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NAMAL RAJAPAKSA: JUSTICE, VENGEANCE OR THE MAKING OF A POLITICAL COMEBACK?



As the former President's son remains behind bars, Sri Lanka confronts an old question: does prosecuting powerful politicians deliver accountability, or can it revive the very political forces it seeks to confront?

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US$500 MILLION PROMISED. ZERO DELIVERED.

Sri Lanka's Urban Development Authority misses its entire foreign investment target while spending just 19% of its development allocation. Is the problem money, management or the machinery of government?

Five hundred million United States dollars. That was the foreign investment target Sri Lanka's Urban Development Authority (UDA) set for 2026. With barely six weeks remaining, the amount reportedly attracted stands at precisely zero.

Not a hundred million. Not ten million. Not even one million dollars.

Zero.

The admission before a parliamentary oversight committee ought to send a warning through government. Not because Sri Lanka has suddenly become unattractive to investors, but because it exposes an institution apparently unable to translate ambition into achievement. And there is worse.

During the first ten months of 2026, the UDA achieved expenditure progress of just 19%, with officials anticipating 35% by December. Across the wider urban development sector, the figure was 26%.

Consider what these numbers mean.

Sri Lanka is recovering from an economic catastrophe that devastated household finances, destroyed businesses and drove skilled citizens overseas. Housing remains unaffordable for many, infrastructure needs improvement and productive employment is essential.

Yet an institution entrusted with facilitating development has failed to meet its foreign investment target while struggling to implement its own expenditure programme. To be fair, a target is not a contractual promise.

The US$500 million was an objective, not necessarily money investors had formally committed. That distinction matters in a country where political rhetoric frequently confuses proposals, pledges and completed investments.

But it does not excuse the outcome.

The public deserves to know how the target was determined, which investors were approached and why the effort produced no reported investment.

The UDA cited conflict in West Asia, which reportedly forced the cancellation of an investment forum. Geopolitical instability undoubtedly affects capital flows, but can one cancelled conference explain an entire year's failure?

Investment promotion is a continuous process involving project preparation, financial evaluation, regulatory clarity and sustained engagement. Countries competing for international capital cannot abandon their ambitions because a conference becomes impossible.

Parliamentary committee chairman S. M. Marikkar reportedly challenged the explanation, noting that Colombo Port City had organised an investment forum in Dubai. But conferences themselves achieve little unless they produce genuine commitments and completed projects.

Another uncomfortable question arises.

Why was the UDA duplicating functions already undertaken by the Board of Investment?

UDA Chairman M. G. Hemachandra reportedly acknowledged that both institutions examined investors' financial capacity. A Cabinet proposal would transfer that responsibility to the BOI, allowing the UDA to concentrate on land development.

Sensible, certainly. But why did recognising this duplication take so long?

Sri Lanka has constructed an administrative maze where investors encounter ministries, authorities, departments and regulators with overlapping responsibilities and uncertain timelines.

This is not an argument for removing safeguards. Environmental protection, transparent land transactions and rigorous financial scrutiny remain essential. But they must operate efficiently, consistently and within defined timeframes.

Good governance and investment efficiency should reinforce each other.

The UDA also proposes a public website identifying available state lands, zoning regulations and development plans. This is welcome, provided it contains reliable information rather than becoming another government website gathering digital dust.

Public land transactions must remain transparent. Investors deserve certainty, but citizens deserve to know how national assets are allocated.

Parliamentary disclosures also highlighted delays affecting the Life Cities programme and foreign-funded housing projects, including two contracts reportedly terminated.

Were these projects poorly prepared? Did contractors fail? Were financing arrangements inadequate? Or did administrative delays contribute?

The answers matter.

Somewhere, a family continues paying rent it can scarcely afford. Somewhere, a young couple postpones establishing a home. Somewhere, construction workers remain unemployed while development opportunities languish in government files.

That is the human cost of administrative inefficiency.

