Issue No. 420 5th NOVEMBER 2026 CEYLON INDEPENDENT @+94 77 230 0305

NEWSLINE

Daily by Faraz

"Questioning The Answers"



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL : @ceylonindependent

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

PARLIAMENT CLASHES OVER PRESIDENT ANURA KUMARA'S ZERO-TAX CLAIMS

Few things stir political theater quite like a debate over who is reaching into the taxpayer's pocket, and Sri Lanka's Parliament just bore witness to a masterclass in conflicting ledger books. Opposition MP Ajith P. Perera has launched a scathing parliamentary assault on President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, directly accusing the Head of State, who conveniently also serves as Finance Minister, of misleading the public over the government's tax trajectory.

The controversy erupted following recent high-profile declarations by President Dissanayake, who assured citizens that his administration had not introduced a single new tax since taking office in late 2024. Pledging further tax relief in the upcoming budget, the President argued that his government had instead focused on curbing state waste, easing the burden on ordinary citizens, and significantly paring down several existing tariffs.

Speaking on the floor of the House, Perera methodically pulled apart the President's claims, accusing the administration of practicing selective arithmetic amnesia while citizens reel from persistent cost-of-living pressures.

"The President insists that not a single new tax has been introduced under his watch," Perera declared during his speech. "Yet the official revenue record tells a completely different story. We are looking at three brand-new tax measures and at least seven major tax hikes slapped onto the public".

Perera's breakdown listed the newly minted revenue levies, highlighting a 15 percent income tax imposed on service export earnings, an 18 percent Value Added Tax (VAT) extended to digital services, and a 5 percent withholding tax applied to specified professional service payments.

Turning to rate increases, the Opposition MP detailed hikes hitting interest income, capital gains, financial services, alongside steep revisions on alcohol, tobacco, and betting and gaming operations.

"How can the Finance Minister of this country claim no new taxes exist when digital services, export income, and professional fees are being squeezed under new instruments?" Perera questioned, taking direct aim at Dissanayake's dual executive roles.

He argued that while state treasuries continue to collect record receipts, government ministries are simultaneously failing to fully utilize the capital revenues gathered from strained households.

While official economic records confirm that several statutory tax adjustments, including cross-border digital service VAT and service export income levies, were legislated to broaden the national revenue base, the administration maintains these are essential structural realignments inherited from broader fiscal stabilization efforts rather than ad-hoc extractions.

As the upcoming budget deadline approaches, the debate highlights the tightrope President Dissanayake must walk: balancing populist promises of middle-class tax relief against the unyielding requirements of state debt restructuring. For Sri Lankan taxpayers, however, the technical distinction between a "new tax" and a "realigned rate" matters far less than the final balance on their bank statements.

UN EXPERTS SOUND ALARM ON ORGANISED CRIME DRAFT

In a detailed 31-page joint intervention, five United Nations human rights mandates have formally urged the Sri Lankan government to halt the proposed Prevention of Organised Crimes Bill. The diagnosis from international experts is unequivocal: beneath official assurances of tackling criminal syndicates, the draft legislation threatens to entrench arbitrary executive detention, state coercion, and systemic abuses.

The primary alarm point for international watchdogs is the bill's sweeping expansion of police custody powers. The text allows authorities to hold suspects for up to 72 hours before presenting them to a magistrate, while ministry-issued detention orders can keep individuals locked inside police stations for up to a full year. UN rapporteurs highlighted that prolonged, isolated detention in police facilities significantly increases the risk of torture, forced confessions, and procedural denial of basic legal rights.

Equally concerning to international legal observers is a drastic shift in evidentiary safeguards. Statements made to senior police officers would become admissible in court as evidence against the accused, effectively reversing the burden of proof. If a detainee alleges that a confession was extracted through violence or intimidation, the responsibility falls squarely on the accused to prove coercion while remaining behind bars. Human rights groups have noted that this mechanism mirrors some of the most criticized features of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The scrutiny extends beyond station cells to civic freedoms. The draft law grants law enforcement broad, unchecked authority to intercept private communications, compel data decryption, and access telecommunications records without judicial warrants. Furthermore, journalists face potential criminal penalties for reporting on relevant court proceedings without prior judicial authorization. Sweeping definitions of "organized criminal groups" create additional risks that trade unions, student movements, and peaceful protest networks could be ensnared in state dragnets.



While the UN mandate holders recognize that countering organized crime remains a legitimate security goal, they stress that legislation must align with Sri Lanka's international commitments.

With international bodies, domestic rights commissions, and civil society groups advocating a comprehensive overhaul, Sri Lanka faces a clear choice: heed international warnings or allow crime-fighting tools to compromise constitutional protections.

