Issue No. 437 25th NOVEMBER 2026 CEYLON INDEPENDENT @+94 77 230 0305

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

TREASURY LOOKS FOR INCOME THE TAX SYSTEM IS MISSING



NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

TREASURY LOOKS FOR INCOME THE TAX SYSTEM IS MISSING

The Government is looking at ways to identify Sri Lankans who earn taxable income but remain outside the tax net. Presidential economic adviser Duminda Hulangamuwa says the Inland Revenue Department has a clearer view of salaries, bank interest and dividends because employers and financial institutions already report or deduct tax on these payments. Earnings from some private transactions and self-employed work are harder to trace, especially when an individual receives money from several sources.

Hulangamuwa has suggested linking information held by Inland Revenue, Customs, banks and land registries. A vehicle purchase or a property transfer could prompt an inquiry where the value of the transaction appears difficult to reconcile with the income a person has declared. Sri Lanka lacks a fully integrated system for making those comparisons, and Hulangamuwa says there is too little information to estimate reliably how much additional revenue the effort would yield.

That is an important admission. The Treasury can identify an area where it suspects tax is going uncollected, but it will take actual inquiries to establish how much is due. A vehicle may have been financed with a lease, a property bought with the proceeds from selling another, and a large bank deposit received as an inheritance. For a business, deposits can also reflect turnover from which wages, suppliers and other costs still have to be paid.

The government's best starting point would be to examine substantial discrepancies that recur over time. A one-off purchase can have a straightforward explanation. A series of high-value transactions alongside consistently low declared income may justify a closer look, with the taxpayer given a written explanation of what prompted the inquiry and a reasonable opportunity to provide documents.

The Treasury also needs to decide how much information officers should see and who can authorise access. An assessor examining a land transaction may need its value, date and parties. That does not automatically justify access to records unrelated to the inquiry.

The agencies involved could maintain a log showing who accessed a record, when and for which case, while giving taxpayers a way to correct a mistaken match or outdated entry.

It would also help to publish the results of an initial programme before the Treasury makes wider revenue projections. The number of notices sent tells the public little on its own. Parliament should be able to see how many inquiries led to additional assessments, how much tax was ultimately collected and how often an initial finding was overturned.

Those figures would show both the revenue potential and the risk of errors.

For workers whose tax is deducted every month, the question is whether Inland Revenue will pursue income that takes more effort to uncover, including where the sums or influence involved are substantial. For anyone drawn into an inquiry, the question is whether they can see the basis for it and challenge a mistake without spending months navigating the system. A wider tax net will be judged on both counts.

US$200 MILLION FOR SMALL BUSINESSES. HOW MUCH REACHES THE BORROWER?

The Asian Development Bank has approved US$200 million to improve financing for Sri Lanka's micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Half will support policy and institutional changes intended to make it easier for smaller firms to obtain finance. The other US$100 million is a financial intermediation loan intended to expand investment lending through participating institutions. Of that amount, US$40 million is earmarked for green loans.

The distinction matters to an owner deciding whether to apply. A policy-based loan can support changes to regulation, credit guarantees or the way lenders assess applicants. The investment-lending component is the part designed to finance businesses through participating lenders. Approval of the package is the first step. A business owner still needs to know when applications will open, which institutions will accept them and what an applicant will have to put up as security.

The ADB says smaller enterprises account for more than half of Sri Lanka's gross domestic product and about 45% of employment. The category takes in very different businesses. A food processor applying to replace an unreliable refrigeration unit may already have regular orders and cash-flow records. A small manufacturer seeking to buy equipment for its first large contract may have an order book and little property to pledge. A lending programme designed around one applicant can easily miss the other.

Credit guarantees could help lenders consider viable firms that cannot meet conventional collateral requirements. The terms will determine how useful those guarantees are. A partial guarantee still leaves the lender with risk, and a borrower needs to know whether the guarantee changes the security requirement, the interest rate or the size of the loan available. A simple application process matters as well. A small firm can ill afford to pay for valuations and paperwork before finding out whether it qualifies.

The green-lending component also needs clear rules. A hotel might want to replace an inefficient hot-water system, while a small factory might want to cut electricity use by upgrading motors or refrigeration. Owners will want to know whether the programme finances this kind of incremental investment, how it measures energy savings and whether technical advice is available before they commit to equipment.

The Ministry of Finance and the participating lenders could publish one schedule covering eligibility, loan sizes, indicative rates, collateral requirements and application dates.

US$200 MILLION FOR SMALL BUSINESSES. HOW MUCH REACHES THE BORROWER?



They could then report how much has been disbursed, with enough detail to show whether businesses outside Colombo and women-owned enterprises are gaining access. Approval rates and typical processing times would tell applicants more than a national announcement alone.

