Issue No. 351 15th AUGUST 2026 CEYLON INDEPENDENT @+94 77 230 0305

"Questioning The Answers"

16,966 MISSING: JUST 25 FOUND

Eight years after the Office on Missing Persons began operations, thousands of Sri Lankan families are still waiting for answers

Issue No. 351 15th AUGUST 2026 CEYLON INDEPENDENT @+94 77 230 0305

"Questioning The Answers"

16,966 MISSING: JUST 25 FOUND

Eight years after the Office on Missing Persons began operations, thousands of Sri Lankan families are still waiting for answers

COLOMBO, Friday. Sri Lanka's Office on Missing Persons has disclosed that **16,966 civilian cases remain active on its books while only 25 missing people have so far been traced and their whereabouts formally verified**, figures that raise searching questions about the effectiveness of one of the country's principal transitional-justice institutions.

The OMP says its consolidated database contains **23,352 missing persons** after records inherited from previous commissions, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organisations were brought together and duplicate complaints identified.

Of those cases, 16,966 involving civilians remain active. The OMP says it has found and verified the whereabouts of 25 people, while another six are believed to be alive but their circumstances have yet to be formally verified.

The numbers are striking not merely because of their scale but because the OMP has been operational since 2018. For thousands of families, the issue is therefore not an historical statistic but an unresolved question that has followed them through successive governments, commissions and investigations.

The Office says it has conducted face-to-face inquiries with **9,072 families** and plans to meet approximately another 5,000 families before the end of this year. The Government has allocated more than **Rs.375 million** to support the process of meeting affected families and progressing inquiries.

The OMP was established as an independent institution to search for and trace missing persons, clarify the circumstances in which they disappeared and provide families with information concerning their fate. Its mandate encompasses disappearances connected to the armed conflict as well as other periods of political violence and unrest.

The difficulty confronting the institution is formidable. Records accumulated over decades are frequently incomplete, witnesses may have died or become difficult to locate, families have moved and evidence capable of establishing what happened to an individual can become increasingly difficult to recover with the passage of time.

Yet those difficulties cannot obscure the extraordinary disparity contained in the latest figures. If nearly 17,000 civilian cases remain active while the whereabouts of only 25 people have been formally established, the inevitable question is whether the machinery created to provide answers is functioning with sufficient speed, resources and effectiveness.

There is also a larger question of public confidence. Sri Lanka has established numerous commissions and investigative mechanisms over several decades to examine disappearances.

For families who have repeatedly provided statements and documentation, the ultimate measure of success is not the number of files opened, interviews conducted or institutions created. It is whether they finally discover what happened to the person who disappeared.

Eight years after the OMP began its work, that remains an answer thousands of Sri Lankan families are still waiting to hear.

(By Faraz Shauketaly)

I have found myself thinking much about a person whom I have never met in person, yet who, thanks to Alexander Graham Bell and Dialog, became a friend across distance and circumstance.

In an age where voices travel faster than footsteps, such connections carry a quiet significance of their own.

He has been deeply affected by the loss of a job he cherished, and by events that have weighed heavily upon him.

In reflecting upon his journey, I felt compelled to remember him in my own writings, not as an observer of his struggle, but as someone pausing briefly alongside it.

This, then, is a small pit-stop from the highways of corruption, political egos, accountability and transnational justice.

A moment to step away from the noise, to breathe, and to acknowledge another's conundrums with empathy rather than analysis, with humanity rather than judgment.

For even amid the grand narratives of power and consequence, it is often the individual story, quietly endured, that reminds us what it means to be human.

God bless you,
Faraz

WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES

In a world crowded with complexities, it is sometimes the simplest truths that matter most.

There comes a moment when loyalty, however deeply held, must no longer be confused with remaining tethered to the past.

Principles need not be abandoned, reputations need not be diminished, and yesterday need not be rewritten.

But there is a time to accept what has happened, close the chapter with dignity and move forward.

Circumstances alter cases - as surely as powder alters faces.

The digital world has created its own order of behaviour, with unfamiliar rules, instant judgments and consequences that can draw even the finest men and women into controversy.

Good people are not rendered bad by one difficult episode, nor should an entire life be measured by a single moment.

Be that as it may, the past cannot be allowed to occupy the space reserved for the future.

Sometimes what feels like rejection is, in truth, redirection.