The committee reportedly also directed the winding up of inactive state companies, including Sahaspura Investment Limited and Selendiva Investments Limited.

Every public institution should justify its continued existence through measurable value, not political patronage or historical convenience.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's administration promised stronger accountability, institutional reform and efficient government. These are worthwhile objectives.

Progress in restoring fiscal discipline and improving Sri Lanka's international financial standing deserves recognition.

But economic stabilisation is not economic development.

A government can improve fiscal indicators while failing to implement projects. It can strengthen revenue collection while leaving development allocations unspent. It can announce impressive investment targets without creating the conditions necessary to achieve them.

Balancing the books is necessary. Rebuilding a nation is indispensable.

And rebuilding demands disciplined execution.

The government should establish a transparent national investment delivery system covering major state development institutions.

Every significant project should identify its responsible authority, implementation timetable, measurable milestones and progress reports.

Investment opportunities, expressions of interest, negotiated agreements, binding commitments and funds actually received must be reported separately.

This would end the misleading practice of presenting preliminary investor discussions as secured investment.

Parliament should receive quarterly reports identifying delayed projects, explaining failures and specifying corrective measures.

The BOI should coordinate financial screening while the UDA concentrates on planning and land development. A streamlined approval process must retain environmental safeguards, transparency and public accountability.

Government must also establish why development expenditure remains so low.

Poor project preparation, cumbersome procurement and inadequate technical capacity require practical correction. Where negligence or improper interference causes delays, responsibility must follow. These reforms require neither surrendering sovereignty nor selling national assets cheaply.

They require competent administration.

The opposition also bears responsibility. Sri Lanka's investment difficulties did not begin with this administration. Successive governments presided over delayed projects, abandoned developments and initiatives generating more publicity than economic activity.

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The public gains nothing from politicians competing over who failed most spectacularly.

Parliamentary oversight is welcome, but scrutiny must produce consequences.

The UDA should explain its US$500 million target, disclose its investment strategy and publish a credible recovery programme. The responsible ministry must identify why expenditure performance remains so poor. Sri Lanka has heard enough promises.

A completed housing development matters more than a hundred investment presentations. A productive job means more to a struggling family than another ministerial assurance about economic transformation. Be that as it may, the UDA's failure should become an opportunity for institutional reform, not political triumphalism.

Ambition is essential. But ambition without execution is merely aspiration. And aspiration does not build homes, create employment or restore prosperity.

Five hundred million dollars was the target. Zero dollars is the reported achievement.

The country deserves to know why. Sri Lanka does not suffer from a shortage of promises. It suffers from a shortage of delivery.

NAMAL RAJAPAKSA: JUSTICE, VENGEANCE OR THE MAKING OF A POLITICAL COMEBACK?

As the former President's son remains behind bars, Sri Lanka confronts an old question: does prosecuting powerful politicians deliver accountability, or can it revive the very political forces it seeks to confront?

Namal Rajapaksa is in remand custody, confronting legal proceedings that could have consequences extending well beyond the courtroom.

For a politician whose family dominated Sri Lankan politics for much of the past two decades, the circumstances represent a dramatic reversal.

But does incarceration necessarily mean political decline? Sri Lanka's history suggests that the relationship between prosecution, public sympathy and political survival is considerably more complicated.

Rajapaksa remains in custody despite having secured bail in the controversial Krrish transaction case on November 3. Separate proceedings prevented his release, and on November 18 the Colombo High Court suspended the earlier bail order following an application by the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption.

These are judicial developments, not findings of guilt. The distinction is fundamental.

The allegations must be examined through evidence, tested by competent courts and determined according to law. Neither a prominent surname nor political office establishes guilt. Equally, neither should provide immunity from investigation.

Yet beyond the legal proceedings lies a political question.

Will Sri Lankans view these developments as evidence of a justice system finally confronting powerful political interests, or will some perceive them as politically motivated persecution?