For an owner making a decision about machinery, stock or expansion, the answer needs to come before a supplier's quote expires or a customer takes an order elsewhere. The package will earn its value when a viable business can see the terms, make an application and get a decision in time to use the money.

CENTRAL BANK LIFTS POLICY RATE TO 9% AS FOOD AND ENERGY KEEP INFLATION HIGH

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka has raised its Overnight Policy Rate by a quarter percentage point to 9%, citing persistent pressure from food and energy prices. The decision, announced on November 20, followed an increase in annual inflation to 8.3% in October.

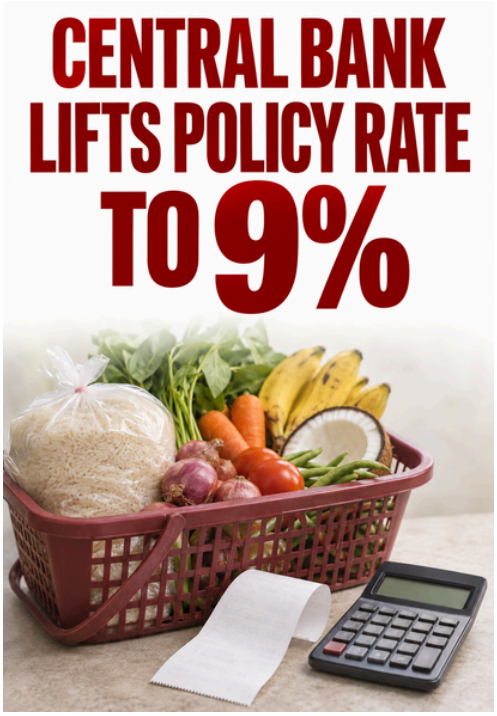
The Bank expects inflation to remain elevated for longer than it previously projected and to return to its 5% target in the second half of 2027.

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

CENTRAL BANK LIFTS...

The Bank said the conflict in the Middle East had lasted longer than it expected, keeping pressure on global energy costs. International energy prices had eased somewhat by the time of the decision, but the Bank expects earlier increases to continue feeding through to domestic prices. That can happen when distributors, manufacturers or service providers are still working through contracts, stocks or transport bills priced at earlier levels.

The policy rate affects the cost of short-term money in the financial system. Banks can pass changes through to deposit and lending rates over time, with the pace varying between products. A household with a fixed-rate loan generally feels the change when it next borrows or refinances. A household on a floating rate needs to check when its bank can reset the rate and how the change will affect the repayment or the remaining term.



Small firms can feel the effects through overdrafts and other short-term borrowing used to buy stock or pay wages before customers settle invoices. The squeeze is sharper for a business that has already absorbed higher electricity or transport costs and has little scope to raise selling prices.

Firms with good records and regular cash flow may have more room to negotiate terms than firms already using most of their available credit.

The Central Bank's case for acting is that higher food and fuel prices can spread across the economy if businesses and households come to expect inflation to stay high. A higher policy rate can dampen demand and help contain those expectations. Cheaper transport, more reliable food distribution and greater competition in essential goods depend on action elsewhere in government.

One practical response would be for the Treasury and the agencies responsible for energy and food supply to explain which costs are still working their way into retail prices.

A regular account of landed fuel costs, import lead times and selected wholesale and retail food prices would help distinguish pressures coming from abroad from those arising in domestic distribution. The Government could then target problems that changes to interest rates cannot directly fix.

The household test comes when wages, regular bills and the weekly shop are set against one another. Inflation returning to 5% would mean a slower rise in the general price level. For families whose incomes have fallen behind, how quickly earnings recover will determine how much relief they actually feel.

INSTANT LOANS, HIDDEN CHARGES AND A PHONE FULL OF PRIVATE DATA

Sri Lankans who need money for a medical bill, a school expense or the last week before payday can now apply for a small loan on a mobile phone. A study by the Centre for a Smart Future found that some digital microloan providers used unclear terms or misleading advertising, and that borrowers had experienced harassment during collection. Some lending apps also sought access to contacts, photographs and call logs, raising questions about how much personal information a lender needs.

The borrowers interviewed for the study explained why the service survives despite those problems. When money is needed the same day, a bank application that takes longer, requires documentation or offers a larger loan than the borrower wants may be of little practical use. An app can fill the gap. The immediate pressure of the expense can also make it harder to stop and check what will be deducted upfront, when payment falls due and how late charges build up.

The simplest reform would start with what appears on the screen before the applicant agrees. Every provider should show the amount the borrower will actually receive, the full amount repayable, the payment date and the charges that apply if the money is late. Those figures should appear together in rupees, in language the borrower can understand.

A downloadable or text-message copy of those terms would give both parties a record if there is a dispute.

