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"Questioning The Answers"

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THE POWER OF RESTRAINT

Maithri Gunaratne PC says Sri Lanka should worry when the Executive, Parliament and Judiciary appear to converge around one centre of political power. The bigger question is not whether the Government believes it is entitled to wield that power. It is whether the People, from whom every part of that power originates, will continue to accept its concentration.

Maithri Gunaratne PC, lawyer and twice a Provincial Governor, appearing on NEWSLINE with Faraz, raised an uncomfortable proposition. In his assessment, the traditional boundaries separating Sri Lanka's Executive, Legislature and Judiciary are becoming dangerously blurred.

Gunaratne went further. He referred to statements he attributed to members of the Government which, in substance, said: we have the Presidency, we have Parliament, and now we want "state power."

The precise political meaning attached to those words is a matter for those who uttered them. Gunaratne's warning, however, raises a much larger constitutional question.

What happens when the institutions designed to restrain each other begin, or are perceived, to speak with one political voice?

Sri Lanka's Constitution provides an important starting point. Sovereignty does not belong to the President. It does not belong to Parliament. It certainly does not belong to a political party. Article 3 declares that sovereignty is in the People and is inalienable. Article 4 then distributes the exercise of that sovereignty through legislative, executive and judicial power.

That distribution is not merely decorative constitutional drafting.

The Supreme Court has itself described the three functions of government as distinct, constitutionally equal and independent, stating that one organ should not dominate another.

In another constitutional determination, the Court connected the separation of powers directly with the sovereignty protected by Article 3, describing the constitutional arrangement as a "delicate balance."

That makes Gunaratne's argument worth examining beyond today's party politics.

A government winning the Presidency and obtaining a commanding parliamentary majority is entirely democratic. Indeed, the present Government acquired those powers through elections. A large majority does not become constitutionally suspect merely because it is large. The danger arises elsewhere.

Democracy depends not simply upon who wins elections but upon what those who win are prevented from doing. Courts must remain capable of ruling against governments.

Parliament must retain meaningful scrutiny rather than becoming simply the legislative machinery of the Executive.

Independent institutions must be able to exercise their statutory functions without first wondering whether their decisions conform to the preferences of the governing political movement.

That is the architecture of restraint.

Remove enough of those restraints and a democracy can retain elections, a Parliament, courts and a Constitution while progressively weakening the practical separation between them.

This is why perception matters almost as much as formal constitutional compliance. Judicial independence, for example, does not require proof that somebody telephoned a judge and instructed him how to decide a case before questions can legitimately be asked.

The public must have confidence that judicial decisions, appointments and careers are insulated from political reward or punishment.

The controversy surrounding the Twenty-Second Amendment inevitably gives Gunaratne's intervention greater resonance. The amendment was passed on September 25 by 158 votes to 63 at its Third Reading, after considerable controversy over changes affecting the superior judiciary.

None of that establishes that Sri Lanka's three branches have in fact fused. That would be a much more serious allegation requiring considerably more evidence than political criticism or constitutional controversy.

But Gunaratne's proposition deserves attention precisely because constitutional safeguards are intended to operate before institutional independence disappears, not afterwards.

And there is another player in this constitutional arrangement who is sometimes conveniently forgotten.

The People.

Every institution involved exercises power originating from them. President, Parliament and judiciary are not competing owners of sovereignty. They exercise different aspects of a sovereignty which the Constitution says remains inalienably with Sri Lanka's citizens.

That brings us to the potentially combustible part of Gunaratne's warning.

When citizens conclude that normal institutional avenues no longer provide an effective means of challenging power, political disagreement can migrate outside those institutions. Sri Lanka does not need a theoretical lesson in what happens when economic frustration, political alienation and distrust of institutions converge.

But neither should every concentration of political power automatically be portrayed as the precursor to upheaval. Governments with overwhelming mandates can govern constitutionally. Strong government and constitutional government are not opposites.

The dividing line is restraint.

Can Parliament disagree with the Executive?

Can independent institutions say no? Can courts decide against the State without fear or favour? Can journalists question all three? Can citizens challenge government action and receive an independent determination?

If the answers remain yes, the constitutional machinery continues to work.

If they progressively become no, the problem is considerably larger than whichever party happens to occupy office.

Because the final check upon governmental power in Sri Lanka was never intended to be another politician. It is the People themselves.

And that may be the most important element in Gunaratne's warning. Governments can accumulate authority. Political movements can dominate legislatures. Administrations can seek greater command over the machinery of the State.

But sovereignty itself cannot constitutionally be accumulated by any of them.

It already has an owner.

Be that as it may, those owners are the People.
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THE CHANDRIKA WE DID NOT KNOW

Vimukthi Kumaratunga has spent much of his adult life away from Sri Lanka's political stage. Now, speaking with unusual candour about his mother, he offers something political biographies seldom manage: a glimpse of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga as daughter, widow, mother and President, while delivering his own striking assessment of the political atmosphere into which she stepped.

There are few families in Sri Lanka whose private lives have been so thoroughly entangled with the country's public history. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike became Prime Minister and was assassinated. His widow Sirimavo entered politics after his death and became the world's first woman Prime Minister. Their daughter Chandrika married one of the country's most celebrated actors, Vijaya Kumaratunga, himself turned politician. He too was assassinated.

Chandrika would go on to become Prime Minister and then President, serving as Sri Lanka's Executive President from 1994 to 2005. Her children, Yasodhara and Vimukthi, therefore grew up in circumstances for which the word "unconventional" may almost seem inadequate.

That is nevertheless precisely where Vimukthi begins.
"Our family isn't conventional at all," he says. "There's nothing conventional about her being born into a family where both parents were world leaders and prime ministers of this country."

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It is the beginning of a revealing description of a woman Sri Lanka knew extremely well in public, but perhaps considerably less well in private.

Vimukthi believes the independence that came to characterise his mother began in her own childhood. Despite Sirimavo Bandaranaike coming from what he describes as a very conservative background, he says his grandmother did not expect her daughters to conform to convention. She did not interfere with whom they married, where they studied or what they studied.

"Convention was never really part of her upbringing or her vocabulary," he says.

The same freedom, he suggests, was passed to another generation. Chandrika did not attempt to mould Yasodhara and Vimukthi into predetermined versions of themselves. Their parents were hardly conventional either: one a politician born into Sri Lanka's most celebrated political family, the other an actor who became a politician and developed an enormous popular following of his own.

