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NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

HOMELESS HAND SYMBOL:

ELECTION COMMISSION DERECOGNIZES THE SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY



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The political entity that dominated Sri Lankan governance for decades and birthed prime ministers, presidents, and historic coalitions has effectively been declared legally non-existent. In a landmark decision, the Election Commission of Sri Lanka officially informed the competing factions of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party that the organization can no longer be considered a recognized political party.

The ruling represents a catastrophic milestone in the long-running post-presidential decline of the country's grand old party. For months, rival factions led by competing executive committees have waged a bitter war of attrition across party headquarters, press conferences, and district courts, each claiming to hold legitimate custodianship over the iconic blue banner and its famous hand symbol. However, the Election Commission made clear that state regulators will no longer act as referees for internal chaos. Under existing electoral statutes, when a political party splits into warring camps that produce conflicting executive rosters, constitution filings, and office-bearer nominations, the state simply suspends recognition entirely.

Instead of acknowledging either side, the Commission advised both factions to start from square one. If the Sri Lanka Freedom Party wishes to regain its seat at the official political table, its members must file a completely fresh application for party recognition.

That process requires fulfilling rigid statutory criteria, starting with conducting a unified, formal party conference and election that strictly aligns with registration rules.

The technical requirements for a brand-new application present a near-insurmountable wall for a divided party. Beyond proving continuous political activity for four years, an applicant party must submit audited financial statements, a clear policy declaration, and an official constitution approved by a undisputed general assembly. Crucially, the application requires the signature of a single, undisputed General Secretary and an accepted list of office-bearers that includes female representation. With rival factions holding separate meetings and filing competing injunctions against one another, convening a recognized party election remains a distant dream.

The broader implications for electoral strategy are severe. Without formal recognition, the party loses its statutory entitlement to field candidates under its registered name and symbol in upcoming elections.

Candidates aligned with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party will be forced to contest under independent groups or seek shelter beneath the banners of newer third-party platforms.

For anyone who has even the slightest clue about Sri Lankan politics across the past five decades, the derecognition of the party founded by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1951 carries immense symbolic weight. Having spent the better part of seven decades shaping the island's economic and constitutional trajectory, the party has been brought low not by external electoral wipeouts, but by self-inflicted internal fragmentation.

The Election Commission's directive leaves the warring factions with a harsh reality check. While both sides continue to squabble over keys to Darley Road and debate who holds legitimate authority, the state regulator has effectively pulled the plug on their political life support. Rebuilding a party from an empty registration form requires unified leadership and statutory elections, two concepts that have proven entirely foreign to a party currently intent on destroying itself from within.

THE ECONOMY HAS RECOVERED. HAS YOUR FAMILY?

With Budget 2027 due on November 12, the Government faces a test that reaches beyond revenue targets: whether economic recovery can deliver greater security to ordinary households.

Sri Lanka approaches next week's Budget with a question that no parliamentary majority can answer on the public's behalf: how much of the recovery has reached the family budget? President Anura Kumara Dissanayake will present his proposals on Thursday, November 12. The national accounts will matter, but so will what remains of a salary after food, transport, electricity and school expenses.

The Government has defended its recent tax measures, arguing that they correct inconsistencies, protect foreign exchange and distribute obligations more fairly. Deputy Finance Minister Dr. Anil Jayantha Fernando has explained changes affecting vehicle imports, bank interest, service exports and digital services. His position is that individual changes must be assessed within the wider tax framework.

That explanation deserves scrutiny on its merits. Consolidating existing taxes is different from introducing an additional charge, while a deduction creditable against an annual tax bill is different from a final tax. Equally, the Government must explain what each measure means in rupees, who qualifies for relief and how easily that relief can actually be obtained.

Be that as it may, fiscal recovery cannot be judged solely by the Treasury's capacity to collect. A household needs dependable earnings, affordable essentials and public services that reduce the need to spend privately. A small business needs customers with money to spend, alongside predictable rules and a reasonable chance of expansion.

There are legitimate constraints. Sri Lanka must sustain its recovery as the IMF programme approaches its scheduled conclusion in March 2027, while higher energy costs place renewed pressure on households. Promising relief without explaining its financing would offer little protection against another crisis.



