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# SRI LANKA MUST START THINKING IN DOLLARS, NOT JUST RUPEES

By Kithmi Gunaratne



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*Sri Lanka celebrates rising revenues, corporate profits and economic recovery in rupees. But when inflation erodes household incomes and currency depreciation weakens international purchasing power, a harder question emerges: is the country genuinely becoming wealthier, or merely counting its progress in larger numbers?*

**By Kithmi Gunaratne**

Sri Lanka has become remarkably comfortable with large numbers. Corporate revenues are celebrated in billions, government budgets announced in trillions, and economic recovery proclaimed through expanding domestic output. Yet beneath these figures lies an uncomfortable contradiction: a country can become nominally richer while its citizens afford less and its economy struggles to purchase what it cannot produce.

For a nation dependent on imported fuel, pharmaceuticals, machinery and industrial raw materials, prosperity must be measured through two inseparable questions: what can citizens afford domestically after inflation, and what can the country afford internationally after currency depreciation?

**The depreciation problem Sri Lanka cannot ignore**

By October 2026, the rupee had depreciated 6.8% against the dollar since January, according to Central Bank data. During January–September, merchandise imports reached $18.67 billion against exports of $10.75 billion, leaving a trade deficit approaching $7.91 billion. Remittances and services earnings provide essential foreign exchange, but cannot eliminate the underlying vulnerability.

The problem extends beyond imported consumer luxuries. Sri Lankan manufacturers require foreign currency to purchase machinery, chemicals, components and intermediate goods, hospitals require imported medicines and equipment, while agriculture depends partly on imported fertilisers and machinery. When the rupee weakens, these necessities become more expensive, potentially increasing production costs throughout the economy. Sri Lanka cannot depreciate its way towards industrial competitiveness when depreciation simultaneously raises the cost of industrialisation.

**Hayleys: Growth beyond the currency**

Hayleys illustrates the potential of internationally competitive businesses. During the six months ending September 2026, consolidated revenue from continuing operations increased 33% to Rs.358.01 billion, while pre-tax profit rose 49% to Rs.21.31 billion. The conglomerate surpassed $1 billion in first-half revenue.

Its profit expansion substantially exceeded the rupee's year-to-date depreciation, although the comparison alone cannot establish productivity gains. During the September quarter, operating profit increased approximately 55% to Rs.17 billion, while net finance costs approached Rs.5.60 billion and borrowings stood near Rs.334 billion.

Hayleys demonstrates that businesses can achieve meaningful expansion despite currency instability. Nevertheless, substantial financing obligations reinforce why revenue growth must be examined alongside operating profitability, cash generation and foreign-currency exposure.

**John Keells: When exchange rates change the profit story**

John Keells Holdings reveals the opposite danger: currency movements can disguise underlying performance. During April–June 2026, the conglomerate recorded approximately Rs.1.89 billion in net exchange losses. In the September quarter, exchange movements instead contributed approximately Rs.340 million. Reported quarterly pre-tax profit increased 2% to Rs.7.95 billion, but excluding exchange movements, profit declined from Rs.8.04 billion to Rs.7.61 billion.

City of Dreams Sri Lanka offers a particularly revealing example. Quarterly EBITDA improved from negative Rs.64 million to positive Rs.340 million, demonstrating operational progress. Yet the development recorded a pre-tax loss of approximately Rs.1.19 billion despite an exchange gain of Rs.896 million. Depreciation, amortisation and interest expenses totalled approximately Rs.2.43 billion. The distinction matters because stronger operations do not necessarily guarantee profitability when financing costs and currency exposures remain substantial.

**The real measure: What can citizens actually afford?**

The contradiction becomes more troubling when examined through household incomes. Department of Census and Statistics survey findings indicate that average monthly household income rose from Rs.62,237 in 2016 to Rs.120,266 in early 2025. Yet after adjusting for inflation, average income increased by only approximately 6%.

More revealingly, real median monthly household income fell from Rs.43,511 to Rs.41,623 in 2016 prices, a 4.3% decline. The typical household therefore possessed less purchasing power despite the impressive increase in nominal earnings.

Higher salaries mean little if food, electricity, transport, housing and healthcare absorb a greater share of household budgets. Inflation-adjusted income reveals whether citizens can purchase more domestically, but this represents only half the equation. A household may receive a nominal salary increase while its dollar-equivalent earnings deteriorate. Similarly, collecting more rupees in government revenue does not guarantee the capacity to import additional medicines, energy or industrial equipment.