There is no reliable basis for assuming that the electorate shares a single interpretation.

Those demanding accountability for alleged corruption may regard the proceedings as evidence that political influence no longer guarantees protection. Rajapaksa's supporters may question their timing, proportionality or motivation.

Others may simply wait for the courts to establish the facts. History provides a revealing comparison.

In October 1980, President J. R. Jayewardene's United National Party government used the findings of a Special Presidential Commission to deprive former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike of her civic rights and expel her from Parliament.

The action followed allegations of abuse of power during her administration.

Bandaranaike maintained that the proceedings were politically motivated. Her opponents presented them as accountability for misconduct.

Her civic rights were restored in January 1986. She subsequently contested the 1988 presidential election, losing to Ranasinghe Premadasa, before returning as Prime Minister in November 1994 following her daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's election as President.

That was approximately seventeen years after she had last held the premiership in 1977.

The historical lesson is not that every prosecuted politician eventually returns to power. It is that political exclusion, even when prolonged, does not necessarily extinguish political influence.

Bandaranaike retained an established party organisation, a recognisable political identity and a substantial constituency. Her return also depended upon changing political circumstances and the success of her daughter.

Namal Rajapaksa's circumstances are different.

He belongs to a political dynasty whose reputation has been profoundly affected by Sri Lanka's economic collapse and the extraordinary events of 2022. The Rajapaksa name continues to command loyalty in some quarters while attracting intense criticism in others.

Whether his legal difficulties alter those attitudes remains an open question.

There is also an important difference between the two historical situations.

Bandaranaike's civic rights were removed through a political and parliamentary process following a special commission. Rajapaksa faces proceedings within the ordinary judicial system, where prosecutors must establish their allegations and judicial decisions remain subject to legal challenge.

Conflating the two would be misleading.

Nevertheless, the comparison raises an enduring concern about the relationship between political power and justice.

Sri Lanka has repeatedly witnessed allegations of corruption and abuse of authority directed against prominent figures, particularly following changes of government. Investigations attract publicity, arrests dominate headlines and competing political narratives emerge.

But the public interest ultimately depends upon something less dramatic and considerably more important: the lawful conclusion of proceedings.

An arrest is not a conviction. Remand is not punishment following conviction. Bail is not an acquittal.

These distinctions must remain central to public understanding.

The government also has an interest in ensuring that investigations are conducted independently, without political interference or selective enforcement. Prosecutors must act on evidence rather than political expectations, and defendants must enjoy the full protection of due process.

The judiciary, meanwhile, must be free to decide matters without pressure from either government or opposition.

For Rajapaksa, the political consequences will unfold alongside the legal proceedings, but they should not determine them.

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His supporters may continue to mobilise around his circumstances. Critics may demand answers about the allegations. Neither reaction establishes the truth of the charges.

The more revealing question is whether Sri Lanka's institutions can demonstrate that the same standards apply to powerful politicians, their opponents and ordinary citizens.

That requires timely investigations, transparent proceedings, consistent application of bail provisions and judicial decisions grounded in law.

It also requires political leaders to refrain from treating criminal proceedings as instruments of public relations.

Be that as it may, Sirimavo Bandaranaike's experience offers a warning against assuming that removing a politician from public office or political activity necessarily ends a political career.

But history offers no guarantee of resurrection either.

Namal Rajapaksa's future remains uncertain. His legal position will be determined through judicial proceedings, while his political standing will depend upon developments that cannot yet be measured.

The immediate responsibility belongs not to political strategists but to the institutions entrusted with administering justice.

Sri Lanka deserves neither political vengeance disguised as accountability nor impunity disguised as political persecution.

It deserves evidence, due process and judgments that withstand scrutiny. For ultimately, the question is larger than Namal Rajapaksa.

Can Sri Lanka demonstrate that justice is neither a privilege of political power nor a weapon against those who have lost it?

