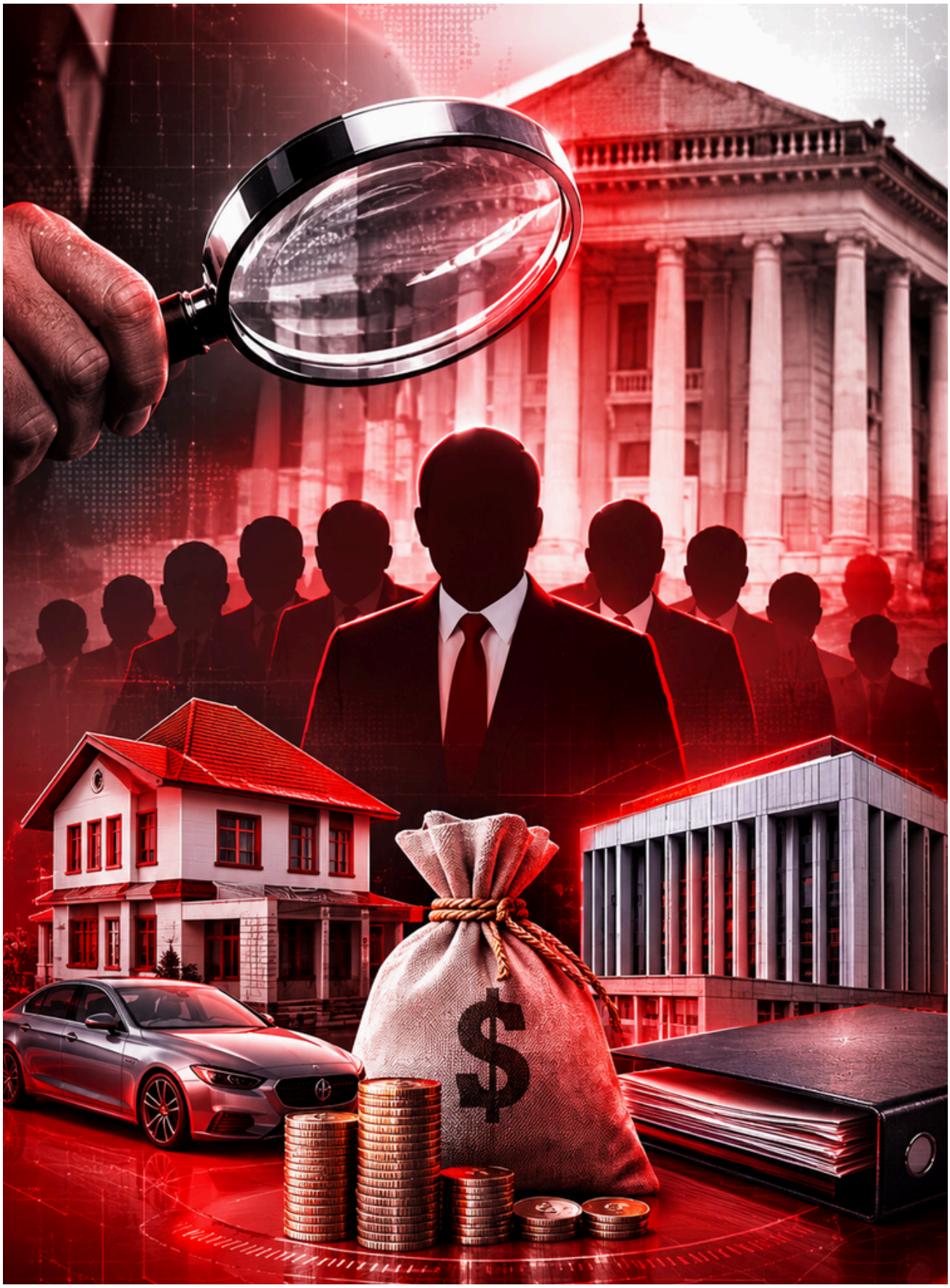
NEWSLINE

Daily by Faraz

"Questioning The Answers"



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BY THE NUMBERS: 500 ASSET INVESTIGATIONS, 60 POLITICIANS, AND 16 FORMER MINISTERS IN CIABOC DRAGNET

If there is one sport in Sri Lanka that competes with cricket for national obsession, it is watching our political class try to explain where their wealth came from. For decades, the ritual has been entirely predictable. A government changes hands, public outrage peaks, headlines trumpet new anti-corruption drives, and citizens sit back with a familiar mix of hope and deep-rooted skepticism.