ADMINISTRATIVE FRAUD AT THE YOUTH COUNCIL: NYSC DIRECTOR BAILED IN AMPARA PROPERTY PROBE

Corruption in public institutions rarely presents itself with dramatic midnight handovers; more often, it hides inside routine administrative files, sub-lease contracts, and unauthorized renovation bills. The ongoing investigation by the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) into the National Youth Services Council (NYSC) provides a textbook look at how state funds can be systematically siphoned through bureaucratic maneuvers.

The latest development in the case unfolded at the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court, where Manula Chamal Perera, Director of Administration and Human Resources at the council, was granted bail following his arrest by bribery investigators. Chief Magistrate Asanga S. Bodaragama ordered Perera's release on two surety bails of Rs. 1 million each while placing an immediate ban on his overseas travel. Perera's arrest comes just one week after investigators took former council Chairman Lalith Piyum Perera into custody on identical charges before he too was released on bail, confirming that graft investigators are treating this as a coordinated administrative failure at the apex of the youth council's executive leadership.

At the heart of the prosecution's case is a property located in Samapura, within the Ampara District. According to filings presented in court, the core of the

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

ADMINISTRATIVE FRAUD...

financial loss stems from a dual-stage irregular transaction totaling Rs. 5.1 million. Officials allegedly drafted sub-lease agreements falsely representing a plot of land and building as state-owned premises to secure it for council operations, resulting in Rs. 3.8 million in public funds being improperly paid out to an unauthorized third party. On top of the lease disbursements, an additional Rs. 1.3 million was spent on renovating the building. Investigators revealed that these capital expenditures were carried out completely in the dark, bypassing the statutory approval of the Board of Directors entirely and creating a direct loss of Rs. 5.1 million to the state treasury.

While both high-ranking officials have secured temporary freedom on bail, the legal trajectory for this case is set to escalate over the coming months. Bribery prosecutors are currently finalizing the documentary evidence, tracing bank transfers connected to the third-party lease recipient, and verifying board meeting minutes to prove the deliberate omission of mandatory approvals. Once preliminary investigations conclude, formal indictments under the Anti-Corruption Act are expected to follow. If charges of causing willful financial loss to the state are established, the suspects face stiff criminal penalties alongside orders for full restitution. The case also places mounting pressure on the ministry to audit regional property acquisitions across the island, while the court's travel ban ensures that administrative rank will offer no escape from financial accountability.

THE VOTE TALLY SPEAKS: INSIDE THE DEMOCRATIC MIDTERM SWEEP

If American politics is a theater of public grievances, election night pulled back the curtain to reveal a crowd that finally got tired of the noise. The official vote tallies from the 2026 midterm elections handed the Democratic Party a sweeping mandate, delivering the House of Representatives back into Democratic hands, securing crucial Senate seats in battleground states, and leaving the White House scrambling to spin a mathematical rout as a mere technicality.

The undisputed main event of the night unfolded in Michigan, where progressive leader and former Detroit health commissioner Dr. Abdul El-Sayed claimed victory in the race for the United States Senate.

Facing off against Republican contender Mike Rogers for the seat vacated by retiring Senator Gary Peters, El-Sayed crossed the finish line with 2,497,852 votes—capturing 52.5 percent of the total turnout. Rogers trailed with 2,162,890 votes, or 45.5 percent. The remaining ballots went to minor candidates, leaving El-Sayed with a massive margin of over 334,000 votes.

When El-Sayed takes the oath of office in January, he will become the first Muslim elected to the United States Senate in American history.

But the victory was as much a triumph over political insult as it was over raw vote totals. During the closing weeks of the campaign, Vice President JD Vance flew into Michigan to rally behind Rogers, famously calling El-Sayed a "little weasel" who ought to "shut his mouth". Vance went further, claiming that El-Sayed was ashamed of American heritage and hated things near and dear to local voters, like Mackinac Island and high school football.

El-Sayed's response at a rally of 1,300 supporters in Marquette was an instant classic in political clapback. Refusing to take the bait quietly, El-Sayed lit into the Vice President's Buckeye roots. "J.D. Vance called me a little weasel today," El-Sayed told the cheering crowd. "I'm like, no, no, no. What you're talking about is a fucking Wolverine. You can take your Buckeye and go shove it somewhere else, Ohio. Here, we might be Wildcats, we might be Spartans, we might be Wolverines, but we will never be Buckeyes."

Taking direct aim at Vance's lectures on patriotism, El-Sayed added a sharp reality check for the out-of-state Vice President. "In America, we don't discriminate against people for who they love, how they identify, how they pray, or the color of their skin. We believe in an America big enough for all of us. So don't you dare come from Ohio to lecture me about America. You don't know a damn thing about America. Never have, never will."