**The illusion of growth in a weakening currency**

Consider a company whose revenue rises from Rs.100 billion to Rs.120 billion. It reports 20% nominal growth, but if its rupee-per-dollar exchange rate rises by 15%, dollar-equivalent revenue grows by only approximately 4.3%. Inflation may further weaken real domestic performance.

Sri Lanka therefore needs two complementary measures of prosperity: inflation-adjusted purchasing power to establish whether citizens are better off, and foreign-exchange earning capacity to establish whether the economy can afford its international obligations.

**Strategic dollarisation, not monetary surrender**

What is monetary sovereignty worth if it cannot consistently deliver economic security? Sri Lanka does not need to abandon the rupee or surrender independent monetary policy.

It needs strategic dollarisation: retaining the national currency while expanding regulated foreign-currency investment instruments, improving affordable currency hedging and requiring internationally comparable corporate reporting. Public investment and major infrastructure projects should be evaluated against both their rupee costs and foreign-exchange requirements, while safeguards prevent excessive dollar borrowing by households and businesses earning predominantly in rupees. The objective is not to replace monetary sovereignty but to make it economically meaningful.

**Think in dollars. Build prosperity in rupees.**

Sri Lanka must stop confusing rising monetary figures with rising economic strength. Greater domestic value addition, export diversification and internationally competitive production are essential because dollarisation cannot manufacture dollars; only productive economic activity can earn them.

A successful economy must enable citizens to afford more at home while generating sufficient international earnings to finance essential imports, industrial production and future development. The real test of prosperity is not how many rupees Sri Lanka earns, but what those rupees can buy at home and what its economy can command abroad.

# THE NINE PERCENT WARNING: GLOBAL OIL SHOCKS FORCES SRI LANKA'S CENTRAL BANK TO TIGHTEN THE SCREWS AGAIN

Central bankers rarely enjoy admitting that reality moved faster than their econometric models, yet candid course corrections are infinitely preferable to wishful thinking. Addressing the Monetary Policy Review media briefing in Colombo on Friday, November 20, Central Bank Governor Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe delivered a sobering assessment of Sri Lanka's near-term price trajectory, warning that headline inflation could climb to around nine percent or slightly higher by December 2026 after already reaching eight point three percent in October.

To put that warning into perspective, one only needs to look back six months to see how sharply external shocks have redrawn the economic map. When the Monetary Policy Board delivered an outsized one hundred basis point interest rate hike in May 2026,

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raising the Overnight Policy Rate from seven point seven five percent to eight point seven five percent, policymakers projected that inflation would peak neatly between seven and eight percent before tapering downward. Instead, headline inflation climbed steadily from five point four percent in May to six point eight percent in June, hit a three-year high of eight percent in August, and pushed past projections to eight point three percent last month. As Dr. Weerasinghe acknowledged on Friday, the Central Bank had assumed the conflict in the Middle East would prove short-lived and that international crude prices would stabilize swiftly. Instead, prolonged regional hostilities and shipping disruptions kept global energy costs stubbornly elevated, feeding directly into domestic transport, electricity, and food prices across an import-dependent island.




Rather than sitting on its hands while inflation expectations risk becoming unanchored, the Monetary Policy Board responded on Friday with a decisive double tightening. Policymakers raised the Overnight Policy Rate by twenty-five basis points to nine percent while simultaneously increasing the Statutory Reserve Requirement for commercial banks by one full percentage point to three percent, effective December 9.

The logic behind pairing a rate hike with a reserve ratio increase reveals a fascinating balancing act inside Fort's central banking tower.

Over recent months, the Central Bank's aggressive foreign exchange purchases from the domestic market successfully bolstered gross official reserves to roughly seven point one billion dollars by the end of October. Yet buying dollars injects substantial rupee liquidity into the domestic money market, fueling brisk private sector credit expansion that threatens to fan inflationary embers if left unchecked. Raising the Statutory Reserve Requirement mops up that excess rupee liquidity before it translates into excessive borrowing and import demand.