Access to a borrower's phone deserves separate scrutiny. A provider may need to verify identity and contact the person who took the loan. Access to an entire address book or photo gallery raises a different question. A lender should have to explain why it needs each permission, how long the information will be retained and who may receive it. Collection rules should make clear when a lender can call, what it can say and what conduct will draw a penalty.

The Asian Development Bank's small-business financing programme supports legal reforms to establish a Microfinance and Credit Regulatory Authority. As that work proceeds, there is a case for clear coverage of digital lenders, a register the public can check and a single place to lodge a complaint.

People should be able to submit a screenshot or message and receive a case number without first working out which agency has jurisdiction.

Banks, cooperatives and regulated lenders also have an opportunity to address the gap that drew borrowers to these apps in the first place.



A small emergency loan with clear charges and a decision within a predictable time would give people a real choice. For someone facing a bill today, the most meaningful protection is the ability to compare two usable offers and understand what each will cost before pressing accept.

PUBLIC-SECTOR UNIONS PRESS FOR RS. 25,000 INTERIM ALLOWANCE

Several trade unions called a national day of protest on Monday over the 2027 Budget, bringing public-sector pay and working conditions back into the parliamentary debate.

Anuradha Seneviratne, general secretary of the All Ceylon Development Officers' Association, said the central demand was a Rs. 25,000 interim allowance for public employees. Representatives from the health and education sectors also argued that the Budget had left important grievances unresolved.

The demand brings together employees whose conditions differ considerably. A development officer travelling regularly for fieldwork may be concerned about fares and fuel costs. A hospital worker may be dealing with shifts and overtime.

A principal may be trying to keep a school running while meeting costs that fall outside the provision available to it. A flat allowance would give eligible workers the same cash increase, though its effect on take-home pay would vary considerably across salary grades.

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

PUBLIC-SECTOR UNIONS...

The Government should put a clear costing before Parliament. The calculation should show how many employees would qualify, whether workers in provincial bodies and other public institutions would be included, and how long an interim allowance would run. It should also explain any effect on related payments and identify where the money would come from during the Budget year. Without those details, a headline figure tells the public little about the cost of the demand or the relief it would deliver.



The unions, for their part, have an opportunity to show where the pressure is most acute. A breakdown by salary grade of take-home pay, transport costs and the effect of deductions would give substance to negotiations. Evidence of vacancies, overtime and retention problems would also help distinguish pay grievances that apply across the public service from problems that need a response within a particular sector.

There are several credible options to cost. A uniform allowance is straightforward to administer and would give proportionately more relief to those on lower salaries. A payment concentrated in lower grades would direct a larger share of the money to workers whose budgets are tightest. Bringing forward an existing pay commitment could also help some employees, depending on who qualifies and when the increase was due. Each option carries a different cost and reaches a different group.

Any agreement should set out when workers can expect the money and how the Treasury intends to fund it. During negotiations, hospitals, schools and public offices also need to communicate changes in services promptly so patients, parents and other users can plan.

The Government and unions can make progress by publishing a costed set of options and agreeing on a timetable for talks. Workers will then be able to see which proposals offer relief and when it could arrive.

FOUR FINED RS. 76.4 MILLION OVER SINHARAJA WILDLIFE OFFENCES

The Kalawana Magistrate's Court has fined four Chinese nationals a combined Rs. 76.4 million after they pleaded guilty to 143 charges connected with the illegal collection and possession of protected wildlife in the buffer zone of the Sinharaja Forest Reserve. The charges included capturing and possessing more than 300 protected animals, among them insects and reptiles. Wildlife officers arrested the four on November 9 and the court imposed the fines on November 23.

The case turns attention to where the animals were taken. The charges concerned the buffer zone, where the forest meets areas used by people for travel, work and other activities. For enforcement officers, this means that protecting Sinharaja also depends on what happens along its edges. Small animals that are easy to overlook can be the target of collection, and officers need the expertise to identify what they recover.



The number of specimens involved makes the handling of the recovery a matter worth examining. Live animals may require different conditions for transport and temporary care. Identification can take time, particularly when closely related species look alike. Any decision about returning a specimen to the wild needs to consider where it came from, its condition and whether release is suitable. The public account of the case would benefit from a summary of what was recovered and how wildlife officials dealt with it.

The authorities could publish that account while withholding precise locations of vulnerable species. A summary could give the broad groups of animals recovered, the number found alive and the outcome of any examination or release.

It could also explain which agencies handled the specimens and whether outside expertise was required. That would give researchers and conservation staff a clearer picture of what the case required without exposing sensitive habitat details.

A further question is whether enforcement officers and legitimate researchers have a sufficiently clear way to verify collection permits. A field officer who encounters someone carrying specimens should be able to establish quickly whether the holder has permission, what species or groups it covers and where collection is authorised. A readily verifiable permit, paired with a standard record of specimens taken, could make checks faster for officers and easier for researchers conducting lawful work.