With Budget 2027 due on November 12, the Government faces a test that reaches beyond revenue targets: whether economic recovery can deliver greater security to ordinary households.

The Budget should therefore make its choices visible. Who receives assistance, when will it arrive, and what expenditure or revenue will fund it? Parliament should demand measurable commitments on service delivery and spending efficiency, alongside the familiar targets for revenue and deficits.

For NEWSLINE, the test is straightforward: will these proposals make ordinary lives more secure without mortgaging their future? The President has the opportunity to connect economic discipline with public confidence. On Thursday, he must explain how the figures will become improvements people can recognise in their own homes.

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MEANWHILE, IN THE WILD WEST: BLUE WAVES, MARKET CRASHES, AND TEHRAN'S TAKEAWAYS

The factual sequence of events following the November 2026 U.S. midterm elections reads less like standard statecraft and more like an absurdist political theatre. In the span of forty-eight hours, American voters delivered a sweeping legislative eviction to the ruling party, Wall Street responded to democratic decision-making with a trillion-dollar panic attack, the President blamed the public for destroying their own retirement funds, and an authoritarian foreign regime claimed to be the true voice of the American voters' conscience.

The numerical reality of Tuesday night upended the political map. Democrats flipped control of both chambers, securing at least 256 seats in the House of Representatives by winning in deep-red districts across the country. In the Senate, Democrats expanded their reach into traditionally conservative terrain, taking seats in Kansas, electing the state's first Democratic senator since 1932, alongside victories in Iowa, South Carolina, and Texas. In Texas, the outcome carried an added layer of political irony: Ken Paxton, handpicked and heavily endorsed by Donald Trump after defeating incumbent Senator John Cornyn in the primary, lost the general election to Democrat Colin Allred.

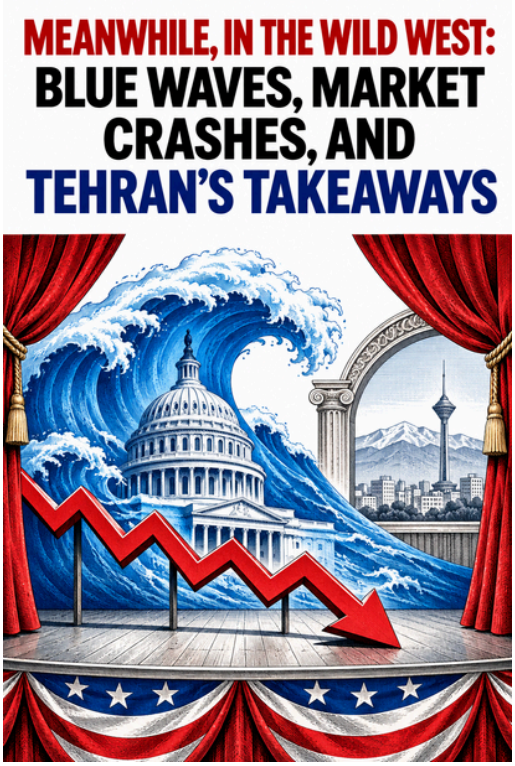
The midterm election results also set historic demographic precedents across the country. In Michigan, former public health director and physician Dr. Abdul El-Sayed defeated Republican former congressman Mike Rogers to become the first Muslim ever elected to the United States Senate. El-Sayed built his victory on strong turnouts in Wayne and Washtenaw counties, driven by voter frustration over healthcare costs, daily expenses, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Simultaneously, Illinois Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton won her race to become the state's first Black female senator, while Georgia elected Keisha Lance Bottoms as governor. Coalition groups, including Palestinian-American and Muslim voter organizations, mobilized heavily against the administration's foreign policy choices and military spending, converting anti-war sentiment into tangible voting blocks in key suburban districts.

The financial reaction to the election outcome arrived on Thursday, transforming Wall Street's brief post-election pause into a violent selloff. Investors, terrified that a Democratic-controlled Congress would restrict land use, local zoning, and environmental permits for power-hungry artificial intelligence data centers, began dumping tech equities at scale.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index dropped 5.5 percent, or 1,422 points, falling to 24,315 and entering technical correction territory. The Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged 1,833 points to close at 51,868, while the S&P 500 dropped 4.4 percent to 7,354. In a single trading session, companies within the Nasdaq-100 saw approximately 2.5 trillion dollars in market value evaporate. Chipmaker Nvidia fell 9.3 percent, SanDisk collapsed 22 percent, and Western Digital dropped 17 percent.