"Neither of my parents were conventional," Vimukthi says. "They were ahead of their time in many ways. They were different in many ways. So therefore our childhoods were not conventional either."

But there was a price.

Vijaya Kumaratunga was assassinated in February 1988. Chandrika was left to raise two children alone while eventually becoming one of the central figures in Sri Lankan politics. And it is here that Vimukthi's recollection becomes unexpectedly candid.

He describes the difficulties of having "a single parent who is also very absent".

"As much as she tried," he says, "she was often very absent in our teenage years."

There is no apparent bitterness in the observation. It is stated almost matter-of-factly. But behind that single sentence sits a reality rarely recorded in political histories. Presidents have children. Elections, party battles, national crises, security arrangements and the machinery of government do not stop at the front door. Sometimes the children simply grow up around them.

Vimukthi says he and his sister had to "muddle through and find our own way". Yet he also sees an advantage. They escaped what he describes as the "helicopter parenting" experienced by many of their contemporaries.

Partly, he jokes, that was because their mother was simply not present enough to do it. But he says it was also because interference was not her nature. She did not demand particular marks or prescribe what her children had to achieve. They set those standards themselves.

Then Vimukthi makes the leap that gives this conversation its wider political significance.

He believes there was a connection between the way Chandrika Kumaratunga parented and the way she eventually governed.

"I think that translates a lot to the way she found her own way of leading as a politician," he says.

And it is at this point that Vimukthi ventures into much more contested territory.

He places his mother's arrival in national politics against his own assessment of the governments that had preceded her. Sri Lanka, he says, had not seen a woman occupying such a powerful leadership position for decades, effectively since the era of his grandmother.

He then describes the political atmosphere of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s in notably stark terms, referring to "periods of quite autocratic, almost dictatorial rule, I suppose" under the presidents and leaders of that period.

It is an important remark, but it is Vimukthi Kumaratunga's characterisation of that era rather than an uncontested historical conclusion.

The period he is talking about encompassed the executive presidencies of J.R. Jayewardene from 1978 to 1989 and Ranasinghe Premadasa from 1989 to 1993, followed by the shorter presidency of D.B. Wijetunga. Chandrika Kumaratunga assumed the presidency in 1994.

There is plenty for historians and political opponents to debate in Vimukthi's assessment. Those years encompassed the creation and consolidation of the executive presidency, civil conflict, the second JVP insurrection and its violent suppression, emergency rule and profound political upheaval.

Equally, supporters of those administrations would contest any attempt to compress very different presidencies and circumstances into a single description.

But Vimukthi's words matter precisely because they tell us how he sees the political environment against which his mother's leadership should be understood.

"So she came in with a storm," he says. "She came in with something very different that she was offering as a result of her not conforming."

That does not require NEWSLINE to accept his assessment of either what came before or what followed. It does, however, provide a revealing insight into how Chandrika Kumaratunga's own son interprets her political arrival.

He remembers a leader who, in his view, attempted to recruit the best people for particular jobs and then give them room to perform. He connects that directly with her approach as a parent: establish expectations, provide opportunity and resist the urge to control every detail.

"Give them the opportunity to blossom and perform," is how he puts it.

She would show her disappointment when targets were not achieved, he says, but he regards the underlying approach as unusual for its time: "forward thinking" and even "groundbreaking" in Sri Lankan politics.

That is the son's assessment. The political record inevitably demands a broader lens.

Kumaratunga's eleven years in office encompassed renewed war, efforts towards a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict, constitutional reform initiatives, bitter struggles within Sri Lanka's political establishment and eventually the extraordinary experiment in political cohabitation after the UNP won the 2001 parliamentary election.

Her governments attracted both admiration and fierce criticism. No recollection by a family member can settle the argument over that record, nor should it.

What Vimukthi provides instead is an explanation of the person he believes was operating behind it.

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He suspects that senior civil servants initially found his mother's approach difficult and unconventional because, as he describes her, she was "so liberal and open-minded" and inclined towards lateral thinking. Once officials understood how she worked, he believes the relationship changed.

Whether everyone who served under President Kumaratunga would recognise that portrait is another question entirely. That is what makes personal testimony interesting rather than definitive.

But perhaps the most intriguing thread running through Vimukthi's account is freedom.

Sirimavo, he says, gave Chandrika freedom. Chandrika gave her children freedom. And Vimukthi believes President Kumaratunga attempted to give those around her freedom to perform.

"Her politics reflecting life, her life reflecting politics," he says.

There is an irony here that Sri Lanka, with its fascination for political families, should not miss.

Vimukthi Kumaratunga could scarcely have been born with a more politically valuable surname. His grandfather was Prime Minister. His grandmother was Prime Minister. His mother was President. His father was one of the most charismatic political figures of his generation.

Yet Vimukthi chose veterinary medicine.

When speculation emerged in 2021 suggesting that a son from a prominent political family was being prepared for entry into Sri Lankan politics, he publicly rejected it. He said he had devoted more than two decades to veterinary work and specialist training in Britain and declared that he had "no intention whatsoever" of engaging in Sri Lankan politics.

That makes this conversation more interesting, not less.

It would be easy to see a Kumaratunga speaking about Sri Lankan political history and immediately ask whether another member of the dynasty is preparing to enter politics. There is nothing in these remarks that justifies that conclusion, and his previous statement explicitly points in the opposite direction.

This is therefore better understood for what it is: a son looking back at his mother and attempting to explain where the private woman met the public President.

He does not present an immaculate childhood. He acknowledges her absence. He acknowledges that he and his sister sometimes had to find their own way. He does not disguise the extraordinary privilege of the family into which his mother was born either. He calls it "illustrious".

But his central proposition is more interesting than either privilege or dynasty.

He believes Chandrika Kumaratunga did not conform because she had never really been taught that she had to.

That independence carried her from an extraordinary political family into a marriage of her own choosing, through widowhood and eventually into the presidency. Vimukthi believes it also shaped the way she exercised power.

History is entitled to argue about the result.

It is also entitled to argue vigorously with his description of the political culture of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. Those are political and historical judgments, not neutral facts.

But it is difficult to dismiss the perspective itself. This is a man who observed one of Sri Lanka's most consequential political figures from a position unavailable to historians, journalists, ministers or civil servants.

He knew her as his mother.

And perhaps the most telling evidence for his description of Chandrika Kumaratunga as a woman who did not insist upon conformity is sitting before us.

She belonged to one of Sri Lanka's greatest political dynasties.

Her son walked away from politics. She apparently let him.