This week, the local media mill is buzzing once again. According to reports from Swarnavahini News, Sri Lanka's Police Assets Investigation Division has handed over detailed dossiers regarding the assets of nearly twenty politicians to the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, better known by its terrifyingly bureaucratic acronym, CIABOC.

Minister of Public Security and Parliamentary Affairs Ananda Wijepala confirmed that every scrap of evidence uncovered during police probes has been passed along to Chatham Street's favorite commission. The scope of this dragnet is staggering.

CIABOC is reportedly running separate bribery probes into more than 55 politicians, while ongoing asset investigations now cover over 500 individuals across the island, including nearly 60 politicians and former MPs.

The main attraction in this financial dragnet involves 16 former Cabinet ministers currently under scrutiny for alleged abuse of power and financial misconduct.

The public's thirst to see these figures formally prosecuted is not born of vindictiveness; it is rooted in a profound demand for justice. Citizens have watched an entire political class enjoy systemic immunity while the rest of the country absorbed the brutal economic fallout of state mismanagement.

When ordinary earners face strict scrutiny for every rupee declared, watching figures who accumulated vast estates, fleets of luxury vehicles, and unexplained portfolios walk free feels like an ongoing insult to the rule of law.

Formal prosecution is the only mechanism that can restore faith in a system that has long appeared rigged in favor of the powerful.

It is worth noting, however, that balanced view requires recognizing that the law cannot operate on public anger alone. As cathartic as a high-profile court spectacle might feel to an exhausted public, the bedrock principle of justice dictates that every individual remains innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

In Sri Lanka's volatile political climate, the line between genuine anti-corruption enforcement and targeted political retribution has historically been dangerously thin. If investigations are rushed, politically driven, or built on procedural shortcuts to satisfy media cycles, they risk collapsing in court or being weaponized as precedent against future political opponents.

Under recently enacted legislative reforms, CIABOC has been handed broader investigative teeth, designed specifically to trace illicit wealth accumulation and bypass the old procedural loopholes that allowed suspects to hide behind political patronage. In recent months, several politicians and their close associates have already found themselves taking uncomfortable morning rides in police transport vehicles.

The real test is not how many press releases the police issue or how many file folders get delivered to commission offices. The true measure of anti-corruption success lies in bulletproof investigations, impartial judicial process, and the formal recovery of stolen assets into the state treasury. Until the first convictions withstand legal scrutiny and illicit funds are returned to the public purse, citizens have every right to remain skeptical, watching closely to see whether CIABOC delivers genuine, equal justice or simply another round of political theater.

THIN BUFFERS, HARD TRUTHS: THE LATEST CPC FUEL HIKE

As the clock struck midnight and turned the page to today, motorists pulling up to Ceylon Petroleum Corporation sheds across the island watched the numbers on the pump ticking upwards yet again.

Octane 92 petrol moved up by LKR 10 to LKR 424 per litre, Octane 95 climbed by LKR 15 to LKR 490, Auto Diesel ticked up by LKR 5 to LKR 397, and Super Diesel took a LKR 15 hit, reaching LKR 543.

For citizens who have spent over half a century chronicling the economic cycles of this country, today's revision brings about a familiar, yet sobering reality.

It is a stark reminder that despite all the press conferences and assurances of recovery, Sri Lanka continues to walk a tightrope over an abyss, completely lacking the fiscal cushions to absorb even the mildest external shock.

Look at the sequence of events that brought us to this price hike. Over the past four weeks, global crude markets faced predictable instability as geopolitical frictions stirred shipping channels across the Middle East and OPEC production tweaks tightened global supply. In any mature economy with proper treasury management, a nation buffers its citizens against short-term global turbulence through specialized energy stabilization funds or strategic hedging contracts.

In Sri Lanka, we have neither.