The President's response to the market destruction was direct and unflinching. Rather than offering economic reassurances, Donald Trump took to social media to inform citizens that they had brought the financial carnage upon themselves. Writing on Truth Social, Trump posted: "The Stock Market crashed today because the Dumocrats had a big Tuesday, so sad to see, you only have yourselves to blame!" He followed up by dismissing the loss of both legislative chambers entirely, declaring: "I wasn't on the Ballot and if I was, we would have won IN A LANDSLIDE!"

While the electoral loss was sinking in, administrative real estate and monumental architecture took center stage at the White House. In the immediate aftermath of the vote, President Trump signed an executive order designating his gold-accented, renovated Oval Office as a national monument to prevent future presidents from altering its layout or interior design. "Nobody can touch it," Trump told reporters, adding that stupid people would not be allowed to destroy or rip it down to build something in a slightly different shape.



However, his broader architectural ambitions hit a judicial brick wall. Just hours after a federal planning panel voted eight to four to approve Trump's planned 250-foot triumphal arch near Arlington National Cemetery, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan issued an emergency injunction halting all construction-related activity for fourteen days while courts consider legal challenges to the project's validity.

Halfway across the world to the Land Of The Free™ and closer to us, the Iranian government chose to step into the role of spokesperson for the American electorate. Observing the eight-month-old military conflict between the U.S. and Iran, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf declared on social media: "Americans said NO TO WAR, and we endorse this message". Ghalibaf cited the rising cost of living and a sudden awakening of "conscience" as the reasons for the Republican losses, before adding a warning: "If the U.S. govt betrays their public will to serve international paymasters and blackmailers, it will learn our NO comes with a Nightmare".

At the same time, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, issued a statement rejecting any suggestion that the American democratic process mattered at all. Published on his official website, Khamenei warned: "If there are still people who harbor even the slightest hope for a change in behavior or for party and factional shifts within the system of domination, or who believe that by making concessions to America they can dissuade it from hostility toward the Iranian nation, they are gravely mistaken". He concluded with a cold assessment of global power: "The United States sees the end of its dominance as distant, but we consider it near"

ACADEMIC SLIP OR REGIONAL SURGE? UNPACKING SRI LANKA'S QS ASIA RANKINGS DROP

Higher education in Sri Lanka has suffered a sobering reality check. In the latest QS Asia University Rankings 2027 released by higher education analysts Quacquarelli Symonds, eight of Sri Lanka's twelve featured public universities registered notable drops in their regional standings. The University of Colombo slipped forty-six places to rank 364th in Asia, while the University of Peradeniya and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura dropped to 389th and 398th respectively.

Even with its decline, the University of Colombo maintained its streak as the island's premier institution for the fifth consecutive year, standing as the only local university inside Asia's top 200 for Employer Reputation at 192nd. Elsewhere, the University of Moratuwa climbed thirty-seven spots to 517th, and the University of Kelaniya surged forty-four places to secure 687th position.

Yet, the overarching trend raises a critical question: is local academic quality deteriorating, or are broader regional mechanics driving the slide?

To understand these shifts, it helps to examine the specific mechanics of the QS Asia evaluation methodology. Unlike global league tables, the Asian regional framework measures eleven specific indicators across academic performance, graduate employability, research production, faculty capacity, and internationalization. Academic reputation accounts for thirty percent of an institution's total score, while employer reputation contributes twenty percent.

Faculty-to-student ratios, international research networks, and citations per paper each carry a ten percent weight, with smaller percentages allocated to staff holding doctorates, papers per faculty, and international student or faculty exchanges.

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ACADEMIC SLIP...

A primary catalyst for the widespread slide is simple regional dilution. Nearly two hundred new institutions entered this year's rankings evaluation pool across East and South Asia. Rapidly funded universities in China, India, and Southeast Asia are pouring billions into state-of-the-art laboratory infrastructure, lucrative research grants, and aggressive international faculty recruitment. In comparison, Sri Lankan state universities operate under severe fiscal constraints, making relative movement downward almost inevitable when regional peers scale up at exponential speed.