The Almighty does not always answer by restoring what was lost. Sometimes He answers by opening another door; a door we might never have noticed while standing before the one that had closed.

That new opportunity must now be seized.

Not timidly, and not while looking over one's shoulder, but with confidence, gratitude and determination. Make it shine. Make it count. Make it the beginning of something worthy - for yourself and for those who depend upon you.

Leave behind bitterness, but carry forward the lessons.

Remember the good without becoming imprisoned by it.

Accept the pain without permitting it to define you.

And when the road ahead feels uncertain, remember this: you do not walk it alone. You never did. You never will.

He walks beside you.

Issue No. 351 15th AUGUST 2026 CEYLON INDEPENDENT @+94 77 230 0305

"Questioning The Answers"

TEMPORARY – UNTIL IT WASN'T

Government extends 50% vehicle import surcharge until December 31 as questions persist over foreign-exchange pressures

By Faraz Shauketaly

COLOMBO, Friday - The Government has extended the temporary **50 per cent surcharge on Customs Import Duty imposed on specified motor vehicle imports until December 31**, prolonging a measure introduced earlier this year to restrain foreign-exchange outflows amid renewed pressure on Sri Lanka's external finances.

The surcharge, introduced on May 16 for an initial period of three months, was due to expire on August 15. Its extension means importers and prospective vehicle buyers will continue to face the additional duty burden for the remainder of 2026.

The order was issued by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in his capacity as Minister of Finance. Motorcycles, three-wheelers and specified commercial vehicles are reported to remain outside the additional levy.

The decision comes after Sri Lanka gradually reopened vehicle imports following restrictions imposed during the economic crisis, when dwindling foreign-exchange reserves forced the country to severely restrict a range of non-essential imports. Restoring vehicle imports has since generated substantial Customs revenue but has simultaneously increased demand for foreign currency.

The Government's original decision to impose the surcharge was presented as a temporary response to external pressures.

Extending it by another four-and-a-half months therefore raises a larger question over whether policymakers remain concerned that unrestricted vehicle demand could place renewed pressure on reserves and the exchange rate.

There is also a substantial fiscal dimension. Vehicle imports have traditionally been an important source of Government revenue, and the additional duties provide the Treasury with significant receipts at a time when Sri Lanka remains committed to demanding revenue targets under its post-crisis economic programme.

For consumers, however, the consequences are straightforward. Higher import taxes translate into higher showroom prices, making already expensive vehicles considerably less affordable and potentially suppressing demand.

The policy therefore performs two functions simultaneously: discouraging foreign-exchange expenditure while increasing Government revenue from vehicles that continue to enter the country.

The question is how long a measure introduced as temporary can remain part of the tax structure before the market begins treating it as permanent. For motorists and the vehicle trade, December 31 has now become the next date to watch.

DROUGHT. THEN DELUGE?

Meteorology Department warns developing El Niño could become exceptionally strong as Sri Lanka faces contrasting risks of dry weather and heavy rain

NewsDesk

COLOMBO, Friday. Sri Lanka could face an unusually powerful El Niño during 2026–27, with the Department of Meteorology warning of a **69 per cent probability that the developing event could become stronger than those experienced during the past 75 years**, raising concerns over agriculture, water supplies, hydropower and the possibility of heavy rainfall later in the year.

Director General of Meteorology Ajith Wijemannage has said moderate El Niño conditions are already being experienced and are expected to strengthen, potentially producing sharply different weather patterns across the country during the coming months.

Below-normal rainfall is expected across parts of the Northern, North Central and Eastern Provinces and sections of Uva during the immediate period. That could place pressure on agricultural production and water availability if dry conditions persist.

The picture may then reverse. Rainfall is expected to increase from September, with above-average rainfall possible during October and November and heightened rainfall risks continuing into December and January.

The combination presents policymakers with an unusual challenge. Prolonged dry conditions can reduce reservoir levels, affect cultivation and constrain hydropower generation, while excessive rainfall later in the year could produce flooding, landslides and further agricultural losses.

Sri Lanka has already been reminded in recent weeks of its vulnerability to extreme weather, with heavy rains causing deaths, evacuations and landslides in parts of the country. An exceptionally strong El Niño would add another layer of uncertainty to disaster-management and agricultural planning.

The economic implications could also extend beyond the farming districts.