(from an interview appearing on social media channels. All rights acknowledged)

THE NEW SYLLABUS WASN'T READY. THE TAXPAYER JUST PAID RS 278 MILLION FOR THE DELAY.

Sri Lanka was supposed to introduce education reforms for Grade 6. It did not happen on schedule. The consequence was rather more tangible than another missed government deadline: more than 2.1 million textbooks from the old syllabus had to be printed again, at a cost exceeding Rs 278 million.

Education reform is one of those expressions that sounds impressive until somebody has to deliver it.

Sri Lanka had planned to introduce reforms affecting Grade 6, which necessarily meant changing what children would be taught and therefore the textbooks from which they would learn. But when implementation did not proceed according to schedule, schools still needed books. The Auditor General has now put a price on what happened next.

More than 2.1 million copies of textbooks based upon the old Grade 6 syllabus had to be reprinted, costing the State more than Rs 278 million.

There is nothing particularly complicated about why the books had to be printed. Children cannot reasonably be sent into classrooms without learning material because the adults responsible for reform have missed their timetable.

The more interesting question is how Sri Lanka reached that position in the first place.

Curriculum reform is not an overnight exercise. New syllabuses have to be developed, teaching material prepared, teachers trained and textbooks written, reviewed, printed and distributed. Each part depends upon the one before it being completed on time.

Somewhere in that chain, the timetable failed.

The taxpayer then became the insurer of last resort. Rs 278 million may not appear enormous when placed beside a national Budget measured in trillions. But public money should not become insignificant merely because governments occasionally waste larger amounts of it.

More importantly, the figure tells us something about the cost of administrative delay.

When a road project is delayed, the cost may appear as escalation in construction prices. When procurement is delayed, the State may pay more for the same equipment. When education reform is delayed, the consequences can be less visible because children continue attending school and teachers continue teaching.

This time there is a convenient receipt.

Rs 278 million.

There is another uncomfortable aspect to the affair. These were not textbooks intended to become part of a long-term educational programme. They had to be produced because the system they supported was supposed to have been replaced but was not replaced in time.

That does not necessarily make printing them the wrong decision. Once the reforms were delayed, reprinting the existing material may have been unavoidable.

The question of accountability lies earlier: why was the country placed in the position where spending that money became necessary?

That distinction matters.

Otherwise the official who eventually orders the textbooks risks being blamed for solving the immediate problem while the decisions that created the problem disappear somewhere inside the machinery of government.

Education reform is difficult. Governments can legitimately change implementation dates when teachers, schools or teaching material are not ready. Indeed, delaying an inadequately prepared reform can sometimes be considerably wiser than imposing it upon children merely to satisfy a political timetable.

But changing a timetable has consequences.

Those consequences should have been calculated before announcements were made, implementation dates fixed and expectations created.

Sri Lanka spends a great deal of time debating how much money should be allocated to education.

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That debate is important. Equally important is what happens to the money after it has been allocated.

Rs 278 million could have purchased books, equipment, laboratory facilities or other educational resources that remained useful for years.

Instead, it purchased more than two million copies of yesterday's syllabus because tomorrow's syllabus did not arrive on time.

The children will still receive their textbooks. The taxpayer has simply received another lesson.

SRI LANKA WANTED YOUR ROOF FOR SOLAR. HAS IT JUST CHANGED THE DEAL?

For years households were encouraged to spend their own money putting solar panels on their roofs, partly on the promise that generating electricity could dramatically reduce their monthly bills. New installations will now operate under Net Plus instead. The panels can still generate electricity. What has changed is the economics for the person who paid for them.

There was something particularly attractive about rooftop solar as public policy.

The State needed more renewable electricity. Instead of the Government finding all the capital itself, thousands of households and businesses were prepared to invest their own money, put generating equipment on their own property and feed electricity into the national system.

For the consumer, the attraction was equally straightforward. Generate electricity during the day, offset electricity consumption and reduce the monthly bill.

Sri Lanka has now changed an important part of that arrangement for new installations.

Net Metering and Net Accounting will no longer be offered for new rooftop solar systems connected after the new policy took effect. New customers will instead enter the Net Plus system. Existing agreements continue under their present arrangements until they expire.

That sounds like an obscure change in electricity terminology.

For somebody considering spending around Rs 1 million on a domestic solar installation, it is anything but obscure.

Under Net Plus, the electricity generated by the rooftop system is effectively treated separately from the electricity consumed by the household.

The generated electricity goes to the grid and the owner receives the applicable payment for it. Electricity consumed by the household is billed separately under the normal tariff structure.

The roof has therefore become, in effect, a tiny generating station.

The problem is that a household does not live like a generating station.

It may consume substantial electricity at night. It may charge an electric vehicle. Air-conditioning, appliances and other household demand can push consumption into expensive tariff bands. The solar system may be producing electricity during daylight hours, but under Net Plus that generation no longer simply cancels the household's consumption in the way many consumers understood rooftop solar to work.

The Government has an argument of its own.

Solar electricity arrives abundantly during daylight hours. Demand does not conveniently disappear when the sun sets. Without sufficient storage, the electricity system can find itself with plentiful solar generation during the day and then needing more expensive generation to meet evening demand.

That is a genuine engineering and economic problem.

The answer increasingly lies in storage. Batteries can capture cheap daytime electricity and release it when demand rises after sunset. Sri Lanka is consequently moving towards battery energy storage, and authorities are considering measures intended to make storage more attractive.

But that still leaves a policy question.

Who should carry the cost of the transition?

Thousands of Sri Lankans responded to years of encouragement to invest in rooftop solar. The proposition was powerful precisely because it aligned private interest with national interest. The homeowner wanted a lower electricity bill; the country wanted more renewable generation.

Changing the financial equation risks weakening that alignment.

The issue becomes even more important as electric vehicles increase. A household may reasonably imagine that owning both solar panels and an electric vehicle creates an elegant energy loop: sunshine on the roof eventually powers the car.

Under a system in which generation and consumption are separately priced, that calculation becomes considerably more complicated.

This does not necessarily mean Net Plus is bad policy. Electricity grids must remain stable, and the cost of balancing intermittent renewable generation cannot simply be wished away.

But neither should the discussion be reduced to engineers explaining why the grid requires change.

Consumers require an explanation too.

If a family is being asked to invest perhaps Rs 1 million of its own capital in equipment that contributes to a national renewable-energy target, it is entitled to know the likely return, the payback period and what happens if tariffs or policy change again.