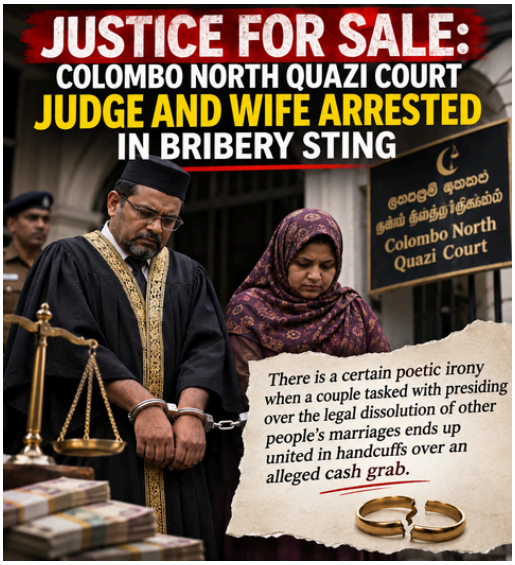
JUSTICE FOR SALE: COLOMBO NORTH QUAZI COURT JUDGE AND WIFE ARRESTED IN BRIBERY STING

There is a certain poetic irony when a couple tasked with presiding over the legal dissolution of other people's marriages ends up united in handcuffs over an alleged cash grab. If marriage is an institution built on partnership, the judge of the Colombo North Quazi Court and his wife appear to have taken the concept of a joint enterprise entirely too literally.

Officers of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption brought an abrupt end to their domestic and professional teamwork, arresting the pair for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs. 65,000. The fee, it seems, was an unofficial express-lane surcharge to deliver a divorce ruling without the usual bureaucratic agony.

In a setup that would make any corporate governance auditor weep, the husband sat on the bench as the Quazi judge while his wife operated right alongside him as the court secretary. Together, they allegedly turned an instrument of personal law into a neat little mom-and-pop storefront where swift justice carried a sixty-five-thousand-rupee price tag.

One has to admire the sheer convenience of the arrangement, at least until the Bribery Commission crashed the party. Acting on a tip from a litigant who evidently preferred keeping their money over paying for expedited paperwork, sleuths laid a trap and caught the duo. Both were promptly scheduled for a trip to the Colombo Magistrate's Court, trading the comfort of their own tribunal for the wrong side of the dock.



Sadly, this is hardly a novel plotline in Sri Lanka's Quazi circuit. Over the past couple of years, anti-corruption officers have practically worn a path to these courts, apprehending a Kaduruwela judge and clerk over a hundred-thousand-rupee demand, remanding a Kalmunai judge and his spouse over bogus service charges, and even arresting a previous Colombo North judge back in Dematagoda for monetizing divorce certificates.

For ordinary citizens already navigating the emotional wreckage of a broken marriage, being shaken down at the courthouse door adds insult to injury. As investigators dig deeper into the Colombo North ledger, one hopes the Ministry of Justice finally realizes that when oversight is missing, temptation always finds a seat on the bench.

(Images by AI for illustrative purposes only)





THE GTA FLU STRIKES: MARITAL CONTRACTS, SCHOOL FINES, AND MODI MEMES GREET GAMING'S BIGGEST LAUNCH

After thirteen years of agonizing delays, teaser trailers, and internet conspiracy theories, Rockstar Games has finally unleashed Grand Theft Auto VI upon an unsuspecting world, and civilization appears to be taking an unscheduled personal day. What was supposed to be a routine video game launch on November 19 has rapidly mutated into a global socio-economic phenomenon that has employers bracing for productivity collapses, headmasters threatening fines, and prime ministers borrowing Vice City aesthetics for political branding.

