America while raising flooding risks in parts of Eastern Africa. In Southern Africa alone, high acute food insecurity over the coming months is projected to hit up to 3 million people in Zimbabwe, 2.6 million in Malawi, and 1.8 million in Mozambique as dry conditions threaten crops.

Humanitarian resources are shrinking just as needs expand. Food security and nutrition funding for the five highest-concern hotspots fell 62 per cent between 2022 and 2025, dropping from $5.1 billion to $2 billion, while the agencies' joint El Niño anticipatory action plan to protect 9 million people across 22 countries faced a $125 million funding shortfall. World Food Programme Executive Director Luke J. Lindberg said the report identifies where famine could strike next and argued that averting catastrophe hinges on ending conflicts, resourcing field teams, and securing safe humanitarian access rather than operational capability.

When climate volatility collides with prolonged instability and shrinking aid budgets, vulnerable farming communities absorb the earliest and hardest blows.

BRAZIL MARKETS REBOUND AS LULA APPOINTS BRADESCO CHAIRMAN LUIZ CARLOS TRABUCO AS FINANCE MINISTER

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has appointed 75-year-old Bradesco chairman Luiz Carlos Trabuco to serve as finance minister starting in January, moving to steady investor nerves after weeks of financial turbulence following Lula's re-election. Confirmed late on Thursday, the selection marks the first cabinet appointment announced for Lula's fourth non-consecutive term and represents an effort to bridge deep fiscal anxieties in financial markets with the spending priorities of a veteran leftist administration.

Financial markets had already begun reacting before the formal announcement. Following Lula's surprise runoff victory a month ago, Brazilian equities slid and the currency weakened, briefly crossing six reais per dollar on November 23.

Rumours that Trabuco was in line for the treasury portfolio helped spark a rebound this week, with the Sao Paulo stock market closing 6 percent higher on November 26 and the real recovering ground as traders priced in a more orthodox interlocutor at the finance ministry.

So, who is Luiz Carlos Trabuco, and why does his background matter to investors?

Trabuco brings more than four decades of banking experience from Latin America's largest economy. Joining Bradesco at age 17 as a clerk, he rose through the institution to become chief executive officer from 2009 to 2018, a period highlighted by the 2015 acquisition of HSBC's Brazilian operations in one of the largest banking transactions in Brazil's history.

Educated in philosophy at the University of Sao Paulo with a postgraduate degree in socio-psychology, Trabuco has maintained a long-standing relationship with Lula and has often served as a trusted bridge between the president and corporate leaders.

His appointment alone won't smooth tension over within Lula's own political base so easily. Placing a prominent private banker at the helm of economic policy has drawn pushback from the left, with lawmaker Glauber Braga criticizing the move on social media and Workers' Party lower-house leader Pedro Uczai expressing reservations ahead of the confirmation. Trabuco has previously argued that prohibitive capital costs hurt industry, commerce, agribusiness, and consumers, and that economic policy must prioritize growth and social inclusion without remaining bound to rigid dogma.



The economic realities waiting to test him when he takes office in January are vast. Brazil's benchmark interest rate sits at 13.75 percent, inflation is projected near 5 percent against a 3 percent official target, and central bank surveys point to roughly 1 percent growth next year.

While the government unveiled measures on November 11 aimed at saving about 0.5 percent of gross domestic product in 2027 to preserve fiscal targets alongside social commitments, economists argue deeper spending discipline will be needed to stabilize public debt.

For emerging markets, including countries like Sri Lanka watching how major developing economies manage debt, interest rates, and populist spending promises, Trabuco's tenure will test whether a pragmatic banker can reconcile market credibility with social pledges.