Reduced domestic food production can feed directly into inflation, while lower hydropower generation increases reliance on more expensive thermal electricity. At the opposite extreme, floods and landslides damage roads, homes and crops and impose additional costs on the State.

One distinction is nevertheless important. The **69 per cent probability relates to the potential strength of the El Niño event itself**. It does not mean Sri Lanka faces a 69 per cent probability of either drought or flooding.

Forecasts will continue to evolve as the phenomenon develops. But with the possibility of unusually strong conditions now being raised by the country's meteorological authorities, preparations for both extremes may have to begin considerably before either arrives.

BIA TERMINAL 2 FINALLY PREPARES FOR TAKE-OFF

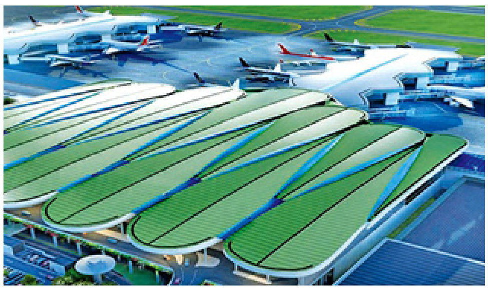
Japan says construction of long-delayed airport expansion will begin before November as additional financing arrangements near completion

COLOMBO, Friday - Construction of the long-delayed Terminal 2 development at Bandaranaike International Airport is expected to resume **before November**, offering fresh momentum to one of Sri Lanka's most important infrastructure projects after years of disruption and delay.

Japanese authorities have indicated that arrangements for additional financing are being completed, while discussions with the selected contractor have reached their final stages. The development should clear the way for construction work on the new international terminal to restart.

Terminal 2 forms a central component of the BIA expansion programme and is intended to substantially increase passenger-handling capacity at the country's principal international gateway. Its completion has assumed increasing urgency as Sri Lanka seeks to rebuild tourism and attract substantially higher numbers of visitors.

The airport has for years struggled with congestion during peak periods, while passenger facilities have failed to expand at the same pace as the country's tourism ambitions. A modern second terminal is intended to increase capacity while improving baggage handling, immigration, passenger circulation and other airport services.



The project also has wider economic significance. Almost every international tourist arriving in Sri Lanka by air passes through BIA, making the quality and capacity of the airport an important part of the country's tourism product. Airport constraints can also affect airlines considering additional frequencies or new routes into Colombo.

"Questioning The Answers"

BIA TERMINAL 2 ...

Japan has historically been one of Sri Lanka's most important development partners and has supported a range of major infrastructure projects. The resumption of Terminal 2 would therefore also mark another step in the restoration of Japanese-backed projects disrupted during Sri Lanka's economic crisis and sovereign debt default.

Yet the test will ultimately be delivery. The airport expansion has experienced repeated delays, and announcements of revised timelines will matter little unless they translate into sustained construction and a credible completion date.

Sri Lanka has set increasingly ambitious tourism targets. If those ambitions are to be realised, the infrastructure through which visitors enter the country must grow with them. After years spent largely on the ground, Terminal 2 may finally be preparing for take-off.

GOVERNMENT DIGS IN; 22A GOES TO PARLIAMENT TUESDAY

Judges' retirement-age amendment moves forward despite objections from the Bar, Opposition and UN as August 18 becomes the next constitutional battleground

By Faraz Shauketaly

COLOMBO, Friday - The Government will present the proposed **22nd Amendment to the Constitution to Parliament on Tuesday, August 18**, pressing ahead with its controversial plan to extend the retirement ages of superior court judges despite mounting objections from sections of the legal profession, political Opposition and the United Nations mandate holder on judicial independence.

Justice and National Integration Minister Harshana Nanayakkara confirmed that the constitutional amendment and the accompanying Judicial Organisations Amendment Bill will be presented to Parliament on Tuesday, establishing the next formal stage in a debate that has moved rapidly from Cabinet approval to one of the most closely watched constitutional issues of the year.

The Government proposes extending the retirement ages of judges of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, arguing that retaining experienced judges forms part of a wider programme to improve the administration of justice.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has maintained that the proposal was not designed to benefit any particular individual or group but was conceived in the broader public interest.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka has taken a more nuanced position. While indicating that it does not object in principle to reviewing judicial retirement ages, the organised Bar has expressed serious reservations over the present proposal and particularly its application to judges already serving on the superior courts.