Nowhere is the sheer absurdity of this cultural earthquake more visible than in the domestic negotiations taking place in living rooms across the globe. In Singapore, one enterprising husband went viral after drafting a formal, multi-clause marital contract signed by his wife granting him uninterrupted permission to vanish into the game for ten consecutive days. The agreement reportedly includes strict domestic protocols, temporarily banning phrases such as "It's just a game" or "Haven't you played enough," while stipulating that hugs, kisses, and urgent household errands must strictly await a suitable in-game save point. While lawyers might question its enforceability in family court, millions of married gamers immediately hailed the document as a masterclass in conflict resolution.



Not everyone, however, is treating the launch as a harmless comedy routine. Educational authorities across the United Kingdom and North America have been forced to issue stern warnings to parents after noticing a suspiciously timed outbreak of the "GTA flu" among teenage boys.

With teachers openly admitting they expect half-empty classrooms, several British schools sent letters reminding families that skipping lessons to roam digital streets carries unauthorized absence fines

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starting at eighty pounds, escalating up to two thousand five hundred pounds for persistent truancy.

Beyond plummeting attendance and sleep-deprived students nodding off at their desks after midnight launch marathons, child welfare advocates have raised alarm bells over the sheer number of underage pupils gaining unsupervised access to an explicitly adult-rated title packed with graphic violence and mature themes. Economists, meanwhile, are watching corporate sick-leave trackers with mild horror as millions of working adults mysteriously develop sudden twenty-four-hour ailments on launch morning.

Even the corridors of high politics have proven entirely immune to the Vice City contagion.

Never one to miss a trending wave on social media, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hijacked the frenzy on launch day by unveiling a slick, GTA-styled digital campaign across his official platforms. Declaring that India is playing a whole new game, the stylized "Then versus Now" illustrations contrasted past economic metrics with modern infrastructure milestones, boasting drops in extreme poverty alongside surges in solar capacity and railway electrification. It takes a uniquely potent pop-culture juggernaut to simultaneously empty a secondary school classroom in London, inspire a spousal ceasefire in Singapore, and rebrand government development statistics in New Delhi.

For better or worse, reality has temporarily taken a back seat to virtual escapism, and the rest of the world is simply waiting for the gamers to pause the screen and return to work.

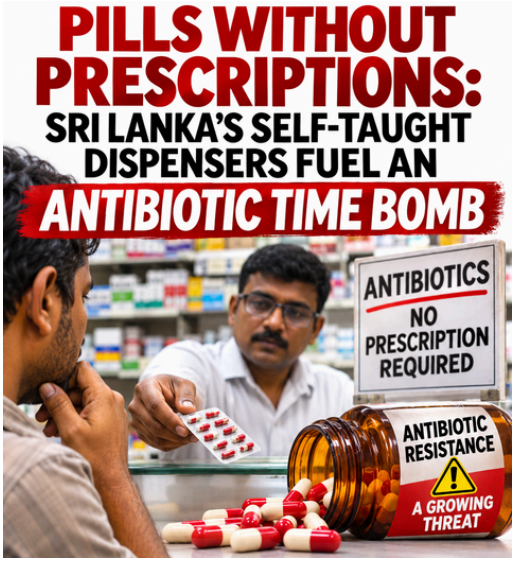
PILLS WITHOUT PRESCRIPTIONS: SRI LANKA'S SELF-TAUGHT DISPENSERS FUEL AN ANTIBIOTIC TIME BOMB

In Sri Lanka, obtaining a medical degree requires years of grueling clinical rotations, sleepless nights over anatomy textbooks, and rigorous licensing exams. Yet if you walk down almost any suburban high street, it appears you can bypass the medical faculty entirely simply by spending a few months behind a pharmacy counter memorizing the color of the boxes.

According to a sobering disclosure by the Association of Community Medicine Specialists, approximately forty thousand individuals with zero formal medical qualifications are currently operating across the island as self-styled dispensers of medicine, turning everyday ailments into an accelerating public health emergency.
Speaking at a media briefing at the Health Promotion Bureau, the association's President, Consultant Community Physician Dr. Ruwan Ferdinando, painted an alarming picture of an unregulated shadow healthcare system operating in plain sight.