Compared to Sri Lanka's harrowing hyperinflationary collapse of 2022, when consumer prices spiraled past seventy percent amid sovereign default and empty fuel queues, today's nine percent projection sits in an entirely different universe. The rupee remains broadly stable, external buffers are healthy, and the Central Bank expects inflation to moderate gradually during the second half of 2027 toward its medium-term target of five percent. Still, for ordinary households whose real wages have barely recovered from years of fiscal austerity and tax hikes, an inflation rate nudging nine percent is hardly an abstract statistic. As Dr. Weerasinghe rightly underscored, allowing high inflation to linger erodes purchasing power and living standards. Yesterday's twin policy moves show that Sri Lanka's monetary authorities are determined not to let a foreign oil shock undo hard-won domestic stability.

## DOUBLE JEOPARDY IN COLOMBO'S COURTS: NAMAL RAJAPAKSA FACES BACK-TO-BACK HEARINGS OVER KRRISH AND AIRBUS DEALS

Two consecutive mornings, two separate courtrooms, and two massive bribery scandals have left Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna Parliamentarian Namal Rajapaksa staring down a crowded December docket. Yesterday, the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court ordered the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption to submit a comprehensive progress report by December 1 regarding its ongoing investigation into the controversial Krrish real estate transaction, ensuring the opposition legislator's legal calendar remains tightly locked.

Presiding over the proceedings, Colombo Chief Magistrate Asanga S. Bodaragama directed the Superintendent of Prisons to produce Rajapaksa before court on December 1 should he remain in remand custody. While the Magistrate's Court had previously granted the parliamentarian bail in the Krrish matter, that brief window of legal relief narrowed earlier this week when the Colombo High Court issued an interim order on Wednesday, November 18, suspending the operation of his bail. Meanwhile, co-suspect and former Krrish director Janaki Siriwardena was ordered further remanded until December 1. At the center of the Krrish probe are allegations by the Bribery Commission that Rajapaksa accepted a hefty bribe in exchange for facilitating the transfer of prime state land at Transworks Square in Colombo Fort for a proposed multipurpose development project.

Friday's developments before the Chief Magistrate arrived just twenty-four hours after Rajapaksa suffered an equally consequential setback in an entirely separate courtroom. On Thursday, November 19, a three-judge bench of the Colombo Permanent High Court Trial-at-Bar, comprising High Court Judges Priyantha Liyanage as President, Thilakaratne Bandara, and Nuwan Dhammika Bandara, ordered the parliamentarian further remanded until December 2 in connection with the SriLankan Airlines Airbus procurement scandal.

During Thursday's Trial-at-Bar hearing, President's Counsel Romesh de Silva made impassioned submissions seeking bail for his client following the formal serving of indictments. However, the bench sided with Deputy Solicitor General Janaka Bandara, who argued on behalf of the prosecution that no exceptional circumstances had been demonstrated before court to justify releasing an accused indicted before a Trial-at-Bar on charges of money laundering and accepting a one hundred million rupee bribe linked to the 2013 Airbus aircraft deal.

With two major bribery and money laundering prosecutions now advancing on parallel tracks toward early December deadlines, Rajapaksa finds himself navigating a tightly interlocked legal vise. Whether arguing before a Magistrate over prime Colombo Fort real estate or facing three High Court judges over international aviation commissions, the political heirs of the past decade are discovering that legacy files carry a stubbornly long shelf life.

## FROM DUBAI'S PARTY RAID TO MOSCOW CUSTODY: THE LONG CRIMINAL TRAIL OF EXTRADITED SUSPECT 'ROTUMBA AMILA'

Sri Lanka's most wanted underworld operators usually treat overseas flight as a reliable insurance policy against domestic prosecution, hopping from Gulf luxury apartments to Eastern European hideouts while orchestrating bloodshed by telephone. On Friday morning, November 20, that overseas runway came to a sudden end for forty-four-year-old SepalaRatnayake Amila Sampath, widely known in police dossiers as Rotumba Amila, who touched down at Bandaranaike International Airport in Katunayake under heavy Criminal Investigation Department escort following his extradition from Russia.

A native of Urubokka in the Matara District, Sampath has long been on the radar of Sri Lankan law enforcement as a central figure in Southern Province extortion rackets, contract killings, and transnational narcotics smuggling. His journey back to Colombo marks the culmination of a twenty-month diplomatic and policing operation that began in March 2025, when Russian security authorities apprehended him on the strength of multiple Interpol Red Notices linked to open warrants issued by Sri Lankan courts. A specialized CID team traveledto Moscow earlier this week to finalize custody arrangements before accompanying the suspect onto Friday morning's flight.