Beyond regional competition, systemic domestic pressures continue to exact a heavy toll. Years of currency devaluation and economic adjustments triggered a notable brain drain across higher education faculties, with senior professors and doctorate holders pursuing overseas appointments. This loss directly damages metrics like staff with doctorates and faculty-student ratios. Furthermore, severe cuts to state research budgets restrict local scholars from publishing in high-impact international journals, directly dampening citation counts and global academic visibility.

Employer perception also took a hit, with drops in the Employer Reputation indicator affecting both Colombo and Sri Jayewardenepura. As global industries adapt to rapid technological shifts, gaps between public university curricula and modern private sector demands have grown more visible to hiring managers.

As QS analysts emphasize, a drop in ranking numbers does not automatically signal a decline in actual teaching quality. However, it serves as an unmistakable warning light: without strategic investments in academic retention, research funding, and industry alignment, Sri Lanka risks being steadily outpaced by a fast-moving regional higher education landscape.

NO FAST PASS FOR PHOSPHATE: MP CHAMARA SAMPATH FURTHER REMANDED OVER 8.4 MILLION RUPEE BRIBE

If Badulla MP Chamara Sampath Dassanayake was hoping for a smooth exit from his current legal troubles, the Colombo Magistrate's Court had other plans. The outspoken former State Minister and his ex-private secretary were escorted right back to prison after Chief Magistrate Asanga S. Bodaragama extended their remand until November 10.

The case hinges on an alleged cash-for-permits scheme during Dassanayake's tenure as State Minister of Primary Industries between September 2022 and September 2024. Investigators from the Bribery Commission allege that Dassanayake and his aide lined their pockets with 8.4 million rupees in illegal payouts from three commercial fertilizer importers. In return, official protocols were quietly tossed out the window to fast-track phosphate import licenses directly to the paying companies.

For a politician accustomed to holding court in Parliament with loud rhetoric, sitting quietly in remand custody presents an uncomfortably stark change of scenery. The defense team's arguments for bail fell flat as prosecutors pointed out that handing out ministerial favors for cash requires a thorough, uninterrupted accounting of state ledgers and bank accounts.

As the Bribery Commission puts the finishing touches on its evidence file ahead of the next court date, Dassanayake is learning the hard way that while state licenses might be easy to sell in office, working your way out of a bribery remand is a completely different proposition.

BAIL IN HAND, STILL BEHIND BARS HANDWRITING UNDER SCRUTINY: NAMAL RAJAPAKSA'S EXPANDING KRRISH AND AIRBUS LEGAL TANGLE

The revolving doors of Sri Lanka's justice system presented a bizarre spectacle today at the Colombo Magistrate's Court, as Parliamentarian Namal Rajapaksa found himself appearing in court under armed prison escort despite having officially secured bail in the very case being heard.

Colombo Chief Magistrate Asanga S. Bodaragama ordered the lawmaker to re-appear on November 20 in connection with the ongoing bribery probe into the controversial 70 million rupee Krrish real estate transaction. The Magistrate further instructed prison authorities to produce Rajapaksa from custody on that date should he remain remanded, highlighting the multi-layered legal net keeping the young politician behind bars.

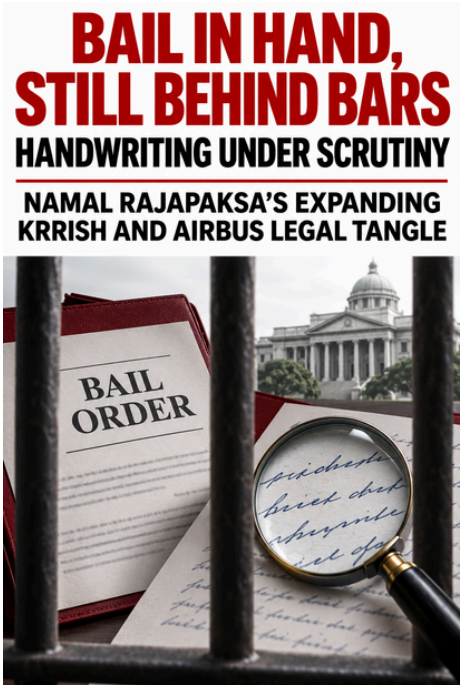
The Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption produced both Rajapaksa and former Krrish Group Director Janaki Siriwardena before the court. While Rajapaksa secured bail in the Krrish case on November 3, Siriwardena was further remanded until November 20.