The political hit job collapsed, and the voters of Michigan agreed with the Wolverine.

Across the rest of the national map, the Democratic wave washed over critical suburban corridors. In the House of Representatives, Democrats comfortably cleared the 218-seat line, securing 225 seats to the Republican party's 139 in preliminary tallies. Suburbs across Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, and California that had strayed toward Republicans in prior years swung back hard toward Democratic candidates.

Voters cited unrelenting inflation, high healthcare costs, and constant executive overreach as their primary reasons for flipping back. In the Senate, Democrats held their defensive line while picking up key battlegrounds, effectively building a hard legislative brick wall right across the Oval Office doorway.

Naturally, the White House reaction to these uncompromising numbers was a masterclass in post-election copium. Having declared just hours before poll closures that this was "the most important midterm election in our lifetime," President Donald Trump woke up to a reality he clearly had no interest in accepting. Addressing reporters and taking to social media in a late-night marathon, the President completely sidestepped the actual vote tallies to launch a familiar tirade of excuses, pointing fingers at "crooked voting systems," biased media coverage, and alleged disloyalty within his own party.

Before the first polls had even closed, Trump had already signaled his copium strategy to reporters, declaring, "I think we're going to do great. But if we didn't win, I veto everything. I'll be vetoing, vetoing... I guess I'll become Mr. Veto."

Instead of reflecting on why suburban voters abandoned the Republican ticket, the President's messaging team scrambled to put lipstick on a pig. Surrogates flooded cable news channels emphasizing narrow victories in deep-red rural enclaves, claiming the MAGA base had turned out in numbers never seen before and dismissing the massive losses in Congress as a standard historic midterm slump that every sitting president faces. Yet, for all the political posturing and talk of becoming "Mr. Veto," rhetoric does not change who holds the gavel.

When the new Congress convenes in January, the political dynamic in Washington will undergo an absolute shock. The new Democratic majority in the House will take over every committee chair, hold every subpoena pen, and control the purse strings of the federal budget. The administrative free ride is officially over. As the dust settles on the 2026 midterms, the takeaway is simple: you can call your opponents weasels and blame the media all night long, but when the vote count comes in, the math always wins.

HACKERS TARGET FRENCH BLOOD SUPPLIES VIA REFRIGERATION LOOPHOLE

If anyone still doubted that cyberwarfare has abandoned the realm of quiet data theft for physical infrastructure sabotage, the latest events unfolding across European networks should shatter that illusion. In an unprecedented breach of critical healthcare logistics, hackers breached control systems managing cold-storage facilities operated by the French Blood Establishment (EFS), attempting to crank plasma freezer settings from a safe minus 30 degrees Celsius up to a scorching 110 degrees.

The attack targeted three separate facilities storing crucial plasma intended both for life-saving transfusions and high-grade medicinal manufacturing. It was not executed through a direct assault on the state health agency's primary networks, but via a vulnerable third-party equipment and maintenance vendor. The strategy was simple: breach the weaker link in the supply chain to remotely alter defrost and temperature thresholds, effectively attempting to cook temperature-sensitive biological stock overnight.

Disaster was averted by an old-fashioned line of defense: responsive monitoring systems and an alert technician. System alarms triggered the moment abnormal temperature shifts began, allowing technicians on duty to intervene immediately. Staff managed to secure or physically transfer the plasma stocks before heat damage could set in, enabling the French Health Ministry to declare zero losses of blood products and uninterrupted supply lines to national hospitals.

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

HACKERS TARGET FRENCH...

Yet, the incident signals a alarming shift in cyber strategy. The attempt on French blood banks follows a rash of recent attacks across European supermarket chains, where hackers hijacked legacy refrigeration controllers, causing millions in spoiled food inventory. Cybersecurity agencies, including France's ANSSI, are now scrambling to trace whether these assaults share a single command origin or represent a wider exploitation of unpatched industrial control systems left exposed on public networks.



While French authorities maintain that operational continuity was preserved, the geopolitical takeaway is chilling. The perpetrators did not seek financial ransom or stolen donor databases; they aimed directly at operational sabotage, testing how easily essential public infrastructure can be crippled through routine maintenance vendors. For health administrations worldwide, the warning is clear: leaving operational technology unshielded leaves the most vital human resources at the mercy of a distant keyboard.

11,131 JUVENILE ARRESTS IN ONE YEAR: CHILDREN ENSNARED AS SYNDICATES TARGET CLASSROOMS

Numbers have a brutal way of stripping away comfortable illusions. According to disclosures made by Police Media Spokesperson Assistant Superintendent of Police F.U. Wootler, a staggering 11,131 children, including 233 girls, have been taken into police custody since October 30, 2025. Behind that cold statistical tally lies a deeply unsettling reality about how modern narcotics syndicates operate, targeting the most vulnerable demographic in society right at the school gate and the neighborhood tuition class.