Communities around Sinharaja can also assist through a clear reporting channel for suspected illegal collection. Officers can then assess reports and decide where patrols or checks are warranted. A combined fine of Rs. 76.4 million brings a substantial court case to a close. The next measure of enforcement will be what wildlife authorities learn from the recovery and how they use it to protect the forest and its buffer zone.

ARUNI RANARAJA IN LINE TO BECOME SRI LANKA'S FIRST WOMAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON

Foreign Ministry Secretary Aruni Ranaraja is to be nominated as Sri Lanka's ambassador to the United States, the Government has announced. If the appointment proceeds, she will become the first woman to represent Sri Lanka as ambassador in Washington. The nomination would move the ministry's most senior official into a posting where diplomatic engagement, trade and consular work all demand attention.

Washington matters to several constituencies in Sri Lanka. Exporters need a reliable understanding of US trade policy and how changes affect their orders and costs. Sri Lankans living or travelling in the United States rely on the embassy for consular services. Colombo also needs a mission that can sustain contact with Congress, federal agencies and policymakers on issues that continue to evolve between official visits.

For exporters, the value of the mission often comes down to timing. A company negotiating an order needs to know how a change in tariffs, customs requirements or product standards affects the price it can quote. Larger companies may have advisers in the United States.

A smaller exporter may depend on information from a trade association or the embassy. Timely notices written in plain language, with a contact for sector-specific queries, would make the mission more accessible to both.

There is a similar case for clarity on consular work.



"Questioning The Answers"

ARUNI RANARAJA...

Applications and document requests often become urgent when people face travel deadlines or a family emergency. Published processing times and a clear route for urgent cases would give applicants a better idea of what to expect. The mission could review which services generate the most queries and use that information to improve instructions and appointment arrangements.



The scope of the job extends beyond the embassy's own work. An ambassador dealing with a trade issue may need rapid technical advice from Colombo, input from industry and an agreed government position before raising it in Washington. The same applies when Sri Lanka needs to answer questions about domestic policy. Ranaraja's experience as Foreign Ministry Secretary gives her familiarity with how Colombo arrives at those positions. Effective coordination will still depend on officials and businesses having a reliable way to bring matters to the mission's attention.

The prospect of Sri Lanka's first woman ambassador in Washington carries significance for the foreign service. The public also has an interest in what the appointment could deliver. If the nomination proceeds, the ministry could set out the mission's priorities and how it will report progress. Exporters and citizens would then have a clearer basis for judging the work of the embassy, from the information it provides on market access to how it handles everyday consular needs.



GALADARI HOLDS RADISSON BLU SOFT OPENING, WITH FULL OPERATIONS EXPECTED IN DECEMBER

Colombo's Galadari Hotel has already held a soft opening under its new name, Radisson Blu Hotel Galadari Colombo. Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism Minister Vijitha Herath attended the unveiling of the new brand on Sunday, November 22. The refurbished Colombo Fort property is expected to be fully operational by December.

The upgrade covers restaurants, conference and banquet halls, a spa, fitness facilities and an outdoor pool. During a soft opening, individual services can become available in stages as staff and systems settle into operation. For guests and event organisers, the practical question is which facilities are ready on the dates they want to book. That matters particularly to anyone committing to an event that needs accommodation, catering and meeting rooms at the same time.

The relaunch comes as Colombo hotels compete for business travellers and conference organisers as well as tourists. A convention can bring in revenue from rooms, meeting space and food service under one booking. It can also create business for transport operators, equipment suppliers and independent restaurants. The wider gain depends on how many delegates come to Colombo, how long they stay and whether they spend time elsewhere in the city.



The Radisson Blu affiliation places the property under a name familiar to international travellers and corporate travel managers. Its impact will become clearer once the hotel is operating fully and the initial interest in the refurbishment has passed. Travel agents and event planners will look at room rates, service and the reliability of facilities they can book. For the listed hotel company, future financial disclosures can show how the refurbishment and relaunch affect trading over time.

Colombo Fort offers the property an advantage that extends beyond its rooms and meeting halls. Visitors can combine a stay with time in the historic commercial district and along the waterfront. That depends in part on what it feels like to walk between venues. Hotels, businesses and city authorities could make it easier by improving signs to nearby attractions, keeping pavements usable and making pickup points clear for guests and drivers. Those changes would serve residents and other businesses as well as hotel guests.

For the moment, the sequence matters. The soft opening has taken place, and December is the stated timetable for full operations. The hotel can help customers plan by making clear which restaurants, rooms and event spaces are available during that transition. Once the full operation is under way, repeat conference bookings and sustained demand will tell more about the return on the refurbishment than attendance at the launch.