Those concerns have now acquired an international dimension. UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers Margaret Satterthwaite has questioned the implications of changing the tenure of incumbent judges and raised concerns about actual or perceived conflicts should judges who stand to benefit from the amendment subsequently be required to determine its constitutionality.

Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa has meanwhile called for the proposal to be submitted to the People at a referendum, bringing the constitutional threshold required to enact the amendment firmly into the political debate.

The Bill's presentation to Parliament will not settle that issue. Once placed on the Order Paper, the Constitution provides a window during which its constitutionality may be challenged before the Supreme Court. The Court would then determine what parliamentary majority is required and whether any provision also requires approval by the People at a referendum.

That prospect produces an unusual constitutional difficulty. If the amendment applies immediately to incumbent judges, members of the very institution whose tenure may be affected could be called upon to determine the constitutional requirements governing the proposal.

Tuesday therefore marks considerably more than another parliamentary sitting. It moves the Government from defending its proposal politically to formally testing whether it can navigate the constitutional safeguards surrounding one of the Republic's most important institutions.

INFLATION STAYS HOT – BUT RATES MAY STAY PUT

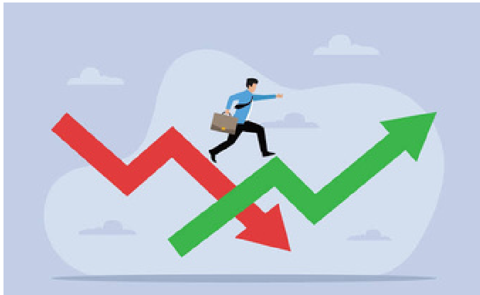
Central Bank expects price pressures to remain elevated in the near term while signalling recent monetary tightening should cool credit growth

COLOMBO, Friday - Sri Lanka's Central Bank expects inflation to remain elevated in the near term even as its recent monetary tightening begins to restrain private-sector credit growth, presenting policymakers with the difficult task of containing prices without unnecessarily weakening the economic recovery.

The Central Bank's **August 2026 Monetary Policy Report** says headline inflation, which has accelerated sharply, is expected to remain elevated before gradually moving back towards the Bank's medium-term target of five per cent.

The outlook follows the Central Bank's surprise **100-basis-point monetary tightening in May**, a move intended to contain emerging inflationary and external-sector pressures. Governor Nandalal Weerasinghe has subsequently indicated that another increase in interest rates is not presently expected during the remainder of the year, assuming economic conditions develop broadly in line with the Bank's forecasts.

That creates a delicate balancing act. Higher interest rates can restrain excessive borrowing and demand, helping to control inflation and foreign-exchange pressures, but they also increase financing costs for households and businesses at a time when investment remains essential to sustaining economic growth.



The Central Bank expects private-sector credit growth to moderate as the effects of tighter monetary conditions work through the financial system. At the same time, it describes economic growth as broadly stable and says the external sector has remained resilient despite continuing geopolitical uncertainty.

Risks nevertheless remain. The Bank identifies international geopolitical developments and adverse weather as potential threats to the outlook. Both could feed directly into domestic prices through higher energy, food or transportation costs.

The latest assessment therefore presents a considerably more complicated picture than the rapid disinflation that accompanied Sri Lanka's initial economic stabilisation. The question for monetary policymakers is no longer simply how quickly inflation can be brought down, but how to do so without undermining the recovery that followed the country's deepest economic crisis.

For consumers, the test will be more immediate. Inflation targets and monetary-policy forecasts ultimately matter because of what happens at the supermarket, on electricity bills and in household budgets.

If inflation remains elevated while interest rates remain restrictive, the recovery may increasingly be judged not by macroeconomic statistics but by whether ordinary households can actually feel it.

Issue No. 351 15th AUGUST 2026 CEYLON INDEPENDENT @+94 77 230 0305

"Questioning The Answers"

SRI LANKA'S REFORM GOVERNMENT IS TESTING JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Raising judges' retirement age can be legitimate. Rewriting the tenure of judges already on the bench is a different matter.

By Kithmi Gunaratne

Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake came to power promising a break with a political establishment discredited by economic collapse, corruption and public anger over the way power had been exercised.