Sri Lanka still wants renewable electricity. It still wants private investment. It still wants less dependence upon imported fuel.

The question is whether the new arrangement gives an ordinary householder sufficient reason to keep supplying all three.

Because governments can set renewable-energy targets. They cannot order homeowners to spend their savings achieving them.

HATE YOUR MOBILE NETWORK? SOON YOU MAY BE ABLE TO LEAVE IT AND KEEP YOUR NUMBER

Sri Lanka has talked about Mobile Number Portability for years. The process has now reached another important stage, with regulatory approval awaiting legal clearance. If it finally happens, something quite fundamental changes: your telephone number stops being one of the reasons you remain with a network you might otherwise leave.

Changing a mobile telephone network should be an uncomplicated consumer decision. Find a better price, stronger signal or superior service and move. Except that for many Sri Lankans it isn't quite that simple.

A mobile number that has been used for ten or fifteen years has acquired a life of its own. It is held by family, friends, employers and customers.

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HATE YOUR MOBILE...

It may be attached to WhatsApp, banking services, two-factor authentication, delivery applications and countless databases the owner has probably forgotten exist.

Changing the network can therefore mean changing the number. And changing the number can be sufficiently inconvenient to persuade an unhappy customer to stay exactly where he is.

Mobile Number Portability, usually called MNP, is intended to remove that obstacle.

The principle is wonderfully simple. The telephone number belongs, in practical terms, to the customer rather than becoming a permanent reason for remaining attached to the operator that originally issued it. Change the network, keep the number.

Sri Lanka has been moving towards that system for years. The latest development brings the process another step closer, with the regulatory arrangements now awaiting legal clearance before the necessary licences can be issued. If implemented properly, its importance goes considerably beyond convenience.

It changes competition.

At present, mobile operators compete vigorously for new customers, but an established customer carries a switching cost that has nothing to do with the advertised price of a package. Leaving can involve informing dozens or hundreds of contacts, changing details with institutions and risking the loss of calls or messages from people who continue using the old number.

That inconvenience has value.

Remove it and the network has to work harder to keep the customer.

A subscriber dissatisfied with coverage could move. Someone offered substantially cheaper data elsewhere could move.

A business customer unhappy with service standards could move without printing a new telephone number on everything from business cards to advertising material.

That should force operators to compete more aggressively on the things consumers actually care about: coverage, speed, reliability, customer service and price.

There will, of course, be complications.

A functioning portability system requires networks to cooperate technically even while competing commercially. Calls and messages must be routed correctly regardless of which operator originally issued the number.

Customer identity has to be verified. Fraud controls have to be strong. Porting requests need to happen quickly enough that changing networks does not become another bureaucratic adventure.

There is also the question of cost.

If moving a number is cumbersome, expensive or takes days, the theoretical freedom to switch becomes considerably less useful.

Successful portability systems elsewhere generally work because changing operators has become an ordinary transaction rather than an exceptional event.

Sri Lanka should aim for the same.

There is another reason the reform matters now. The mobile telephone is no longer merely a telephone. It has become an identity device.

Banking codes arrive on it. Government and commercial services increasingly rely upon it. WhatsApp may contain years of personal and professional communication. For many small businesses, the mobile number effectively is the business number.

The idea that changing the company providing the signal should require changing that identity increasingly belongs to another era.

Sri Lanka’s telecommunications market has changed substantially over the years, through consolidation, competition and enormous growth in mobile data. Consumers now compare packages in gigabytes rather than counting individual calls.

Number portability is one of those reforms that is barely noticed once it works.

Until then, its absence quietly favours the incumbent provider.

After years of discussion, Sri Lankan consumers may finally be approaching the point where they can tell their mobile operator something rather useful.

Improve the service, improve the price or I leave.

And yes, I am taking my number with me.

AI IS COMING FOR THE CODER. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR ONE OF SRI LANKA’S MOST IMPORTANT EXPORTS?

Sri Lanka has spent years building an IT and business-process industry around something the country has in abundance: educated people able to sell their skills to the world. Artificial intelligence is now beginning to perform some of the work those people were trained to do. The question is no longer whether Sri Lanka embraces AI. It is whether we can move up the value chain before AI moves underneath us.

Sri Lanka does not manufacture enough of what the world buys. But there is one export that does not require a container, a port or even a ship.

People. More precisely, their knowledge.

Sri Lanka’s IT and business-process industries have grown by selling software development, engineering, accounting, financial services, back-office operations and other professional skills to overseas customers. It is one of the few areas in which geographical distance becomes almost irrelevant.

A programmer sitting in Colombo can work for a company in London. An accountant in Kandy can service a client in Australia. A software team in Sri Lanka can develop something being used thousands of kilometres away.

Artificial intelligence is now disturbing that model.

AI Week 2026 has brought together Government, technology companies and industry participants around the proposition that Sri Lanka must develop a new generation of AI capability. That objective is difficult to quarrel with.

The more interesting question is why the urgency exists.

AI is rapidly becoming capable of performing tasks which companies previously paid human beings to perform. Software code can be generated, tested and corrected with AI assistance. Documents can be analysed. Routine customer interactions can be automated. Research that once consumed hours can be completed in minutes.

This does not mean the programmer disappears tomorrow.

It does mean the economic value of merely being able to write conventional code may change.

That matters particularly to countries such as Sri Lanka because part of our international competitiveness has historically rested upon a simple equation: a well-educated Sri Lankan professional can perform high-quality work at a lower cost than an equivalent professional in many developed economies. AI alters that equation.

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AI IS COMING...

If one highly skilled engineer assisted by artificial intelligence can accomplish work previously requiring five people, the overseas customer may still require Sri Lankan talent. It may simply require less of it.

The opportunity lies on the other side of the same equation.

A Sri Lankan company using AI intelligently may suddenly be capable of delivering work that previously required much larger overseas teams. Small local technology businesses could compete for more sophisticated projects. Engineers could spend less time writing repetitive code and more time designing systems, solving difficult problems and understanding what customers actually need.

The distinction is between using AI and being replaced by someone who does.

That places enormous responsibility on education.

Universities and training institutions cannot continue preparing students principally for the technology jobs that existed five years ago. Teaching somebody a programming language is increasingly only the beginning.

The valuable worker will need to understand systems, data, security, AI models, business processes and how to identify when an artificial intelligence system has produced something confidently wrong.

Perhaps most importantly, Sri Lanka needs people capable of asking the right questions.

AI can generate an extraordinary amount of output. Knowing what problem should be solved, whether the answer makes sense and how it applies to a real business remains considerably harder.