The modus operandi revealed by law enforcement reads like a dark parody of childhood. Intelligence units have uncovered active distribution networks where synthetic drugs, most notably crystal methamphetamine or "Ice", are smuggled into educational zones disguised as innocent treats.

Narcotics are being laced into everyday items such as flavored ice creams, cotton candy, and even traditional street snacks like Sarawita. When drug pushers package deadly, highly addictive stimulants into colorful sweets sold directly to children, the traditional boundaries protecting schools dissolve completely.

ASP Wootler urged parents to monitor subtle shifts in their children, noting that changes in eating habits, sudden behavioral swings, altered conversational patterns, and unfamiliar social circles are often the only early warning signs that a child has been hooked. Yet, placing the entire burden of surveillance on exhausted parents misses a broader systemic failure. The sheer volume of over 11,000 child arrests in a single year demonstrates that law enforcement is intercepting victims at the tail end of a supply chain that has largely gone unchecked by institutional safeguards.

To understand how Sri Lanka arrived at this precarious juncture, one must look closely at the socio-economic collapse that fractured family units across the island. During the depths of the economic crisis, household poverty skyrocketed, pushing thousands of parents into desperate financial survival or overseas labor markets. This left a generation of children unsupervised and psychologically vulnerable. Organized crime syndicates capitalized on this vacuum, transforming schools and tuition hubs into prime retail markets for synthetic drugs. Unlike traditional heroin, which required established trafficking routes, cheap and synthetic chemical drugs can be manufactured, modified, and marketed with terrifying speed.

Compounding the crisis is the evolving profile of the modern drug user and courier. Syndicates increasingly recruit minors and teenagers because juvenile legal frameworks offer insulation from the heavy mandatory sentencing slapped on adult offenders. Children are deployed not only as end consumers but as low-level couriers, carrying drug-laced sweets and packets past casual security checks. By embedding narcotics into everyday confectionery items, traffickers bypass parental suspicion entirely, turning a routine pocket-money snack into a gateway for chemical dependency.

The path forward requires far more than routine police warnings and sporadic raids outside school gates. If the state is going to reverse a trend that has seen more than 11,000 children ensnared in less than a year, the response must target the financial backers and chemical importers pulling the strings behind the scenes. Intelligence networks must dismantle the supply lines at their source rather than merely filling holding cells with young victims. Until then, the alarming reality remains that for thousands of children in Sri Lanka, the local sweet shop or school lane has become ground zero in an unyielding chemical war.

VERDICT SET FOR NOVEMBER 25: GOTABAYA AWAITS RULING ON OVERSEAS TRAVEL

Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's attempt to unseal his travel documents has run straight into a wall of judicial skepticism and bureaucratic hesitation. The Colombo Fort Magistrate's Court deferred its ruling on Rajapaksa's application to lift his overseas travel ban until November 25, leaving the former chief executive grounded while state investigators struggle to articulate their own conditions.

The legal friction stems from ongoing investigations into the 2019 Easter Sunday terror attacks. In June 2026, the court imposed travel restrictions on Rajapaksa and several former intelligence heads as investigators probed potential security lapses and intelligence failures surrounding the bombings. Months later, the former President filed a motion seeking permission to travel abroad, prompting the court to demand explicit clarification from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) regarding their stance.

When CID officials appeared before Fort Magistrate Pasan Amarasena, their position offered a masterclass in institutional fence-sitting. State investigators voiced grave concerns that should Rajapaksa board an outbound flight, he might simply decide not to return to face ongoing inquiries. Yet, in the same breath, the CID informed the court it would not oppose lifting the ban provided robust legal safeguards were established to guarantee his return. In short: they were happy to let him fly, provided someone else guaranteed he would land back in Colombo.



The Magistrate was quick to point out the procedural absurdity of the request. Observing that Gotabaya Rajapaksa has not been formally named as an accused suspect in the main proceedings, Magistrate Amarasena noted that the court possesses no legal mechanism to enforce a return guarantee on an unindicted citizen once an overseas travel ban is lifted.

The court cannot invent legal sureties out of thin air to cover for prosecutorial hesitation.

The legal impasse highlights the government's delicate balance in handling high-profile investigations linked to the 2019 tragedy. While the CID wants to preserve its investigative footprint, it has stopped short of formal indictments.

By deferring the order to November 25, the court has thrown the ball squarely back into the state's court: either produce formal legal grounds to justify restricting a former president's movement, or accept that an unindicted citizen cannot be held in perpetual transit limbo.