His anti-corruption message was central to his 2024 presidential campaign, and voters subsequently handed his National People's Power coalition an extraordinary 159 of Parliament's 225 seats. It was a mandate not merely to replace the people governing Sri Lanka, but to change the political habits by which it had been governed.

That is why his government's latest constitutional proposal is so troubling.

On August 7, the government gazetted the Twenty-Second Amendment to the Constitution, which would raise the mandatory retirement age of Supreme Court judges from 65 to 67 and Court of Appeal judges from 63 to 65. The bill would also require the chief justice to retire at 67 or after six years as chief justice, whichever comes first, and increase the maximum number of other Court of Appeal judges from 19 to 24.

The four-section bill replaces the existing retirement-age provision without creating a transitional exemption for judges already serving. It therefore stands to change not merely the terms on which future judges enter office, but the tenure of identifiable judges already sitting on Sri Lanka's highest courts.

There is nothing inherently improper about a Supreme Court judge serving until 67. Many countries permit judges to remain in office considerably longer, and there is a respectable argument that Sri Lanka should retain experienced jurists rather than lose them at comparatively young retirement ages. Reducing the controversy to a debate about whether 65 or 67 is the better number, however, misses the constitutional problem.

The real question is whether politicians should be able to change how long judges already in office remain there, when those judges exercise the power to review the legality and constitutionality of actions taken by the political branches themselves.

The government has offered a defence that deserves to be taken seriously. Dissanayake has said the change is not intended to benefit any individual or group and has placed it within a broader programme to improve the administration of justice.

The government is also seeking to expand judicial capacity and strengthen institutions including the Attorney General's Department, police, anti-corruption machinery and Government Analyst's Department. Sri Lanka's Bar Association, after meeting the president this week, said it did not object in principle either to increasing the number of judges or to reconsidering retirement ages, but urged broader expert consultation before such a change is made.

The problem is that good intentions are not a constitutional safeguard.

Judicial independence is usually understood as protection against punishment. Governments must not dismiss judges because they dislike their decisions, threaten their livelihoods or manipulate their conditions of service to secure favourable judgments. But independence has another side that receives less attention: judges must also be insulated from political favour. If politicians should not be able to shorten the career of a judge they want removed, there should be equal caution when politicians acquire the capacity to lengthen the careers of judges already in office.

This is not an allegation that Dissanayake is attempting to purchase judicial loyalty. There is no publicly established evidence of such a bargain, and alleging one would distract from the more important institutional question.

Constitutions do not exist because governments can always be trusted to use power honourably; they exist because eventually a government may not. The relevant test is therefore not whether Sri Lankans believe this president has benign motives. It is whether Sri Lanka should establish a precedent under which any president backed by a sufficiently large parliamentary majority can change the tenure of judges already responsible for checking political power.

That concern has now travelled far beyond Sri Lanka's domestic political debate. On August 7, Margaret Satterthwaite, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, sent the Sri Lankan government a formal communication warning that the proposed amendment could raise concerns under international standards protecting judicial independence and the right to a fair trial. Most significantly, she focused on the proposal's effect on sitting judges rather than future appointments, describing judicial tenure as a core safeguard of independence and referring to international standards requiring security of tenure until a predetermined retirement age or expiry of office.

Satterthwaite's warning goes directly to the weakness in the government's case. She noted that the Venice Commission has repeatedly cautioned against changes to retirement ages or judicial terms that apply retrospectively to serving judges without appropriate transitional arrangements.

While acknowledging that retaining judicial expertise can justify increasing a retirement age, she warned that reforms affecting tenure require particularly robust safeguards precisely because courts constrain executive and legislative power. The absence of transitional protections, she argued, risks making a generally worded reform appear to alter the immediate composition of the judiciary for institutional purposes rather than establish a neutral rule for the future.

There is an additional difficulty that should alarm the government. The Special Rapporteur observed that judges who stand to benefit from the extension could conceivably be required to determine the constitutionality of the amendment itself. That situation would not automatically establish actual bias. But the absence of mechanisms to address the potential conflict, she warned, could undermine confidence in the appearance of judicial impartiality. She therefore asked Sri Lanka to explain why the higher retirement age should apply to currently serving judges rather than only future appointees, what consultations had been undertaken, and what safeguards would prevent actual or perceived political interference.