There is a national economic dimension too.

Sri Lanka desperately needs export earnings that are not dependent upon imported raw materials. Knowledge exports are particularly attractive because much of their value is created domestically.

Losing competitiveness in that sector would therefore hurt.

But trying to protect existing jobs from AI would be equally futile. International customers will use these technologies whether Sri Lanka likes them or not. The only meaningful choice is whether Sri Lankan companies and workers use them earlier and better than their competitors.

This is why the present enthusiasm surrounding artificial intelligence needs to move beyond conferences, speeches and fashionable terminology.

How many schools are preparing children for this economy? How many universities have redesigned courses rather than simply adding an AI module?

How many companies are genuinely building AI capability rather than attaching the letters to their marketing material?

And how many young Sri Lankans currently studying conventional software development understand that the job for which they are preparing may look very different by the time they graduate?

Sri Lanka has spent years worrying about artificial intelligence taking jobs. That may be the wrong way to frame the problem.

The larger danger is that AI creates entirely new kinds of high-value work and Sri Lanka discovers that somebody else trained for them first.

Be that as it may, the machines are not waiting for our curriculum to catch up.

HORMUZ: IRAN OFFERED SEVEN DAYS. TRUMP SAID NO. WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

For a moment there appeared to be the outline of a way out of the Strait of Hormuz crisis. Iran said commercial shipping could begin moving normally again within seven days as part of a wider settlement. Donald Trump rejected the proposal. The disagreement leaves one of the world's most important waterways caught between two governments convinced that time and pressure are working in their favour.

Iran's proposal was deceptively simple. Tehran offered a route towards reopening the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping within seven days, but attached conditions involving American military pressure and restrictions on Iranian ports. Washington has rejected those terms, apparently calculating that Iran's willingness to negotiate demonstrates that the pressure being applied is beginning to work.

Iran sees precisely the opposite lesson. Tehran continues to insist that diplomacy is possible, but wants navigation through Hormuz considered as part of the wider military and economic confrontation rather than as an isolated shipping problem. That leaves the two countries arguing about leverage while shipowners, insurers, energy traders and governments around the world confront the consequences.

The Strait matters because geography gave the world remarkably little room for manoeuvre. A huge share of the petroleum and gas produced around the Persian Gulf must eventually pass through this narrow maritime corridor before reaching the Arabian Sea and international markets.

When Hormuz functions normally, most consumers have little reason even to think about it.

When it does not, the consequences travel astonishingly quickly. Tankers become more difficult and expensive to insure, owners reconsider whether vessels should enter the area, freight costs increase and buyers begin building additional protection into their supply arrangements. None of those things requires the Strait to be completely closed before the economic damage begins.

That distinction is important because some oil is continuing to move. Producers have found alternative arrangements, Saudi Arabia has adjusted export routes and traders have increasingly relied upon transfers and other logistical solutions to keep cargoes reaching international markets. The existence of those workarounds should not be confused with the restoration of normal trade.

Every workaround has a cost. Ships diverted or delayed remain occupied for longer, insurance premiums respond to danger and transfer facilities have finite capacity. Buyers who cannot be certain when a cargo will arrive begin carrying more inventory, while companies facing unreliable delivery schedules start paying a premium for certainty.

Eventually those costs leave the shipping industry and enter the wider economy. They can appear in fuel prices, electricity generation, manufacturing, transportation and the price of goods that have travelled nowhere near the Gulf.

A crisis concentrated around a relatively small piece of water consequently acquires an economic reach vastly greater than its geographical size.

For Sri Lanka, this is not an academic concern. We remain dependent upon imported petroleum and exposed to international freight costs. Another prolonged energy shock would arrive at a particularly inconvenient moment for an economy still trying to strengthen reserves, control inflation and rebuild household purchasing power.

That is why Iran's seven-day proposal mattered even if nobody could seriously guarantee that shipping would return to normal within precisely one week. Markets do not require perfection before they respond. Sometimes the existence of a credible route towards normalisation is enough to change behaviour.

Washington has decided that the proposed route is not good enough. The calculation presumably is that continuing pressure will eventually produce terms more favourable to the United States. Iran, meanwhile, appears to believe that control over access to one of the world's most strategically important waterways gives it sufficient bargaining power to demand concessions of its own.

Both positions carry risk. The longer the confrontation continues, the greater the possibility of an incident producing escalation neither side originally intended. Commercial shipping also has a habit of responding to risk before politicians have finished deciding whether the risk is real.

There is another danger. The longer businesses operate around disruption, the more temporary emergency measures become permanent commercial arrangements. Buyers find different suppliers, vessels are redeployed, insurance changes and trading relationships adapt. Even when the immediate crisis eventually passes, not every additional cost disappears with it.

Hormuz therefore presents Washington and Tehran with a peculiar contest.

Each side is trying to demonstrate that the other cannot indefinitely tolerate the pressure being applied.

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HORMUZ...

The problem is that millions of people with no role whatsoever in that contest are paying part of the price while they wait to discover who blinks first.

The world does not particularly care which government believes it has negotiated more skilfully. It needs energy to move predictably, safely and at a price that does not transmit another inflationary shock across continents.

Be that as it may, neither Washington nor Tehran possesses the one negotiating advantage both might find useful. They cannot move the Strait of Hormuz somewhere else.

HORMUZ ON ONE SIDE. THE RED SEA ON THE OTHER. THE GULF HAS A TWO-DOOR PROBLEM

Saudi Arabia has warned that interference with Gulf shipping threatens international energy security. Riyadh has spent years building alternatives to excessive dependence upon the Strait of Hormuz. The uncomfortable discovery is that the alternative route towards the Red Sea carries vulnerabilities of its own, leaving one of the world's great energy-producing regions confronting trouble at both doors.

For decades the strategic weakness of the Persian Gulf appeared obvious. Some of the world's largest petroleum and gas producers sit behind the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow maritime exit capable of turning a regional military confrontation into an international economic problem almost overnight.

Saudi Arabia invested heavily in reducing that vulnerability. Oil could be moved across the Kingdom towards the Red Sea rather than being sent exclusively eastwards through Hormuz. Pipelines, terminals and alternative infrastructure provided what appeared to be an obvious insurance policy against trouble in the Gulf.

The present crisis has exposed the limits of that insurance. Threats around the Red Sea and disruption affecting alternative infrastructure have complicated the very routes intended to reduce dependence upon Hormuz. Saudi Arabia has consequently had to move additional crude through its Gulf facilities at precisely the moment when the eastern maritime route is itself under pressure.