During proceedings, prosecutors revealed that forensic science is now entering the investigation. An Assistant Director from the Bribery Commission informed the court that a key document containing handwriting attributed to Rajapaksa has been referred to the Government Analyst's Department for verification. Investigators have already recorded statements from the Colombo Divisional Secretary and a former Land Commissioner, and plan to question Urban Development Authority officials regarding the transfer of prime Transworks Square land in Colombo Fort to the Indian firm Krrish.

The forensic check hit an administrative snag when prosecutors requested an order to release the original document currently filed in Colombo High Court No. 7. Chief Magistrate Bodaragama noted that the request was missing from the formal progress report and directed the Commission to file a properly documented motion.

Yet, securing bail in the real estate probe offers Rajapaksa no path to freedom.

His continued detention stems from a separate indictment issued by the Colombo Permanent Trial-at-Bar High Court on October 28 regarding the SriLankan Airlines Airbus procurement deal. In that case, the High Court remanded him over twenty-four charges, including the alleged acceptance of a 100 million rupee bribe.



Winning bail in the Krrish case offered brief headline relief, but forensic handwriting analysis and the unyielding weight of the Airbus indictment have proved immediate and uncompromising. As prison guards escort Namal Rajapaksa back to his cell, his legal team faces an increasingly uphill battle across multiple judicial fronts.

JUDICIAL MUSCLE VS. POLICE BRASS: GAMPAHA MAGISTRATE TRANSFERRED AFTER TAKING ON THE IGP

It appears that in Sri Lanka's administrative ecosystem, questioning the police chief's compliance with judicial orders turns out to be a quick route to an academic reassignment. Gampaha Magistrate Bandula Gunaratne, who recently made headlines by taking aim at Inspector General of Police (IGP) Priyantha Weerasooriya, found himself summarily transferred to the Judges' Training Institute by order of Judicial Service Commission Secretary Prasanna Alwis.

The swift relocation came shortly after Magistrate Gunaratne submitted his formal observations regarding a counter-complaint lodged against him by the IGP.

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JUDICIAL MUSCLE...

While official notices framing the transfer maintain an administrative polish, the timing leaves little doubt about the volatile friction behind the decision.

The feud began when Magistrate Gunaratne directed the police chief to issue a official circular instructing all law enforcement personnel to stop filing frivolous legal proceedings against innocent citizens. Giving the police hierarchy nearly five months to implement the directive, the Magistrate grew increasingly impatient as compliance stalled, eventually accusing the police leadership of attempting to mislead the bench.



Escalating the matter, Magistrate Gunaratne referred the case file directly to the President of the Court of Appeal to initiate formal contempt of court proceedings against the IGP, arguing that failing to enforce judicial instructions brought the administration of justice into disrepute.

Rather than quietly issuing the circular, the top brass fired back. The IGP lodged an official complaint against Magistrate Gunaratne with the Judicial Service Commission. When the Commission asked the Magistrate to respond, Gunaratne submitted his written observations. Almost immediately after the ink dried on those submissions, the order arrived removing him from the bench and sending him to the training institute.

When a local magistrate attempts to rein in systemic police overreach, the machinery moves with remarkable speed, not to enforce the original court directive, but to reshuffle the judge off the active bench.

Whether Magistrate Gunaratne's lectures at the Judges' Training Institute will include a module on the risks of holding the police chief accountable remains an open question. Meanwhile, the initial issue that started the entire fight, namely police officers hauling innocent citizens before the courts on baseless charges, remains as unaddressed as the ignored judicial circular itself.