While Sri Lanka's state medical infrastructure is routinely praised across the region, the ground reality at street level resembles a pharmaceutical free-for-all. Ferdinando explained that many of these forty thousand unqualified practitioners acquired their entire clinical education through casual osmosis while working inside retail pharmacies, eventually graduating themselves to diagnosing illnesses and handing out potent drugs to unsuspecting citizens.

The most dangerous consequence of this amateur pharmacology is the unchecked distribution of antibiotics. Under the National Medicines Regulatory Authority Act, antibiotics are strictly prescription-only drugs intended to combat specific bacterial infections under trained medical supervision. In practice, however, they are frequently handed across counters like breath mints for everything from a mild viral sniffle to a seasonal headache. Ferdinando noted that the crisis is compounded by a deeply ingrained national habit of self-medication, where patients raid leftover home medicine cabinets, actively demand antibiotics from physicians in search of an instant cure, or rely on practitioners who prescribe broad-spectrum drugs simply to keep impatient customers satisfied.



Medical experts warn that this casual relationship with powerful pharmaceuticals is steering Sri Lanka directly toward the cliff edge of antimicrobial resistance. When bacteria are repeatedly exposed to incorrect dosages or unnecessary courses of antibiotics, they adapt, mutate, and render standard treatments completely useless.

Globally, health authorities describe antimicrobial resistance as a silent pandemic, and for a developing healthcare system already managing tight medical budgets, losing first-line antibiotics means routine surgeries, minor wounds, and common infections could once again become life-threatening ordeals requiring prohibitively expensive last-resort drugs.

Regulatory enforcement under existing pharmacy and health ordinances has long struggled to keep pace with the sheer volume of unauthorized dispensaries and under-supervised counters scattered across urban and rural towns alike. Dr. Ferdinando emphasized that permitting unqualified individuals to prescribe and dispense antibiotics is an acute systemic failure that demands immediate national debate and decisive regulatory intervention.

Unless authorities tighten oversight over retail drug outlets and curb the island's appetite for unprescribed pills, Sri Lanka risks waking up to a medical reality where the local chemist has plenty of capsules on the shelf, and none of them actually work.

EIGHTEEN YEARS LATER: BATTICALOA HIGH COURT HANDS DEATH PENALTY TO EIGHT FORMER EPDP MEMBERS

Eighteen years is a long time in Sri Lankan politics, often long enough for wartime shadows to fade into convenient amnesia and for graveyards to be paved over by the passage of decades. Yet every so often, the wheels of justice grind forward with an unmistakable finality, reminding those who once operated with unchecked impunity that memory has a stubborn habit of outliving power. In a landmark ruling that echoed far beyond the eastern coastline, Batticaloa High Court Judge R J Prabhakaran sentenced eight former members of the Eelam People's Democratic Party to death for the 2008 abduction and murder of Devadas Suresh Kumar in the Eravur and Chenkalady area.

The verdict brings a dramatic conclusion to a chilling case rooted in the turbulent final chapters of Sri Lanka's civil conflict, when armed political cadres operated camps across the Eastern Province with virtual autonomy. According to court records and police filings, the ordeal began in June 2008 when Devadas Suresh Kumar was taken away from the Eravur Police Station by individuals attached to a local EPDP camp. What followed was a brutal execution accompanied by a rather rudimentary attempt at botanical landscaping. After killing Kumar, the perpetrators buried his body and planted a banana tree directly over the grave in a bid to conceal the crime scene from prying eyes.

Nature, however, proved far less cooperative than the conspirators had hoped. On June 19, 2008, Eravur Police arrested nine EPDP members and initiated proceedings before the Batticaloa Magistrate's Court, uncovering the grim burial site beneath the freshly planted foliage. As is customary in the labyrinthine corridors of Sri Lanka's legal system, the wheels turned at a decidedly unhurried pace, with the case formally transferred to the High Court in 2016 before finally reaching judgment eighteen years after the crime was committed.