For decades, successive administrations in Colombo treated the CPC not as a commercial entity, but as a political ATM. They suppressed prices artificially to win elections, loading state banks with toxic debt until the entire house of cards collapsed into the catastrophic default of 2022. Now, under the strict oversight of international lenders, the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. The government has instituted an automatic formula that simply passes every ripple of the international market straight onto the shoulders of the public.



The fundamental issue is not that fuel prices go up when global oil surges.

The issue is that after years of talk regarding fiscal restructuring, Sri Lanka's economic reserves remain so thin that the state cannot cushion its own productive sectors for even a single fortnight.

Small business owners, three-wheeler drivers, and supply chain operators must absorb the immediate fallout because our balance sheet possesses zero elasticity.

Today's price hike is more than a routine adjustment. It is a clear warning that until our policymakers build genuine foreign exchange buffers and move past reactive balance-sheet management, the citizen will remain perpetually exposed to every wind that blows across the international sea lanes.



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INCINERATED REMAINS AND RIVER CURRENT: THE HORRIFYING END TO THE WELLAMPITIYA DISAPPEARANCE

A complex year-long missing person investigation in Colombo has concluded with a grim uncovering of murder, body destruction, and a multi-district disposal effort. Investigators from the Colombo District Crimes Division resolved the disappearance of a 24-year-old resident of Wellampitiya, missing since October 2025, by arresting four suspects and uncovering a deliberate attempt to erase all physical evidence of the crime.

The victim's final hours trace back to October 11, 2025, at a vehicle repair workshop nestled in Kambikotuwawatta, Grandpass.

What began as an evening of drinking among acquaintances turned fatal inside the grease-stained garage. An altercation escalated into a deadly assault, prompting everyone present to flee the scene and scatter across the Western Province while his family searched frantically for answers.

What followed was a meticulous multi-district operation to destroy all physical trace of the crime. Reconstructed timelines reveal that after the killing, the perpetrators loaded the body into a vehicle and drove over forty kilometers east into the quiet, wooded stretches of Papiliyawala in Kirindiwela. There, they wrapped the remains in heavy tent fabric and set them ablaze, burning the site to ashes.

Determined to leave nothing for investigators, the group gathered the unburned bone fragments and carried them further east toward Kosgama. Standing atop the Ranwala Bridge, they cast the remaining evidence into the dark waters of the Kelani River, trusting the strong currents to wash away their secret forever.

For a year, the plan seemed to work. But patient detective work by the Colombo District Crimes Division finally broke the wall of silence. Officers tracked down and arrested two key suspects in Mabola and Mahara, whose interrogations quickly led to the capture of two more accomplices hiding out in Uswetakeiyawa. The four men, aged between 29 and 46, now face the full weight of a murder prosecution.

At the burn site in Papiliyawala, forensic teams combed through the dirt, recovering charred bone fragments, pieces of burnt tent fabric, a personal amulet, and a motorcycle ignition key belonging to the victim. Days later, under the supervision of the Avissawella Magistrate and the Seethawaka Crime Scene Investigation Unit, Sri Lanka Navy divers plunged into the Kelani River near Ranwala Bridge to search the riverbed for remaining evidence.

With all four suspects remanded, the horrifying details of that October night have finally come to light, bringing a grim close to a case that nearly vanished into complete darkness.

THREE ARRESTED AS MONARAGALA RAID TURNS TWO ACRES OF CANNABIS TO ASH

In the quiet, sun-baked expanses of Maw Ara in Hambegamuwa, a joint security operation brought a swift, extremely smoky end to a massive illegal farming operation.

Acting on precise intelligence from Army Military Intelligence, officers from the Monaragala Police Narcotics Bureau raided a hidden plantation, seizing and destroying a staggering 36,710 cannabis plants cultivated across nearly two acres of land.

The raid uncovered towering crops, with individual plants measuring anywhere between six and eight feet in height, proving that while the growers clearly lacked legal standing, they certainly did not lack a surprisingly effective green thumb.

However, instead of allowing the lucrative green yield to reach the black market, security forces uprooted the entire crop and incinerated it right on the spot.

One can only assume the surrounding wildlife had a particularly relaxed afternoon as the massive plume drifted over the Monaragala scrubland.