Investigators have linked Sampath to some of the most notorious episodes in Sri Lanka's modern criminal underworld. Police intelligence places him inside the inner circle of late crime bosses Makandure Madush and Angoda Lokka, a network whose turf wars and narcotics pipelines dominated headlines for nearly a decade.

Specifically, detectives are questioning him over his alleged role in the high-profile daylight assassination of businessman Surendra Wasantha Perera, known

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popularly as Club Wasantha, who was gunned down during the opening of a tattoo studio in Athurugiriya on July 8, 2024, in an attack that also claimed another life and seriously wounded singer K. Sujeewa. Beyond the Athurugiriya shooting, Sampath faces scrutiny over an April 29, 2016 murder in Mulleriyawaalongside numerous extortion and drug trafficking files.

Perhaps the most glaring detail in Sampath's criminal biography, however, is that Sri Lankan authorities already had him in their custody once before. In March 2019, he was among the high-profile suspects swept up in the famous Dubai hotel raid during a birthday party hosted by Makandure Madush, leading to his deportation back to Colombo. Yet in a familiar refrain of Sri Lanka's sluggish criminal justice system, Sampath secured bail on May 3, 2023, promptly slipped out of the country, and resurfaced in Russia. During his detention in Russia earlier this year, reports even surfaced that he had attempted to stave off deportation by expressing a desire to enlist in the Russian military.

Now back inside CID headquarters in Colombo for intensive interrogation, Rotumba Amila's return offers investigators a rare chance to connect the dots between overseas syndicates and local hit squads, provided the system manages to keep hold of him this time.

# PHOSPHATE, PERMITS, AND PRISON WALLS: COLOMBO CHIEF MAGISTRATE REJECTS CHAMARA SAMPATH'S BAIL BID

Yesterday morning, former State Minister and sitting Member of Parliament Chamara Sampath Dassanayake discovered once again that the doors of Hulftsdorp swing far more easily inward than outward, after the Colombo Chief Magistrate's Court rejected his application for bail in connection with a multi-million-rupee phosphate licensing bribery investigation.

Presiding over the morning hearing, Colombo Chief Magistrate Asanga S. Bodaragama delivered the ruling after Dassanayake was produced before court from remand custody.

The former minister has been held behind bars since October 12, when officers of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption arrested him following more than three hours of questioning over allegations that he solicited and accepted roughly eight point four million rupees in bribes from three private companies operating in the phosphate trade.

According to investigative filings placed before the Magistrate's Court, the alleged misconduct took place during Dassanayake's tenure as State Minister of Primary Industries between September 2022 and September 2024, a period when Sri Lanka's agricultural sector and mineral resources were already buckling under severe economic strain.

Bribery Commission investigators allege that the former minister bypassed established regulatory procedures to secure and issue lucrative phosphate trading licences for three selected private firms in exchange for illicit payments totaling between eight point one and eight point four million rupees. Alongside Dassanayake, his former private secretary, SumathipalaLiyanarachchi, was also taken into custody and remanded in connection with the same licensing scheme.

Friday's bail rejection marks the latest setback in what has become an increasingly crowded legal calendar for the Badulla District parliamentarian. Earlier this month, on November 10, the court had similarly denied bail to his former secretary while prison authorities informed the bench that a contagious illness outbreak inside the facility had prevented Dassanayake from being physically produced in court, prompting his legal team led by President's Counsel Kalinga Indatissa to seek special permission for him to attend parliamentary budget sessions.



Beyond the phosphate licensing scandal, Dassanayake is simultaneously fighting off older corruption prosecutions stemming from his earlier stint as Chief Minister of the Uva Provincial Council, including cases involving the controversial withdrawal of provincial fixed deposits and the alleged solicitation of bank sponsorships. For a politician who built a career on folksy populism and fiery speeches in the hills of Uva, the cold arithmetic of Bribery Commission ledgers is proving far harder to talk his way around. With Chief Magistrate Bodaragama refusing to loosen the latch on Friday, the former State Minister will have plenty of quiet time in remand to reflect on the true cost of fast-tracking commercial licences.

# WHEN POLITICAL CREDENTIALS MEET A DIGITAL BLACKOUT: WHY TRUMP'S CYBER DIRECTOR HAD TO GO

When an entire "superpower" spends a week watching its air traffic grind to a halt, its banking transactions stall, and even its premier intelligence agency suffer an internal communications blackout, somebody in Washington eventually has to take the fall.