The strategic absurdity is difficult to miss. When the eastern door becomes dangerous, send the oil west.

When the western route becomes dangerous, send more of it east again. Unfortunately, a country can redirect a pipeline more easily than it can redesign the geography surrounding an entire region.

Saudi Arabia has now taken that concern to the international stage, warning that threats to maritime navigation in the region have implications far beyond the countries immediately involved.

Riyadh wants freedom of navigation restored because an oil producer's ability to pump crude means considerably less if getting that crude safely to customers becomes uncertain.

That distinction applies across the Gulf. Qatar's enormous gas industry depends upon reliable maritime access.

The United Arab Emirates has built ports, aviation, logistics and trade into the foundations of its economic model. Saudi Arabia itself is attempting to diversify beyond petroleum through tourism, manufacturing, investment and logistics.

Every one of those ambitions assumes connectivity. Goods must enter and leave, tourists must travel, ships must sail and investors must believe that regional instability will not repeatedly interrupt the physical infrastructure upon which commerce depends.

The problem therefore extends well beyond the daily price of crude oil. A tanker taking longer to complete a voyage remains unavailable for another cargo.

A container ship forced onto a longer route consumes more fuel and ties up capacity. Insurance becomes more expensive and delivery schedules become less reliable.

Enough individual inconveniences eventually become an international cost. Importers build larger inventories because they cannot depend upon delivery dates, manufacturers pay more to secure components and retailers become cautious about ordering stock that may arrive after the season in which it was supposed to be sold.

This is precisely why watching the oil price alone can provide a misleading picture of the crisis. Crude can continue reaching international markets while the system transporting it becomes steadily more expensive and inefficient.

Producers can reroute cargoes and traders can improvise, but every additional layer of complexity has somebody's invoice attached to it.

The consequences matter to Sri Lanka as well. Our location places us close to the great maritime routes connecting Asia, the Gulf and Europe, but proximity does not insulate us from disruption. We import fuel and goods, while our exporters depend upon shipping schedules and competitive freight rates to reach overseas customers.

The greater concern is what happens if disruption ceases to be regarded as temporary. Shipping companies then price it into their operations, insurers incorporate it into premiums and businesses redesign supply chains around the assumption that journeys will take longer.

What began as a crisis becomes part of the ordinary cost of trade.

Saudi Arabia's warning therefore contains a much broader message.

The Gulf states can build alternative pipelines, additional ports, enormous storage facilities and sophisticated logistics networks. They can reduce their exposure to individual chokepoints and create redundancies that keep energy moving during emergencies.

What they cannot do is eliminate geography. Eventually every pipeline reaches a coast, every tanker requires a navigable sea lane and every alternative route develops strategic importance precisely because somebody may one day attempt to disrupt it.

For years the international community worried about what would happen if the Gulf's principal door through Hormuz became difficult to use. The present confrontation is revealing a less comforting reality: the region does possess another door towards the Red Sea, but that door can be threatened too.

The real danger is therefore not simply that Hormuz remains uncertain. It is that the alternatives upon which the world expected to rely when Hormuz became uncertain are themselves no longer guaranteed.

Be that as it may, producing the oil was supposed to be the difficult part. Increasingly, getting it safely out of the neighbourhood may be harder.

"Questioning The Answers"

BANGKOK IS UNDER WATER AGAIN. WHY DOES THIS KEEP HAPPENING?

Heavy flooding has hit Bangkok and large parts of Thailand, disrupting schools, homes and everyday life while affecting tens of thousands of households. Thailand knows how to deal with monsoon rain. The harder question is why one of Asia's great cities remains so vulnerable when extreme rainfall meets rapid development, overloaded drainage and a metropolis that is quite literally sinking.

Floodwater in Bangkok produces images that have become uncomfortably familiar. Roads turn into waterways, traffic struggles through brown water, homes are inundated and pumps begin the race to remove water almost as quickly as the sky can replace it.

The latest flooding has affected Bangkok and provinces across Thailand, with eight deaths reported and more than 170,000 households affected nationally. Tens of thousands of households in the capital have also been caught by the flooding, while hundreds of municipal schools have been forced to close as authorities attempt to drain affected areas.

Some of the water is now receding, but that should not disguise the larger problem. Bangkok is not confronting an entirely unexpected natural phenomenon. Thailand has always had monsoon rains, and the capital sits in a low-lying delta where water management has been central to human settlement for generations.

What has changed is the city built on top of it.

Bangkok has expanded dramatically, replacing areas capable of absorbing water with roads, buildings, concrete and other impermeable surfaces. Rain that might once have dispersed across open land increasingly has to find its way through drains, canals and pumping systems that can be overwhelmed when enormous volumes arrive within a short period.

Then there is the ground beneath the city. Bangkok has long faced land subsidence, historically worsened by extraction of groundwater. Parts of the metropolis are barely above sea level, and a city that is slowly sinking does not acquire greater protection from flooding simply because its skyline is moving in the opposite direction.

Climate change adds another layer to the problem. A warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture, increasing the potential for intense rainfall events. That does not mean every flood can simply be labelled climate change, but it does mean cities designed around historical weather patterns increasingly have to consider whether yesterday's definition of exceptional rainfall remains exceptional.

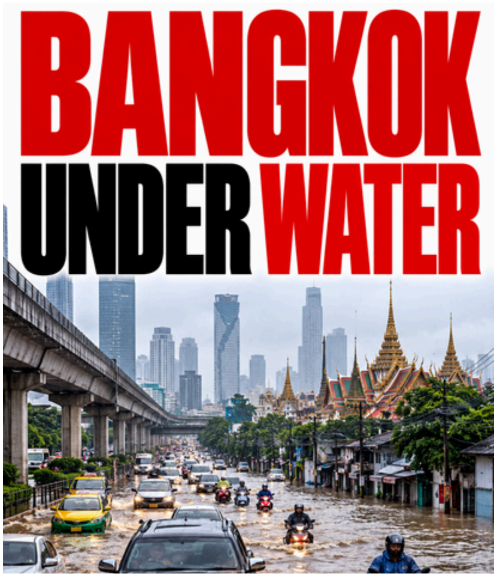
Bangkok is hardly alone. Major cities across Asia are discovering that drainage systems designed for one era are being asked to cope with another.

Rapid urbanisation has placed millions more people, vehicles and buildings into areas where water once had somewhere else to go.