Three suspects were apprehended at the scene and promptly handed over to the Hambegamuwa Police for further investigation.

Their ambitious agricultural venture, it turns out, ended not in a bumper harvest, but in a rather literal cloud of ash.

From an operational standpoint, the raid was a textbook victory. Seamless coordination between military intelligence and police narcotics units allowed law enforcement to shut down a large-scale illegal operation before the product could hit the streets.

The sheer size of the operation shows the lengths to which illicit syndicates will go, transforming remote public lands into secretive, high-yield farms.

But as enforcement agencies continue their endless game of forest whack-a-mole, this latest bust sends a direct message to aspiring wilderness horticulturists: no matter how high your plants grow, the law has a habit of bringing them straight back down to earth.

INVESTIGATIONS LAUNCHED AFTER TUSKER FOUND DEAD WITH SEVERED TUSK

Sri Lanka's conservation record has suffered another devastating, unpardonable blow following the discovery of a dead wild tusker with its left tusk severed and stolen in the North Central Province.

Officers from the Department of Wildlife Conservation discovered the carcass on Sunday in a forested area adjoining a paddy field near the Kayagollewa tank, within the Meeminnawala Grama Niladhari Division of Kahatagasdigiliya.



Preliminary field assessments indicate the animal died roughly a week prior to discovery.

The deceased tusker, estimated to be between 20 and 25 years old and standing seven feet tall, had its left tusk hacked off using a sharp weapon after its death.

Wildlife authorities, alongside Civil Defence Force personnel, have been deployed to secure the site, while the Kahatagasdigiliya Police, Army Intelligence, and wildlife officials have initiated joint investigations to locate the perpetrators and trace the black-market supply chain.

Facts regarding the incident are being submitted to the Kahatagasdigiliya Magistrate's Court today, while the Pandulagama Wildlife Veterinary Unit conducts a formal post-mortem examination to establish whether the animal was poisoned, shot, or killed by electrocution.

The white-hot rage reverberating across the country today is completely justified, but what makes this loss truly infuriating is that stories like this have become horrifyingly frequent as of late.

No matter how loud the public outcry grows, no matter how many press conferences authorities hold, and no matter how many high-level investigations are promised, these atrocious killings simply keep happening.

Less than two percent of Sri Lanka's male Asian elephants carry tusks, yet our nation continues to watch a heartbreaking parade of mutilated giants, illegal high-voltage fences, snares, and jaw-shattering explosive baits devastate our remaining population.

This endless cycle of tragedy proves that our state mechanisms have fundamentally failed these majestic

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creatures, reducing national pride to butchered remains left in muddy fields. The public's patience has completely run out, and the time for routine paperwork and soft warnings is over.

We demand that law enforcement, judicial bodies, and wildlife authorities take immediate, unyielding action by hunting down every individual connected to this crime and subjecting them to the absolute maximum legal punishment available without the option of simple fines, proving once and for all that our natural heritage cannot be slaughtered with impunity.

DEAD AT DUMBARA: SHOT INMATE'S FAMILY DEMANDS ANSWERS AFTER DUBIOUS ESCAPE CLAIM

A 27-year-old remand prisoner was shot dead by guards inside the Dumbara Prison complex in Pallekele, Kandy, around 8:00 p.m. on Sunday. According to Prisons Media Spokesman and Commissioner Senaka Pallathtenna, the inmate was fatally wounded while attempting to escape the facility and actively trying to seize a firearm from a prison officer. The deceased, a resident of Galagedara who had been remanded over allegations of possessing seven grams of narcotics, had been in custody for less than a week. His body was subsequently transferred to the Kandy National Hospital for post-mortem examination, while joint inquiries involving local police and judicial authorities were initiated.



Beyond the immediate official sequence of events, however, the incident has raised significant concern and sparked an intense emotional outcry from the deceased's family. Relatives state they were never formally notified of the shooting by prison administration or local police, discovering the tragedy only through informal channels. Upon traveling to both the Galagedara Police Station and the Kandy National Hospital, family members report being met with limited information and denied access to view the body. They have also raised troubling claims regarding rumors of broken bones prior to the fatal shot, insisting on an impartial investigation to establish complete clarity.