Late Thursday, November 19, and into Friday morning, that fall guy turned out to be White House National Cyber Director Sean Cairncross, whose abrupt exit underscores a glaring reality about modern national security: political loyalty is a poor substitute for technical competence when the servers start smoking.

According to multiple reports in Washington, Cairncross's removal was orchestrated by White House Chief of Staff Stephen Miller with the full backing of President Donald Trump, amid growing frustration inside the West Wing that the nation's top cybersecurity coordinator lacked the technical credentials required to navigate a crisis. Confirmed by the Senate in August 2025, Cairncross arrived at the Office of the National Cyber Director with a resume steeped in partisan machinery rather than network architecture, having previously served as chief operating officer of the Republican National Committee and a senior political adviser during Trump's first term. When America's digital plumbing began bursting simultaneously across multiple sectors over the past seven days, the limits of putting a political operative in charge of cyber resilience became painfully obvious.

To replace him, the administration turned to Pentagon Chief Information Officer Kirsten Davies, who steps in as acting national cyber director. Unlike her predecessor, Davies brings a deep private-sector and defense technology pedigree, having held senior information security roles at global corporations including Unilever, Estée Lauder, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, and Siemens before taking charge of Defense Department networks earlier this year. Both Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth quickly endorsed her appointment on social media, with Davies herself warning that the nation stands at a crossroads of analog, digital, and quantum technologies requiring urgent modernization.

Yet the timing of Cairncross's ouster raises an unavoidable question that official talking points struggle to reconcile. For days, senior administration figures, including Rubio and top intelligence officials, insisted that the cascading wave of disruptions since November 12 was merely a string of unrelated technical glitches. That week saw a twenty-four-hour Microsoft 365 failure, a four-hour Federal Aviation Administration nationwide ground stop that stranded thousands of travelers, payment delays at JPMorgan Chase, Apple service interruptions, and a puzzling network degradation at the National Security Agency on Tuesday. Even President Trump brushed off the chaos earlier in the week by remarking that things like that happen.




If everything truly was fine and routine maintenance was the sole culprit, why fire the nation's top cyber official in the middle of the night? Whether caused by hostile actors or sheer systemic fragility across aging infrastructure, the November meltdown exposed a dangerous vulnerability at the heart of the American economy. With Democrats set to assume control of the Senate in January following this month's midterm elections, Davies faces an uphill confirmation battle ahead, tasked with proving that Washington can finally fix its digital foundations before the next warning light flashes red.

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# OUT WITH INK STAMPS, IN WITH E-GATES: HOW SRI LANKA'S NEW IMMIGRATION BILL REWRITES SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD BORDER RULES

Anyone who has ever queued at Bandaranaike International Airport after a red-eye flight knows that Sri Lanka's border control has long operated on laws written when propeller planes ruled the skies and paper ledgers were cutting-edge technology. On Wednesday, November 18, Parliament took a decisive step toward retiring that bureaucratic museum piece, as the Sectoral Oversight Committee on Governance, Justice and Civil Protection, chaired by Member of Parliament Dr. Najith Indika, approved the new Immigration Bill subject to amendments mandated by the Supreme Court earlier this month.

In plain terms, the proposed legislation sweeps away two foundational statutes that have governed how people enter, leave, and obtain travel documents in Sri Lanka for generations: the Immigrants and Emigrants Act, originally enacted in 1948 right after independence, and the Passports and Exit Permits Act of 1971. While those older laws served an era of manual passport inspections, physical ink stamps, and separate exit permits, they have struggled badly to keep pace with digital travel, biometric identity systems, and sophisticated cross-border human smuggling rings.




For the everyday traveler, the most visible transformation under the new law will be at airport arrival and departure halls. Where old regulations relied heavily on an immigration officer physically inspecting a booklet and thumping an ink stamp onto a page, the new Bill provides the legal backbone for automated electronic gates, known as E-Gates. Passengers carrying biometric passports will soon be able to scan their documents, verify their facial or fingerprint data, and walk through border clearance without waiting in line for a manual stamp. Crucially, unlike the 1948 framework that predated the internet entirely, the new legislation explicitly anchors the collection and storage of travelers' biometric data to Sri Lanka's Personal Data Protection Act, creating formal privacy guardrails around sensitive personal records.