The engineering response is expensive. Bangkok has invested in tunnels, pumping stations, canals, retention areas and drainage improvements.

Yet enormous infrastructure projects address only part of the problem if development continues without preserving sufficient space for water.

There is also an uncomfortable social dimension. Floods do not distribute their inconvenience equally. A wealthy household may lose access to a road or suffer damage to a vehicle. A poorer family living in a vulnerable neighbourhood can lose furniture, appliances, wages and perhaps the ability to remain in its home.



For workers paid by the day, even relatively brief disruption can become an economic emergency. Schools closing means parents must find childcare. Small businesses lose customers while still paying rent and wages. Flooding therefore becomes not merely a water-management problem but a household-income problem.

Thailand's immediate priority is obvious: drain the water, assist affected communities and restore normal life. The more difficult work begins after the photographs disappear from the news.

How much additional development can Bangkok accommodate without fundamentally changing the way it handles water? Are drainage and flood-protection projects keeping pace with construction? Are building approvals accounting for cumulative impact rather than merely examining individual developments?

And perhaps most importantly, is the city planning for the weather it is likely to experience during the next thirty years or the weather engineers expected when much of its infrastructure was designed?

Bangkok is one of Asia's most successful urban economies and among the world's great tourism destinations. Nobody seriously proposes abandoning it because heavy rain falls.

But repeatedly pumping water away after it arrives is not the same thing as making a city resilient.

Thailand will get through this flood. Roads will reopen, schools will resume and Bangkok will return to doing what Bangkok does remarkably well.

The question is whether the city will use the dry days to prepare for the next wet ones.

MALAYSIA'S ECONOMY IS GROWING. ANWAR WANTS TO KNOW WHY THE WORKER ISN'T GROWING WITH IT

Malaysia's economy has been producing respectable growth, productivity has improved and companies are making money. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has now turned attention towards the uncomfortable part of that equation: why are so many workers still earning relatively little? It is a question that extends far beyond Malaysia. Economic growth means rather less to a household if somebody else receives most of it.

There is a familiar way governments tell the story of an economy. Gross domestic product increased, investment arrived, exports performed well, companies expanded and productivity improved. Put enough positive numbers together and the assumption is that citizens must surely be feeling better too.

Malaysia is discovering the distance that can exist between those numbers and the experience of the person receiving a salary at the end of the month.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has openly questioned why wages remain low while productivity and corporate profits have risen. His Government intends to address the issue in Budget 2027, arguing that Malaysia cannot be satisfied with companies recording substantial profits while workers remain around the lower end of the wage scale.

The concern is particularly striking because Malaysia is not discussing wage stagnation from the depths of recession. The economy has been growing. The second quarter of 2026 produced growth of around six per cent, a figure many countries would regard with considerable envy.

Yet GDP does not go shopping.

People do.

The distinction matters because economic growth measures the expansion of activity across an economy. It does not tell us how the additional income created by that activity is distributed. A country can therefore become statistically richer while large numbers of households feel remarkably little improvement.

Malaysia's dilemma is one confronting governments across the world. If productivity increases, businesses can produce more value from the same amount of work. In theory that creates room for higher wages, increased profits, lower prices or some combination of all three.

The political argument begins when workers conclude that their share of that improvement is too small.

Businesses have arguments of their own. Wages cannot simply be increased indefinitely by decree without consequences. Labour-intensive companies compete internationally,

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and substantially higher employment costs can make production less competitive. Smaller businesses may not enjoy the profit margins of the large corporations politicians understandably prefer to cite.

There is also the danger of wage increases being consumed by higher prices. A worker receiving more money is not necessarily better off if housing, food, transport and other essential costs rise just as quickly.

That is why the important number is not merely the salary printed on a payslip but what that salary can actually buy.

Malaysia nevertheless has reason to confront the question now. The country wants to move further away from an economic model based principally upon relatively inexpensive labour and towards higher-value manufacturing, technology and sophisticated services.

That transition requires more productive workers, but it also requires those workers to see some reward for becoming more productive. Otherwise the country risks building a higher-value economy while retaining a lower-value wage structure.

There is a second danger. Talented Malaysians can leave.

Singapore sits next door offering substantially higher salaries in many professions. Other developed economies actively recruit skilled Asian workers. If Malaysia invests in educating people but cannot provide sufficient economic incentive for them to remain, part of that investment eventually contributes to somebody else's economy.

Sri Lanka should pay attention to this debate.

We too frequently celebrate GDP growth as though the number itself settles the question of economic wellbeing. It does not. Growth is essential, particularly for a country recovering from economic collapse, but who participates in that growth matters almost as much as the headline percentage.

An economy cannot sustainably improve living standards without becoming more productive. Equally, productivity growth that consistently fails to reach wages eventually creates its own social and political pressures.

This is the difficult territory Anwar is entering. Governments can increase minimum wages and encourage progressive wage structures, but ultimately businesses must create enough additional value to pay employees more without simply transferring the entire increase into prices.

The solution is therefore unlikely to be found in one Budget. Education, investment, technology, competition, labour mobility and productivity all eventually enter the equation.

But Anwar has at least posed the question plainly. If the economy is doing better, when does the worker get to notice?

Be that as it may, GDP can tell a government that the country is getting richer. It cannot tell the family paying the grocery bill that it feels any richer.

SRI LANKA DOESN'T HAVE A WELFARE PROBLEM. IT HAS AN OPPORTUNITY PROBLEM

Sri Lanka needs a strong social safety net. But a country cannot transfer its way out of poverty indefinitely. The harder task is building an economy in which fewer people need welfare in the first place.

By Kithmi Gunaratne

For decades, Sri Lankan governments have responded to poverty with a familiar political vocabulary: subsidies, allowances, relief packages, Samurdhi, Aswesuma and repeated promises of programmes for those struggling to survive. When food becomes unaffordable, assistance is increased; when electricity prices rise, relief is discussed; when farmers struggle, subsidies return to the political agenda.

Much of this is necessary. A society in which the poorest are abandoned to hunger, illness or destitution is neither economically sensible nor morally defensible, particularly after an economic crisis that destroyed household incomes and pushed previously secure families into vulnerability.

Yet beneath Sri Lanka's endless arguments over welfare lies a more difficult question: why do so many people continue to need it?

The deeper problem is not simply whether welfare payments are large enough or sufficiently well targeted, but whether the economy gives people realistic pathways out of dependency. Social protection can prevent a family from falling into destitution.