Delivering his ruling, Judge Prabhakaran found eight of the accused guilty beyond reasonable doubt, handing down the capital sentence to Dharmalingam Ilamaran alias Ravi, Veerakutty Sekar, Mahendrarajah Vinoraj alias Vijey, Yogarasa Jayakumar alias Jekka, Siriskantharajah Naganathan alias Siri, Sokkalingam Nagarasa alias Siva, Arunachalam Ramachandran alias Arul, and Govindan Pradeepan alias Viji. The ninth defendant was acquitted and released from all charges. Following the pronouncement, the eight convicted men were escorted directly from the courtroom to the Batticaloa Prison.

For decades, paramilitary politics in the north and east operated on the comfortable assumption that wartime deeds would forever remain buried beneath shifting political alliances. Today's judgment in Batticaloa suggests otherwise, proving that even the most carefully planted cover up eventually runs out of root.



"Questioning The Answers"

HOW A 2013 AIRBUS ORDER BECAME A 2026 INDICTMENT: THE KEY QUESTIONS BEHIND NAMAL RAJAPAKSA'S REMAND

When a sitting Member of Parliament is escorted out of the Colombo Permanent High Court Trial-at-Bar and ordered back into remand custody until December 2, the public inevitably begins asking uncomfortable questions. Why is Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna parliamentarian Namal Rajapaksa still behind bars over an aircraft transaction negotiated more than thirteen years ago? And how did a corporate aircraft order from 2013 turn into a twenty-four-count indictment in late 2026?

To answer the first question, we must first look at the mechanics of Sri Lankan criminal procedure rather than the political calendar. Why does legacy evidence from 2013 carry enough weight to deny bail today? The answer lies in the jurisdiction of a Permanent High Court Trial-at-Bar. Unlike routine magistrate proceedings where bail is often granted as a matter of course, once the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption files formal indictments before a three-judge Trial-at-Bar, in this instance naming Rajapaksa alongside Shamindra Punsiri Rajapaksa, Priyanka Neomali Wijeynayake, and the firm Biz Solutions. strict statutory thresholds apply. Under the Bribery Act and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, an accused person indicted before a Trial-at-Bar cannot simply walk out on standard bail without demonstrating exceptional circumstances to the satisfaction of the bench. Following his initial indictment on twenty-four charges in late October and his production before the court on November 19, the judges saw no immediate reason to alter his custodial status before the next hearing on December 2.

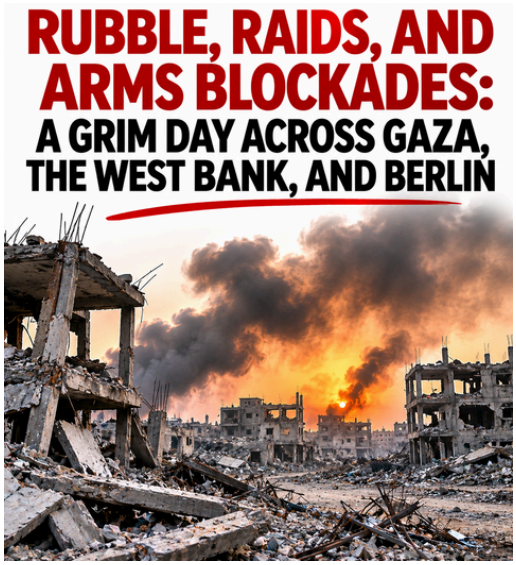
That naturally raises a second question. What exactly are investigators alleging happened during that 2013 SriLankan Airlines re-fleeting exercise? At the heart of the prosecution's case is a multi-billion-dollar decision by the cash-strapped national carrier to purchase six Airbus A330 and four A350 aircraft while leasing additional planes. For years, critics questioned the commercial sanity of the deal, yet hard proof remained elusive until January 2020. That was when Airbus entered into a landmark deferred prosecution agreement with Britain's Serious Fraud Office, French prosecutors, and American authorities, formally admitting to paying massive bribes to secure contracts worldwide, including in Sri Lanka.