TAMIL NADU | CHENNAI PUTS ITS INVESTMENT PLEDGES TO THE TEST

Tamil Nadu is scheduled to hold its second VETTRI Investment and Conversion Conclave in Chennai today, with the state government shifting attention from signing investment agreements to getting projects under way. The first conclave announced proposals worth ₹1.02 lakh crore. The industries department says this meeting will focus on turning commitments into capital spending and jobs. Ahead of the event, the government had yet to disclose how many projects would come up for review or their combined value.

The distinction is consequential for workers, suppliers and local authorities. A memorandum can record a company's intention to invest before it has bought land, secured financing or settled on a construction date. For a family expecting a new employer to start recruiting, the useful information is when hiring might begin. For a local supplier considering whether to buy machinery, it is when the factory expects to place orders.

Industries Minister S. Keerthana has said the administration wants to move investment commitments into implementation.

Bringing company representatives and public officials together can help when a project has stalled because responsibility lies across several departments.

A manufacturer may have an agreement with the state and still need a road connection, a dependable power supply or permission to draw water. Each issue may have a different owner and a different timetable. Speed also depends on which problem the Government is trying to solve.

An investor waiting for a routine document should be able to find out who has it and when a decision is due. Where a project raises questions about water use, pollution or land acquisition, people affected should have access to the proposal and time to raise objections. Publishing each stage of the process would help distinguish administrative delays from decisions that require proper scrutiny.

Tamil Nadu could publish a project register that follows commitments from the first agreement through to construction and production. It could record expected and actual investment, distinguish temporary construction work from permanent jobs, and show when a company scales back or withdraws a proposal.

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

TAMIL NADU...

The state could also identify where a delay sits with an agency and where a company has yet to make a final decision. Commercial details can be protected while the public sees whether projects are moving.

ARUNI RANARAJA IN LINE TO BECOME SRI LANKA'S FIRST WOMAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON



Sri Lanka has reason to watch the Chennai exercise. An investor comparing locations needs a credible date for starting production, including a realistic timetable for land, utilities and approvals. Colombo could publish the same milestones for major projects approved here, including those announced with government incentives.

That would give prospective investors a clearer view of how the process works and give Parliament a way to examine what public concessions have delivered. The immediate test for Chennai is whether today's meeting produces dates and decisions for projects people can track after the conclave ends.

KARNATAKA | JAPAN VISIT PUTS FACTORIES AND BENGALURU'S CITY SERVICES ON THE SAME AGENDA

Karnataka Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar's delegation is scheduled to reach Tokyo today after stops in Nagoya and Osaka. The state government's programme lists proposed meetings with Toyota, Panasonic Automotive Systems and other companies as Karnataka seeks investment in manufacturing and electric-vehicle supply chains. The delegation is also looking at how Japanese cities handle transport, redevelopment and waste. Industries Minister M. B. Patil is expected to oversee business meetings scheduled to continue after the chief minister's three-day programme.

The business discussions cover several types of investment, and their local effects could differ considerably. A vehicle assembly plant and a components factory need different suppliers, land and skills. A company looking for a base to produce electrical systems may ask whether local manufacturers can meet its quality standards reliably. It may also want to know how quickly workers can be trained and whether equipment can be serviced locally. These details help determine whether an investor will build a substantial operation or source most of what it needs elsewhere.

Karnataka could use the meetings to find out where local firms fall short of a prospective customer's requirements and what it would take to qualify. A supplier-development programme could bring manufacturers and technical colleges together around specific training and certification needs. Participation by smaller firms would be easier if they knew which standards mattered and what orders might become available once they met them.

KARNATAKA SEEKS JAPANESE INVESTMENT AND TRANSIT IDEAS



Bengaluru has a distinct interest in the visit. A worker's journey can involve a bus, a train and a stretch on foot. An efficient rail service can still be difficult to use if connecting buses are infrequent, interchanges are poorly marked or the walk to the station is unsafe. A practical outcome from the transport visits would be an agreement to test better connections at selected Bengaluru stations and measure whether they reduce the time passengers spend getting to work.

Waste management presents a similar question about how services fit together. A city can study a Japanese processing plant, but the result at home will also depend on how consistently waste is separated and collected, what arrives at the facility and how the municipality pays to operate it. Testing changes to collection and separation in a defined area would provide evidence before Karnataka commits to an expensive plant or a long operating contract.

The programme published for the visit sets out meetings Karnataka intends to hold. Any investment agreement will need its own timetable and terms. A useful account after the delegation returns would identify where companies have expressed interest, what follow-up they have asked for and which city projects Karnataka intends to test. Bengaluru's residents can then judge the trip by changes they can see in their journeys and services, while manufacturers can track whether discussions produce orders and jobs.