The UN is not alone. The Commonwealth Lawyers Association warned in June that constitutional amendments affecting judicial tenure should not be made in a piecemeal or ad hoc fashion and should be preceded by proper public and stakeholder consultation.

LAWASIA subsequently endorsed those concerns, arguing that the proposal had the appearance of an ad hoc initiative without adequate consultation and could undermine public confidence in judicial independence. The International Association of Judges has likewise stressed that its concern is not with changing retirement ages as a general policy, but with the timing, manner and perceived purpose of Sri Lanka's proposal.

That distinction is crucial because international experience demonstrates that increasing a judicial retirement age is not inherently an attack on democracy. Britain raised the mandatory retirement age for many judicial office-holders from 70 to 75.

But the British government first conducted a formal consultation lasting three months and received 1,004 responses from judges, magistrates, lawyers and other stakeholders. Its review explicitly considered the competing consequences of a higher retirement age: retaining expertise and increasing judicial resources on one hand, while potentially slowing the flow of new appointments and affecting the composition and diversity of the judiciary on the other. The reform proceeded after that debate, not before it.

Australia offers an even clearer lesson about tenure. Until 1977, federal judges were appointed for life. Australians then approved a constitutional amendment establishing compulsory retirement at 70, but the alteration did not disturb judges who had been appointed under the previous tenure arrangements. Australian parliamentary records make clear that judges appointed before the constitutional change retained their existing position while the new retirement rule governed subsequent appointments. The direction of the reform was opposite to Sri Lanka's, but the constitutional principle is instructive: governments can change the rules governing the judiciary without rewriting the tenure attached to appointments already made.

Zimbabwe provides the cautionary example. In 2021, constitutional changes allowed senior judges to remain in office beyond the previous retirement age of 70, and President Emmerson Mnangagwa extended Chief Justice Luke Malaba's tenure as he reached the old limit. Litigation followed and the controversy became inseparable from a larger argument about executive influence over the judiciary. Sri Lanka is not Zimbabwe, and equating the two governments would be both inaccurate and intellectually lazy. The relevant lesson is narrower: when a constitutional amendment produces an immediate extension of tenure for identifiable senior judges, suspicion about who benefits can overwhelm whatever institutional rationale the government originally offered.

“Questioning The Answers”

Sri Lanka’s reform government...

For a judiciary, that suspicion is not a trivial public-relations problem. Courts ultimately rely upon citizens believing that judges approach disputes without political obligation. Consider the entirely avoidable position Sri Lanka could create: a citizen challenges an important act of the government before judges whose retirement dates were extended because that same government initiated a constitutional amendment and its parliamentary majority enacted it.

The judges could be completely independent. Their reasoning could be impeccable. Nothing about receiving the benefit of a generally worded law proves gratitude or bias. Yet constitutional design should try to eliminate such doubts, not manufacture them and then insist that the public disregard them.

Nor does Sri Lanka’s enormous court backlog resolve the problem. The government is right that judicial delay is serious and that retaining experienced judges may have some administrative value. But its own reform programme demonstrates that congestion is a system-wide problem involving judicial numbers, prosecution, policing, forensic capacity, administration and infrastructure.

Expanding courts, filling vacancies and improving those institutions attack capacity constraints directly. Extending the retirement dates of the people already occupying senior judicial office is a much blunter intervention, while also slowing the vacancies and promotions through which judicial institutions renew themselves. Britain’s own retirement-age review openly acknowledged the trade-off between retaining experienced judges and maintaining a steady flow of new appointments.

Sri Lanka therefore faces a false choice if this debate is presented as one between retaining judicial expertise and preserving judicial independence. It can do both. If 65 and 63 are no longer appropriate retirement ages, the government can demonstrate that with evidence, consult the judiciary, the Bar, legal scholars and civil society, examine the effects on succession and court capacity, and establish a higher retirement age through a carefully designed reform. It can then adopt transitional provisions that prevent the change from appearing to be additional tenure bestowed by the political branches upon judges already in office. That is essentially what the UN Special Rapporteur has asked Colombo to explain.

For Dissanayake, however, there is a larger political question. His government does not lack the parliamentary strength to force through ambitious reforms. The NPP controls 159 seats, comfortably more than two-thirds of Parliament. That makes self-restraint more important, not less. Governments with fragile majorities are constrained by arithmetic; governments with overwhelming majorities must sometimes impose constraints upon themselves.