So how does an international corporate settlement in London land a Sri Lankan politician in remand in Colombo? According to court filings and anti-corruption investigators, Airbus agreed to funnel up to sixteen million dollars through a Brunei-registered shell company linked to the spouse of a senior SriLankan Airlines executive, with two million dollars actually wired before the scheme was halted. Prosecutors allege that a slice of those illicit commissions, specifically one hundred million rupees, was laundered through domestic corporate channels and channeled to Rajapaksa.

Which brings us to the final, lingering question. Why did it take so long to reach this point? Complex cross-border money laundering cases rely heavily on mutual legal assistance treaties, foreign bank records, and corporate disclosures that trickle across jurisdictions at a glacial pace. While Rajapaksa has consistently maintained his innocence and dismissed the charges as political theater, the courtroom in Colombo is no longer dealing with rumor or rhetoric. Until December 2, and throughout the trial ahead, the answers will have to come from bank ledgers and sworn testimony.

RUBBLE, RAIDS, AND ARMS BLOCKADES: A GRIM DAY ACROSS GAZA, THE WEST BANK, AND BERLIN

Yesterday, the situation across the occupied Palestinian territories, and even on the streets of Berlin, offered a stark retort to diplomatic platitudes, marked by fresh demolitions in central Gaza, a school raid in East Jerusalem, settler intrusions in Nablus, and repeated street blockades outside German weapons plants.



In Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood, Palestinians organized by the Gaza Municipality and the Palestinian Engineers Syndicate gathered amid mountains of shattered concrete to demand what basic human recovery requires, namely clearing the rubble and lifting blockades that keep heavy machinery and building materials out of the strip.

Across the territory, aid organizations have warned that a ceasefire framework announced over a year ago has failed to deliver safety or basic shelter, leaving displaced families confronting winter rain and cold in torn tents. Meanwhile, medical sources at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital confirmed that a Palestinian man died on Thursday morning from wounds suffered in an earlier strike north of Bureij refugee camp, while gunfire near Hamad City north of Khan Younis wounded a woman close to displacement tents.

Earlier in the day, Israeli tanks and troops carried out demolitions in central Gaza as part of the first ground incursion across the yellow line boundary since the fragile October 2025 truce took effect. Eyewitnesses reported loud explosions north of Nuseirat and east of Maghazi, where evacuated homes were blown up using explosives dropped by quadcopter drones, alongside closures along Salah al-Din Road.

Farther north, in the Shuafat refugee camp north of occupied East Jerusalem, Palestinian authorities reported that Israeli forces raided al-Masira School and a nearby women's center, arresting school principal Samar Adwan. According to the Jerusalem Governorate, troops searched both premises, took over the administrative office, inspected books belonging to students and teachers, and seized computers along with surveillance gear.

Elsewhere across the West Bank, Israeli forces detained eleven Palestinians while hundreds of settlers stormed Joseph's Tomb in Nablus under heavy military protection.
The fallout continues to spill onto European asphalt as well. In Berlin's Wedding district at dawn, forty-seven activists from Peacefully Against Genocide glued themselves to six intersections leading to a Rheinmetall munitions plant, marking their third German weapons-factory blockade this week.

From shattered neighborhoods in Gaza and locked classrooms in East Jerusalem to glued protesters in Berlin, Thursday demonstrated that the conflict on the ground and the battle over who arms it are colliding simultaneously.

Whether measured in quadcopter explosives dropping over Maghazi, settler convoys marching through Nablus under armed escort, or protesters gluing their hands to cold Berlin asphalt, the message from the ground is unmistakable. You cannot declare a conflict paused while continuing to choke off reconstruction, raid schools, and export the machinery of war, because peace without accountability is merely destruction operating on a quieter schedule.