NEW DELHI | A BUNGALOW IN THE CAPITAL FOR THE DALAI LAMA'S OFFICE

India's Union government has allocated a bungalow in central New Delhi to the Dalai Lama's office. The property, at 20 Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane, was renovated over several months. A nameplate bearing the words Gaden Phodrang was visible at the entrance when a reporter visited on Monday. The allocation gives the Tibetan spiritual leader's office a base in the Indian capital.

Gaden Phodrang was registered as a trust in 2011, when the Dalai Lama relinquished his political authority. That history matters to understanding who will use the property. The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, while the office is an institution with its own administrative work. A permanent address in Delhi can make that work easier to conduct in the capital. The details disclosed so far concern the office premises.

NEW DELHI ALLOCATES BUNGALOW TO THE DALAI LAMA'S OFFICE



A government bungalow in central Delhi also has significance beyond its physical size. The area houses ministries, official residences and diplomatic missions. For an office that needs to communicate with officials and receive visitors, location can make a difference to everyday business.

The exact functions to be carried out at the bungalow, and the timetable for putting it into regular use, remain to be set out publicly.

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

NEW DELHI...

The allocation takes place against a long diplomatic history. India has hosted the Dalai Lama since he fled Tibet in 1959. His presence in India has given Tibetan religious institutions space to continue their work, and Tibet remains a sensitive subject in relations between India and China.

A decision involving his office can therefore draw attention beyond Delhi property administration. The terms the Indian government sets for the premises, and any statements it makes about their purpose, will help clarify the significance it attaches to the decision.

The most useful detail now would be an explanation of the arrangement from the authorities responsible for the property and from the trust. Knowing who holds the allotment, what activities it covers and when the office expects to start using the building would give the public a clearer account.

It would also help people who deal with the trust know which matters they can take up in Delhi and how to contact the office once it is operating.

For now, the visible change is an identifiable address for Gaden Phodrang in central Delhi. The institutional change that gives it context happened in 2011, when the Dalai Lama handed over his political responsibilities. Keeping those facts in view makes it possible to understand both the practical value of the new premises and why a decision about a single bungalow attracts attention well beyond the street on which it stands.

BANGLADESH | DHAKA SAYS SHEIKH HASINA FACES ARREST IF SHE RETURNS

Bangladesh says it will arrest former prime minister Sheikh Hasina if she returns from India, where she has lived since fleeing the country in August 2024. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam said Dhaka wants New Delhi to extradite Hasina under the treaty between the two countries. Hasina faces a death sentence in Bangladesh and has indicated she wants to return in December. Her requests for a new passport and identity card have been rejected.

The announcement brings two possible routes back into focus. If Hasina travels of her own accord, Bangladeshi authorities say she will be taken into custody on arrival. An extradition would require India to act on Dhaka's request. India said in April that it was examining the matter and gave no immediate public response to the latest remarks. Hasina's stated intention to return leaves open when, or by what route, she could do so.

The dispute stems from the uprising that ended her rule in 2024. The United Nations has said as many as 1,400 people may have been killed during the unrest. Hasina's Awami League has since been banned. Its supporters called protests and rallies this month in favour of her return, culminating in a nationwide lockdown call on November 19. The renewed mobilisation has put pressure on the authorities to protect the public while handling a case that remains intensely divisive.

For families of those killed, accountability depends on a process that can establish responsibility and withstand scrutiny. That requires a clear public account of what has been decided by the courts and what remedies remain available to Hasina. If she is taken into custody, access to counsel and clarity over the next hearing would give the public a basis for following the case. Those safeguards carry particular weight where a death sentence is involved.



New Delhi faces a decision with consequences for its relationship with a neighbour. A public explanation of where the request stands, including which stage of the treaty process it has reached, would help reduce conflicting accounts. Dhaka can likewise explain the process it expects India to follow and the legal steps its own authorities would take if Hasina returned independently. Neither government needs to disclose every diplomatic exchange to give citizens a clear account of the procedure.

The immediate test will come if Hasina establishes a travel date or India takes a formal decision on extradition. Until then, Bangladesh has to manage the political tension at home and families affected by the violence of 2024 are still waiting for a dependable account of responsibility. How the authorities communicate and conduct the next legal steps will matter long after the dispute over her return is settled.

THAILAND | HEAVIER MONSOON RAIN SET TO RETURN TO THE SOUTH

Thailand's Meteorological Department expects rain to intensify in parts of the south from today as the northeast monsoon strengthens. Its outlook through November 29 warns of isolated heavy to very heavy rain. In the lower Gulf of Thailand, waves are forecast to reach around two metres and rise higher in thunderstorms. The outlook follows a brief period of less intense conditions in parts of the region.