Sri Lanka should understand that danger better than most countries. Its modern political history has repeatedly involved constitutional rules being remodelled as governments alternately strengthened and restrained the presidency, altered checks on political appointments and redesigned the relationship between elected power and independent institutions.

The present Constitutional Council itself exists under the Twenty-First Amendment and plays a role in approving presidential recommendations for appointments including the chief justice, Supreme Court judges and Court of Appeal judges.

A movement elected on the promise of changing Sri Lanka’s political culture should therefore be exceptionally wary of repeating one of that culture’s oldest habits: treating constitutional architecture as something that can be adjusted whenever the government of the day believes its immediate objective is sufficiently worthy.

That is what makes this more than an argument about two additional years of judicial service. Democratic erosion does not always begin with a president ordering a judge from the bench or openly declaring war on the courts.

Institutional boundaries can also weaken through technical measures, respectable administrative explanations and constitutional amendments whose proponents insist that nothing sinister is intended. The appropriate response is not to assume sinister intent. It is to design institutions so that intent matters as little as possible.

Dissanayake’s government can still do that. It can raise Sri Lanka’s judicial retirement age after a transparent review.

It can expand the courts, modernise case management, strengthen prosecution and forensic services and tackle the delays that deny Sri Lankans timely justice. What it should not establish casually is the principle that political majorities may alter how long judges already sitting in judgment over the state remain in office.

The issue is not whether a judge becomes incapable of delivering justice on his or her sixty-fifth birthday. Clearly, that is not the case.

The issue is who gets to change the terms of judicial tenure after the judge has taken office, what safeguards govern that power and whether the change leaves citizens with reason to wonder about the relationship between those who govern and those who judge them.

Judicial independence requires judges to know that politicians cannot end their careers because they dislike their decisions. A democracy should be equally careful to ensure that sitting judges never have reason to owe additional years on the bench to those same politicians.

(The author is a published poet and a student of International Relations.)

POLICE REVEAL CASES AGAINST SHIRAN BASIK AFTER DUBAI RETURN

Alleged large-scale drug trafficker and underworld figure Shiran Basik, who had fled Sri Lanka and was hiding in Dubai, has been brought back to the country, Police said.

According to the Police Media Division, the 48-year-old suspect, a resident of Dehiwala, was brought to Sri Lanka on August 14 after being apprehended overseas.

Police said Basik is wanted in connection with several investigations involving drug trafficking and other alleged criminal activities.

Investigations related to alleged drug trafficking are being handled by the Police Narcotics Bureau and the Dehiwala and Mirihana Police stations, while cases involving the possession of firearms are linked to the Mount Lavinia and Dehiwala Police stations.

He is also wanted in connection with the alleged possession of dangerous and sharp weapons, as well as membership in an unlawful assembly and causing damage.

Police said further investigations will also focus on suspected illegal assets allegedly acquired through drug trafficking and other organised criminal activities.
Further investigations are underway on the instructions of the Inspector General of Police.

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

NEWSLINE RATE CARD

YOUR STORY. OUR PLATFORM. MAXIMUM IMPACT.

Dear Subscribers,

We are pleased to announce the introductory advertising rates for News Line Daily, our digitally circulated daily magazine. With an extensive and growing readership across multiple digital platforms, News Line Daily offers an effective and affordable opportunity for organizations to promote their products and services to a wide audience.

OUR INTRODUCTORY ADVERTISING RATES (6-DAY CAMPAIGN)

FULL PAGE	LKR 80,000
HALF PAGE	LKR 60,000
QUARTER PAGE	LKR 35,000

OUR DAILY REACH

WHATSAPP CIRCULATION	FACEBOOK REACH	WEBSITE REACH	TOTAL DAILY REACH
2,000+	250,000+	25,000+	250,000+ (BASED ON THE FIGURES PROVIDED)

These special introductory rates are available for a limited period and offer exceptional value for businesses seeking targeted digital exposure.

To reserve your advertising space or for further information, please contact us at your earliest convenience.

We look forward to partnering with you and helping your organization reach a wider audience through News Line Daily.

NEWS LINE DAILY
STAY INFORMED. STAY AHEAD.

CONTACT US
FOR ADVERTISING & PARTNERSHIPS
info@independent.lk
www.independent.lk