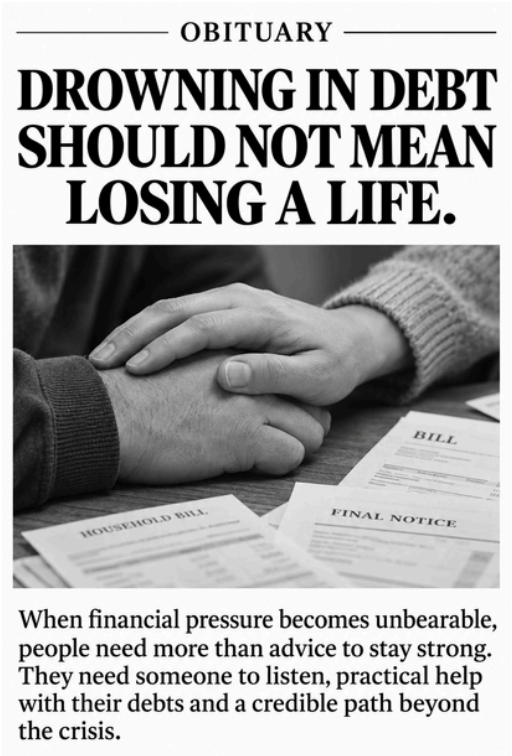
DROWNING IN DEBT SHOULD NOT MEAN LOSING A LIFE

When financial pressure becomes unbearable, people need more than advice to stay strong. They need someone to listen, practical help with their debts and a credible path beyond the crisis.

For someone overwhelmed by debt, an ordinary day can become a succession of things to fear. The telephone rings, another repayment falls due, and a familiar creditor asks for money that simply is not there. When there are no assets left to sell and no obvious means of meeting commitments, financial difficulty can begin to feel like a verdict on an entire life.

Yet debt and personal worth are different things. A failed business does not make someone a failed human being, and an unpaid instalment does not erase their value to others. Those distinctions can become painfully difficult to hold onto when someone is exhausted, frightened and unable to imagine their circumstances improving.

Financial problems are recognised among the pressures associated with suicide risk. But suicide is complex, and no individual death should be reduced to a single explanation without evidence. Debt may interact with relationship difficulties, ill health, alcohol use, isolation or other pressures that outsiders cannot readily see.



Nor does the absence of a known psychiatric diagnosis establish that someone is safe from an acute suicidal crisis. Some people have never sought an assessment; others experience severe distress during an overwhelming situation. The practical question is whether they are struggling and need help, rather than whether they have previously carried a diagnostic label.

Appearances can mislead. A person may continue attending meetings, answering messages and maintaining the outward habits of ordinary life while experiencing profound distress. Families and colleagues should take expressions of hopelessness, being a burden or having no future seriously, even when those words come from someone usually regarded as resilient.

The first response should make it easier for the person to speak. Listening without humiliation or moral judgement can help open a conversation that shame has kept closed. Someone expressing suicidal thoughts needs support and professional help; where there is immediate danger, they should not be left alone while urgent medical assistance is sought.

Be that as it may, emotional reassurance cannot, by itself, resolve a financial emergency. Telling someone that money is not everything may sound hollow when money determines whether the rent is paid, medicine is purchased or children get to school. Support must address both the distress and the circumstances contributing to it.

There is no universal promise of restructuring or debt cancellation. However, uncertainty can be reduced by obtaining clear account information, keeping records and seeking advice before agreeing to further commitments. Taking another expensive loan merely to postpone an existing repayment deserves particular scrutiny.

For customers of Central Bank-regulated financial institutions, complaints can be raised through the lender's procedures, with further guidance available from the Central Bank's Financial Consumer Relations Department on **1935**. That service concerns financial - consumer inquiries and complaints. It is neither a crisis counselling line nor a guarantee that a debt will be written off.

There is also a public-policy responsibility. Sri Lanka needs accessible debt guidance, fair complaint mechanisms and clear routes from financial hardship services to mental health support. Lenders should explain how customers can report hardship, while government should examine whether people with the least ability to pay can obtain the advice they need.

Anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts can contact Sri Lanka's National Mental Health Helpline on **1926.** If there is immediate danger, stay with the person and seek urgent help at the nearest emergency department.

Financial obligations require attention, but nobody should have to face a crisis alone or believe that their outstanding balance determines the value of their life.

"Love for those closest was never in doubt,
Though pain left so much too difficult to say.
A heart can hold its family dearly
And struggle still to see another way.
We cannot know each thought within that anguish,
Or how the hours became so hard to bear.
We know that love and deep distress can coexist;
The suffering does not mean love was not there.
For those who grieve, let this be spoken gently:
This was no measure of the love you gave.
Some questions may remain without an answer;
No family should have to carry blame."

In appreciation of an erstwhile association and a knowledge that inspite of circumstances the love for the immediate family was unquestionable.