The forecast covers a broad area and conditions can differ sharply between neighbouring communities. A town can have a manageable day while a district farther inland receives enough rain to affect roads and drainage. Heavy rain upstream can also raise water levels in places where relatively little has fallen. For residents and businesses, the timing and location of district warnings will matter as much as the outlook for southern Thailand as a whole.

The marine forecast carries particular weight for fishing communities and people using ferries. A wave forecast for the lower Gulf describes conditions across an area. Operators must still judge each crossing against local wind, visibility and sea conditions. A clear notice explaining whether a service is running, delayed or suspended helps passengers avoid unnecessary journeys to a pier.



It also gives hotels and tour operators time to rearrange connections before visitors are on the road.

Travel disruption can have effects well beyond the coast. A ferry cancellation can affect an onward bus or flight. A flooded approach road can keep workers from reaching a hotel even when the building itself remains open.

A district-level update that brings road closures, ferry changes and other transport notices together would give people a better chance of making a workable plan. Each notice should say when it was issued and when officials or operators expect to update it.

For local authorities, the early decisions are often practical. They include checking drainage at roads that regularly flood, making sure emergency vehicles have an alternative route and giving communities time to move supplies or equipment.

Districts with recurrent problems can publish the locations where access tends to be lost and name the office responsible for issuing updates. Residents who know which outlet to check before conditions deteriorate are less dependent on messages passed from person to person.

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

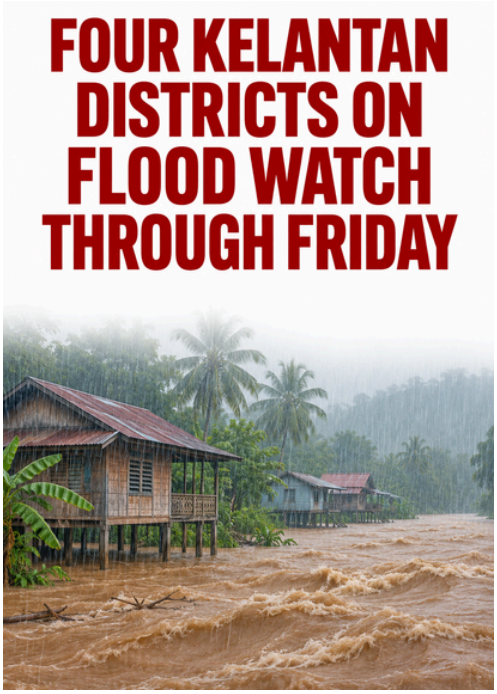
THAILAND...

The department's outlook establishes a period of heightened risk through Sunday. Over the next several days, the reporting to watch will be which districts receive the heaviest rain, how rivers respond and whether coastal operators change schedules. Clear local bulletins, issued early enough for people to act, will determine how useful the broader warning proves.

MALAYSIA | FOUR KELANTAN DISTRICTS ON FLOOD WATCH THROUGH FRIDAY

Malaysia's Department of Irrigation and Drainage has warned that flooding could affect parts of Jeli, Pasir Mas, Tanah Merah and Tumpat in Kelantan through Friday, November 27. The preliminary forecast uses river-basin data to identify low-lying communities and other locations with a history of flooding. Several of the places named lie in the Sungai Golok basin. The department says flooding could occur earlier or later than forecast, depending on rainfall and river conditions.

The distinction between a district warning and a warning for a particular river or village can matter greatly in Kelantan. Two communities within the same district may face different risks because of the height of the land, which way water drains and the roads residents use to get out. A household may still be dry when the road to the market, clinic or main highway is already under water. That makes road access a useful part of any update to residents.



The department will continue to monitor the rivers and issue warnings if heavy rain persists. Its Public InfoBanjir service provides river-level information and flood updates.

Local notices can turn those readings into practical information by naming affected roads, identifying relief centres and giving people a number to call if they need transport. Announcements should distinguish a centre that has been identified for possible use from one that is already open and receiving families.

An early forecast also gives district officials time to check who may need extra help if water rises. Older residents, people with disabilities and families without vehicles may need arrangements before a road becomes impassable. A committee that knows which households will require assistance can organise transport while it still has a choice of routes. For shops and farms, enough notice may allow stock, machinery or animals to be moved before access is cut.

Kelantan's warning is also a reminder of the value of forecasting by river basin. Water can move across administrative boundaries before the worst effects are felt downstream. Agencies working from the same river data can compare conditions across districts and avoid issuing conflicting advice. The approach has relevance for Sri Lanka, where communities along the same river also depend on separate local authorities for roads, drainage and emergency response. A shared reading of what is happening upstream can give each authority more time to act.

The forecast remains preliminary, and the risks will change as observations come in. The most useful updates through Friday will say which rivers are rising, where access has become difficult and what help is available locally. Issuing those details while people can still use them is the practical test of a flood warning.