Beyond airport convenience, the Bill sharpens the state's teeth against transnational crime and irregular border crossings. Under the outdated legal framework, prosecuting Sri Lankan nationals or syndicates operating human trafficking rings abroad using forged travel documents was riddled with jurisdictional headaches, particularly if those individuals had originally left the country legally. The new law closes that loophole by empowering the High Court to prosecute offenders in Sri Lanka for overseas human trafficking and organized document fraud regardless of how they departed. At sea and along remote coastlines, the Bill also allows the President, via a formal Gazette notification requested by the subject Minister, to grant targeted powers to the Armed Forces and Coast Guard to intercept illegal entries, formalizing inter-agency border enforcement.

Even the administrative hierarchy gets a clean overhaul, upgrading the top posts from Controller and Deputy Controller to Controller General and Additional Controller General, while clarifying visa frameworks for foreign spouses of Sri Lankan citizens. Having incorporated the Supreme Court's constitutional tweaks, the Bill now heads toward its Committee Stage in Parliament, poised to finally bring Sri Lanka's border laws into the twenty-first century.

# NINE LETTERS, ZERO REPLIES: SRI LANKA'S DOCTORS THREATEN STRIKE ACTION OVER GOVERNMENT SILENCE

In our chronically overburdened public healthcare system, few phrases carry the immediate capacity to induce dread among ordinary citizens quite like a warning of impending trade union action by the Government Medical Officers' Association. On Friday, November 20, the country's most powerful doctors' union placed the administration on formal notice, declaring that it may soon be forced onto the picket lines after months of written pleas for dialogue with the nation's top leadership were met with what it describes as complete official silence.

To back up its accusation of deliberate stonewalling, the union took the unusual step of releasing copies of nine separate letters dispatched between August and November 2026. According to the association, four formal requests for a meeting were sent directly to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, two to Prime Minister Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, and three to Health Minister Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa. Despite repeated follow-ups over four months, the doctors say not a single audience was granted, leaving critical grievances festering unresolved inside state hospitals from Colombo to the rural peripheries.

Beneath the procedural frustration lies a familiar, combustible mix of economic strain and structural neglect that has plagued Sri Lanka's medical workforce since the height of the economic crisis. At the top of the union's agenda are long-delayed payments for extra-duty and public holiday allowances, upward revisions to the Disturbance, Availability and Transport allowance, broader salary adjustments, and relief from personal income tax brackets that physicians argue have steadily eroded their take-home pay. Having already submitted detailed recommendations ahead of the 2027 Budget only to find their core concerns sidelined, the association argues that frontline medical officers are being asked to carry an expanding patient load while watching their real earnings shrink.






Yet reducing this standoff purely to a paycheck dispute misses the deeper systemic rot the doctors are flagging. Beyond allowances and tax relief, the union's correspondence highlights severe staffing shortages, erratic workforce management across regional hospitals, stalled career progression, and the long-standing demand to establish an independent, dedicated Sri Lanka Medical Service insulated from bureaucratic bottlenecks. Over the past few years, thousands of qualified doctors and specialists have migrated overseas in search of predictable working conditions and fair remuneration, leaving rural wards dangerously understaffed and forcing remaining clinicians to cover impossible rosters.

There is an unmistakable political irony at play here as well. Health Minister Dr. NalindaJayatissa is himself a medical doctor by training, and the current administration came to power promising participatory governance, institutional reform, and an end to the arrogant dismissal of professional bodies that characterized previous regimes. When a union led by state physicians produces nine unanswered letters spanning four months, questioning whether the administration is deliberately avoiding dialogue, that narrative of open-door governance begins to look distinctly frayed.

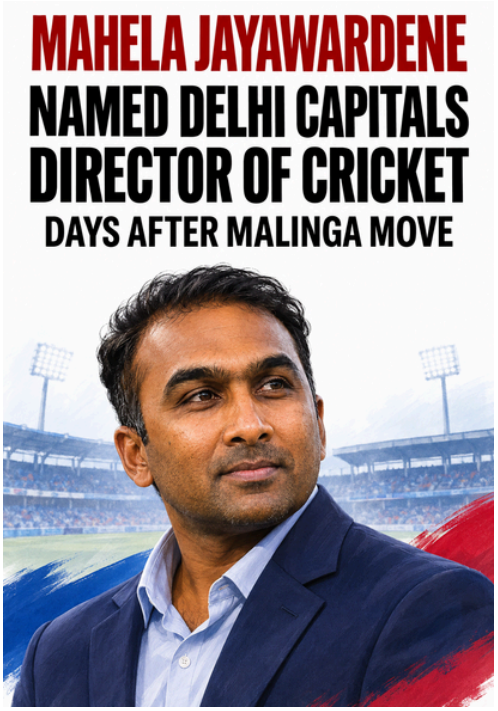
To be sure, the public has grown deeply weary of hospital strikes that invariably punish impoverished patients who cannot afford private channeling fees while policymakers and union leaders trade press statements. The association itself insists that industrial action remains a last resort rather than a preferred weapon, warning that the government must bear full responsibility if continued refusal to talk forces doctors out of outpatient departments and clinics. Before another hospital corridor falls silent and vulnerable patients become collateral damage once again, the leadership in Colombo would do well to pick up the phone, open the nine letters sitting on its desks, and talk.