Balancing these accounts requires examining the severe operational pressures and security risks confronting correctional personnel. High-security facilities like Dumbara manage volatile environments where an attempt to disarm a perimeter guard poses an immediate, lethal threat to officers, other inmates, and public safety. In such high-stress scenarios, guards are trained to deploy decisive force to prevent a weapon from falling into unauthorized hands or allowing a breach of the perimeter.

At the same time, custodial deaths place a heavy burden of accountability on state institutions. A standard self-defense assertion does not negate the necessity for procedural transparency, particularly when a newly remanded suspect dies within days of entering a state facility. With the deceased having married six months ago and leaving behind a pregnant wife, the human toll underscores why routine press statements are insufficient to satisfy public trust.

The ongoing magistrate's inquiry and official post-mortem at the Kandy National Hospital must now provide objective forensic findings. Establishing the full truth serves both sides of the fence, verifying whether correctional officers acted strictly within lawful self-defense protocols, while guaranteeing the grieving family an open, verifiable accounting of the events that transpired behind Dumbara's walls.

ANOTHER ONE: FORMER MINISTRY SECRETARY ARRESTED OVER RS. 7.9M HOSPITAL CHAIR PROCUREMENT

Yesterday morning, at around 9.45 a.m., CIABOC investigation officers arrested Gamini Kithsiri Dias Amarawardhana, the former Secretary to the Ministry of Cooperatives and Internal Trade. The charge? Alleged corruption surrounding a routine, seemingly mundane public procurement process that somehow managed to bleed millions from state coffers: buying chairs for the Polgolla Mahinda Rajapaksa Hospital.

According to official details released by the Bribery Commission, the former Ministry Secretary allegedly orchestrated a tender bypass of classic proportions. Investigative files reveal that during the procurement evaluation, a competing private firm submitted the lowest price quotation while fully satisfying all specified technical and quality benchmarks. Yet, instead of awarding the contract to the lowest valid bidder as required by state procurement guidelines, Amarawardhana allegedly arranged for the order to be handed over to a different private entity.

The financial arithmetic behind this seating arrangement is staggering. CIABOC officers state that the deliberate deviation from tender rules resulted in a direct loss of Rs. 7,973,114.50 to the government, while handing an unlawful financial windfall to an external commercial party.

The suspect now faces formal charges of committing the offense of corruption under national anti-corruption laws and is scheduled to be produced before the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court for remand proceedings.

For the Sri Lankan public, the arrest of yet another senior administrative bureaucrat evokes a familiar combination of satisfaction and deep-seated weariness. While citizens are forced to count every rupee at the grocery counter, state officials were apparently treating multi-million-rupee public hospital procurements like personal budget allocations.

Whether it is fuel imports, road construction, or sitting furniture for a regional hospital, the playbook remains infuriatingly identical: bypass the lowest bidder, line an associate's pockets, and leave the taxpayer to absorb the bill.

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Corruption surrounding a seemingly mundane public procurement process that managed to bleed millions from state coffers: purchasing sitting furniture for the Polgolla Mahinda Rajapaksa Hospital.

According to official details released by the commission, the former Ministry Secretary allegedly orchestrated a tender bypass of classic proportions. Investigative files reveal that during the evaluation, a competing vendor submitted the lowest price quotation while fully satisfying all specified technical and quality benchmarks.

Yet, instead of awarding the contract to the lowest valid bidder as mandated by state financial regulations, Amarawardhana allegedly arranged for the order to be steered toward a different private supplier.

The financial arithmetic behind this seating arrangement is staggering. CIABOC officers state that the deliberate deviation from standard tender rules resulted in a direct loss of Rs. 7,973,114.50 to the government, while providing an undue commercial benefit to an external party.

The suspect faces formal charges of committing the offense of corruption under national anti-corruption laws and is scheduled to be produced before the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court for remand proceedings.

Whether it is large-scale infrastructure or basic hospital seating, the temptation to sideline official procedure has plagued state administration for decades.

Amarawardhana will now have his day before the Colombo Chief Magistrate to explain how a routine order of hospital chairs managed to cost the public treasury nearly eight million rupees in inflated excess.