It cannot indefinitely compensate for an economy that fails to generate enough productive employment, reward skills, support small businesses or allow people outside the country's wealthiest areas to participate fully in economic life.

Sri Lanka's recovery illustrates the contradiction. Inflation has fallen dramatically from its crisis extremes, macroeconomic stability has improved and growth has returned. Yet recovery at the level of the state is not necessarily recovery at the level of the household. The World Bank estimated poverty remained at 24.5% in 2024 under its $3.65-a-day poverty measure, approximately twice its 2019 level, while real wages remained below pre-crisis levels.

Poverty is usually discussed through income: determine who falls beneath a threshold and decide what assistance should reach them. But poverty is also about what people are actually able to do with their lives.

Can a young person in Monaragala acquire the skills required for a well-paid job without moving to Colombo? Can a woman in a rural village transform a home-based enterprise into a business with reliable access to finance and markets? Can a farmer move from subsistence agriculture into higher-value production? Can a graduate find employment that makes meaningful use of years of education?

These are not primarily questions about welfare. They are questions about opportunity.

The missing jobs

Sri Lanka has achieved relatively strong educational and health outcomes. But human development becomes economically frustrating when education does not translate into productive employment. The state can educate someone for more than a decade, subsidise university education and provide healthcare, only to watch that person conclude that the most rational economic decision is to leave the country.

Migration itself is not a failure. It can transform families, create international networks and generate valuable remittances. The problem arises when migration becomes less a choice than an escape route from an economy incapable of rewarding people's skills.

The scale of the challenge is increasingly difficult to ignore. In April, the World Bank warned that nearly one million young Sri Lankans are expected to enter the labour market over the coming decade, while without stronger investment and growth only around 300,000 new formal jobs would be created.

That gap cannot realistically be closed through welfare payments.

Successful social protection should therefore be measured partly by how effectively people capable of economic participation can eventually move beyond it. That requires a bridge between welfare and employment: vocational training connected to industries actually hiring, affordable finance for viable small businesses, reliable transport, childcare, digital infrastructure, export opportunities and investment outside Colombo.

A cash transfer can help a household buy food this month. It cannot create the job that raises household income next year.

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Training programmes achieve little if people complete them only to discover there are no employers seeking their skills. The test should not simply be how many people participated in a programme, but how many obtained stable employment, increased their earnings or built businesses capable of surviving without continuing assistance.

The women Sri Lanka's economy leaves behind

The opportunity deficit is particularly visible in women's participation in the economy. Sri Lanka has educated generations of women, yet their labour-force participation remains far below that of men. World Bank data drawing on ILO estimates put female labour-force participation at about 31% in 2025, compared with roughly 68% for men.

Sri Lanka cannot seriously discuss increasing national productivity while such a large share of its educated population remains outside the labour market. Childcare, elder care, workplace safety, flexible employment, public transport and access to finance may appear to be social-policy questions, but they are also economic infrastructure.

The same applies to women's entrepreneurship. Providing equipment, training or a small loan may help, but production is only one part of an economic chain. A rural producer also needs working capital, logistics, buyers, packaging, quality standards and access to larger markets. The difference between persistent poverty and a sustainable enterprise may not be charity at all. It may simply be market access.

Geography still determines opportunity

Economic possibility also continues to depend heavily on where someone is born. Access to high-quality schooling, English education, professional networks, technology, finance, transport and higher-value employment remains uneven.

Talent may be distributed throughout the island, but opportunity is not.

This is why development interventions can address the visible symptoms of deprivation without changing the structure surrounding them. Equipment can help a farmer. A sewing machine can help someone begin earning.

A scholarship can transform a life. But sustainable economic mobility requires an ecosystem in which education connects to employment, production connects to markets and entrepreneurs can obtain finance without already possessing substantial wealth.

If a young person receives vocational training in an industry with few vacancies, the state has issued a certificate without creating an opportunity.

If a family receives financial assistance but confronts the same structural barriers five years later, welfare may have prevented extreme hardship while development has failed to create mobility.

Recovery cannot end with macroeconomic stability

Sri Lanka had little choice but to stabilise its economy after the catastrophe of 2022. Fiscal discipline, debt sustainability, government revenue, investment and foreign reserves matter. Without macroeconomic stability, the poor are often among the first to suffer from inflation, shortages and collapsing public services.

But stability is a foundation rather than the final purpose of economic policy.

The next stage of recovery must therefore be judged by different questions: whether real household incomes rise, whether productive jobs are created, whether small businesses become medium-sized businesses, whether women can enter and remain in the workforce, whether young people believe they can build meaningful careers here and whether a child's economic prospects become less dependent on geography and family income.

Welfare is not the enemy
None of this is an argument for dismantling Aswesuma or withdrawing support from vulnerable households. With poverty still severely elevated after the crisis, dismantling the social safety net would be reckless.

The false choice is between welfare and opportunity. Sri Lanka needs both, but they perform different functions.
Social protection prevents people from falling through the floor; economic opportunity gives them a staircase.

The mistake is allowing the first to substitute permanently for the second.

That means moving away from one of the persistent habits of Sri Lankan politics: seeing poorer citizens primarily as beneficiaries to whom something must periodically be distributed. They are also workers, farmers, parents, entrepreneurs, students, craftspeople, caregivers, graduates and potential employers.

Once policy begins viewing people through that lens, the question changes from how much assistance a household should receive to what prevents that household from achieving greater economic security.

For one family the barrier may be childcare; for another transport, credit, land ownership, inadequate schooling, poor English or digital skills, disability, discrimination or simply the absence of decent jobs.

Removing those barriers is considerably harder than depositing the same payment every month.

But development was never supposed to mean the efficient administration of poverty. Its purpose is to expand people's capacity to escape it.

Sri Lanka's recovery should not produce a state whose balance sheet improves while too many of its citizens remain economically trapped.

The country will continue to need welfare because there will always be people who require the protection of the state. But the greater ambition should be to ensure poverty does not become an inherited condition and welfare does not become the closest thing millions of citizens have to an economic policy.

Sri Lanka does not need to choose between protecting people and empowering them. It needs a social safety net strong enough to protect people when they fall, alongside an economy capable of giving them the education, infrastructure, finance, employment and market access necessary to build something better.

Until those opportunities exist beyond Colombo, beyond privileged families and beyond those fortunate enough to leave the country,

Sri Lanka will continue spending enormous political energy deciding how poverty should be managed rather than confronting the more difficult question of how people can permanently escape it.

Sri Lanka does not have too much welfare. It has too little opportunity.