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# MAHELA JAYAWARDENE NAMED DELHI CAPITALS DIRECTOR OF CRICKET DAYS AFTER MALINGA MOVE

In franchise cricket, coaching dynasties rarely vanish when one chapter closes; they simply relocate across the boardroom map. On Friday, November 20, GMR Sports confirmed that former Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene has been appointed Director of Cricket for the Delhi Capitals, handing one of the sharpest tactical minds in the T20 circuit overarching authority across a global stable of teams spanning the Indian Premier League, the Women's Premier League, the International League T20, Major League Cricket, and The Hundred.

Jayawardene's arrival in Delhi follows his departure from the Mumbai Indians after the 2026 IPL season, where he built a formidable reputation as a three-time IPL-winning strategist. Notably, the move also reunites him with a very familiar Sri Lankan comrade. Just days after we reported on fast-bowling legend Lasith Malinga's appointment as bowling coach for the franchise's UAE sister outfit, Dubai Capitals, GMR Sports has effectively imported the old Mumbai brain trust to anchor its international ambitions. In fact, Jayawardene's very first assignment in his new role will be alongside Malinga with the Dubai Capitals as the fifth season of the ILT20 gets underway in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday, November 21.




Beyond the immediate Dubai kickoff, the structural mechanics of Jayawardene's portfolio reveal how seriously Delhi's co-owners are overhauling their operation. Under the joint-ownership arrangement between GMR Sports and the JSW Group, operational control of the men's and women's franchises alternates in two-year cycles. With GMR Sports taking charge of the women's setup for the 2027 and 2028 seasons, Jayawardene will step in directly as Director of Cricket for Delhi Capitals Women ahead of the WPL season starting on January 7. That particular assignment carries an unmistakable mandate: breaking an agonizing championship curse. Despite reaching the final in all four editions of the Women's Premier League played so far, Delhi Capitals Women have walked away as runners-up every single time. As GMR Sports Chairman Kiran Kumar Grandhi noted on Friday, Jayawardene's proven pedigree in constructing cohesive, title-winning squads is squarely aimed at turning perpetual finalists into champions.

The shakeup has already claimed casualties inside the Capitals camp, with GMR Sports parting ways with former Director of Cricket Venugopal Rao and bowling coach Munaf Patel to clear the deck for the new leadership. For Jayawardene, the appointment also carries a neat touch of cricketing symmetry, bringing him back to the very franchise where he concluded his own IPL playing career during the 2012 and 2013 seasons. Back then, he walked out in Delhi colors with a bat in hand; more than a decade later, alongside Malinga, he returns with the blueprints for an entire global franchise network.

# BUDGET 2ND READING PASSED COMFORTABLY

The division bells fell silent in Diyawanna Oya yesterday evening, November 20. The arithmetic on the parliamentary scoreboard was decisive. A total of 157 Members of Parliament voted in favor of the Second Reading of Sri Lanka's 2027 Appropriation Bill. Only 60 voted against, giving the administration a comfortable majority of ninety-seven votes. Yet for ordinary Sri Lankans watching from kitchen tables, bus queues, and small shop counters, parliamentary majorities rarely pay the grocery bill. The 2027 Budget now enters a nineteen-day Committee Stage marathon starting Saturday, November 21. The final Third Reading vote arrives on December 14. That is when the real test begins. Beneath the 367 pages of President and Finance Minister Anura Kumara Dissanayake's third national budget, what actually changes for the citizen on the street? Can these numbers hold together in a turbulent world?

Cutting through the political noise, every salaried worker asks one question first: will I take home more pay next year? The short answer is yes, though relief only begins on April 1, 2027. Under the budget's flagship personal income tax reform, the annual tax-free threshold rises from one point eight million rupees to one point nine five million rupees. That lifts the monthly tax-free salary limit from one hundred and fifty thousand rupees to one hundred and sixty-two thousand five hundred rupees. Better still, the government brought back a twelve percent tax bracket between the six percent and eighteen percent slabs. Every subsequent bracket widens to fifty thousand rupees per month. The threshold for the punishing thirty-six percent top tax rate jumps from three hundred and fifty-eight thousand rupees to four hundred and thirty-three thousand rupees a month. In practical terms, someone earning two hundred thousand rupees a month saves seven hundred and fifty rupees in monthly tax. A professional earning three hundred thousand saves five thousand two hundred and fifty rupees. Higher earners save up to fifteen thousand seven hundred and fifty rupees every month.

That raises an immediate second question: what about household essentials and the cost of living right now? Families are already feeling the pinch of global fuel price spikes and inflation climbing above eight percent. Knowing this, the Treasury moved immediately on kitchen staples. Effective November 13, the Special Commodity Levy on imported sprats dropped from one hundred rupees to ten rupees per kilogram. Maldive fish plummeted from three hundred and two rupees to ten rupees per kilogram. Dried chillies dropped by fifty rupees per kilogram, though imported sugar saw a ten-rupee levy increase. Parents and students also get welcome relief. Value Added Tax disappears from exercise books, printed books, dictionaries, and educational materials. A new ten-thousand-rupee grant will also help low-income families purchase school supplies. Meanwhile, public servants receive one hundred and ten billion rupees for the final phase of their salary adjustment. Retirees who stepped down between 2020 and 2024 receive an interim monthly allowance of two thousand five hundred rupees. Another two hundred and thirty billion rupees goes toward Aswesumaand social welfare transfers.

If taxes are being trimmed and welfare is expanding, how does the government plan to balance the national check book without sliding back into fiscal trouble? That is the trillion-rupee question at the heart of Budget 2027. Overall, the state plans to collect six thousand one hundred and eighty billion rupees in revenue and grants. Total spending hits seven thousand six hundred and seventy-three billion rupees. That leaves a baseline budget deficit of one thousand four hundred and ninety-three billion rupees, or three point eight percent of Gross Domestic Product.

Factor in a separate two hundred and sixty billion rupee supplementary estimate for post-Cyclone Ditwah reconstruction, and the deficit widens to four point five percent. Crucially, the government maintains a primary surplus of two point nine percent of GDP before debt interest is paid. That keeps Colombo broadly aligned with International Monetary Fund benchmarks before the current Extended Fund Facility concludes in March 2027. Yet one sobering figure in the budget annexes serves as a stark reminder of how narrow Sri Lanka's fiscal runway remains. Interest payments alone will consume two thousand six hundred and forty-three billion rupees next year. Roughly forty-three out of every one hundred rupees collected in state revenue goes straight toward servicing debt.

To generate growth rather than simply taxing a stagnant economy, the administration is betting heavily on public capital expenditure and targeted private incentives. Roughly two trillion rupees goes toward infrastructure, transport, and economic transformation. Commuters are promised a record ninety-five billion rupees to modernize bus and rail services. Another eighty billion rupees will begin electrifying three Colombo suburban rail lines, while thirty billion rupees extends the Kurunegala to Galewela expressway. Small and medium enterprises gain access to a one hundred and seventy-four billion rupeeconcessionary loan pool. Export-oriented Board of Investment projects committing at least three million dollars receive a two hundred percent capital allowance. Meanwhile, the much-criticized Tourism Development Levy disappears altogether. At the same time, the tax net widens into modern territory. Capital gains tax will soon apply to cryptocurrency, telecom licences, and high-value gems, while electronic tax invoices become legally binding.

Which brings us to the final question every voter should keep in mind between now and December 14: can external shocks derail these promises before they reach your pocket? The Middle East conflict continues to drive global oil prices higher. Central Bank Governor Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe has already warned that inflation could touch nine percent next month. Worse still, an El Niño weather pattern expected to peak in February 2027 threatens agriculture and hydropower. The margins for error are razor-thin. Passing the Second Reading by ninety-seven votes gives the government full parliamentary authority to proceed. Over the next nineteen days of Committee Stage scrutiny, Parliament must ensure every borrowed rupee delivers real relief rather than another cycle of unfulfilled pledges.