EUROPE | BRUSSELS ESTIMATES ENERGY EFFICIENCY SAVED €120 BILLION IN FUEL IMPORTS

The European Commission estimates that energy-efficiency measures saved the European Union around €120 billion in oil and gas import costs from Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 to the middle of 2026. The Commission says the savings reflect measures introduced between 2015 and 2021. Europe's exposure to fuel prices during the years that followed gave those earlier measures a financial significance that became clearer once the crisis was under way.

The estimate measures import costs that the Commission calculates Europe avoided. An avoided import bill and a household energy bill are different things.

Individual consumers pay according to their usage, tariffs and contracts, and the benefits of efficiency depend partly on whether they can afford to improve their homes or replace inefficient equipment. An economy that needs less fuel for the same services is still better placed when the international price of oil or gas rises suddenly.

The Commission is also seeking to raise electricity's share of final energy consumption from around 23% to 46% by 2040. The intention is to reduce dependence on fossil fuels by switching more activities to electricity.

The benefits will depend on where the additional power comes from and how efficiently consumers use it. Replacing a fuel-burning heating system with an electric one, for example, changes the source of energy. Improving the building can reduce the amount of energy required in the first place.

Environmental groups have warned that delays to planned efficiency and energy-labelling rules could undermine Europe's strategy. The label on an appliance can help buyers compare two products at the point when they are about to spend their money. A cheaper model can cost more over its useful life if it draws considerably more power. Clear and comparable information matters to households, and it also matters to businesses buying equipment that will run for many hours a day.



Sri Lanka has a more immediate reason to pay attention to the Commission's calculation. Imported fuel has to be paid for in foreign currency, and a rise in its price can put pressure on businesses even before the full effect reaches the consumer.

Hospitals, hotels and factories could identify where electricity or fuel is being wasted, rank changes by the savings they are likely to deliver and begin with improvements that have a measurable payback. The resulting figures would help lenders decide which upgrades are worth financing.

A similar approach could inform public procurement. A department buying air conditioners, pumps or refrigeration equipment can compare purchase prices with expected running costs over the life of the equipment. It can then check actual power use after installation.

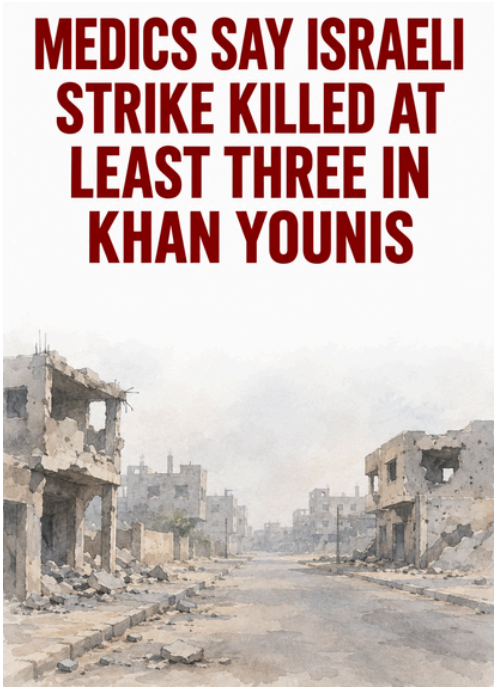
Sri Lanka's estimates would naturally differ from Europe's. The Commission's exercise offers a question Colombo can answer in its own figures. How much could the country save on imported energy by using less of it to provide services it already needs?

NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

PALESTINE | MEDICS SAY ISRAELI STRIKE KILLED AT LEAST THREE NEAR KHAN YOUNIS POLICE POST

An Israeli airstrike killed at least three Palestinians near a police outpost in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday, local health officials said. Medics reported that five others were wounded. The Israeli military had given no immediate comment when the strike was first reported. The initial accounts identified the area where the strike occurred but left open who was targeted and whether the people killed were connected to the outpost.

The strike came more than a year after a US-backed ceasefire took effect in October 2025. The agreement halted major fighting, but lethal attacks have continued. Palestinian and Israeli tallies respectively put the number killed since the truce began at at least 1,600 Palestinians and five Israeli soldiers. Israeli troops now control around two-thirds of the territory, compared with more than half when the agreement began.



The question for people living in Gaza is how the truce operates in the places where they have to move, work or seek help. A reported strike near a police post can leave residents trying to establish whether an adjoining road is open and whether it is safe to return. An ambulance crew may need to know whether it can reach the scene and which route it can use. These questions arise immediately, often before there is a public military account of what happened.

A credible account of the Khan Younis incident will require more than the first casualty figures. Medical staff can report whom they received and what injuries they treated.

A military statement could disclose whether the outpost was the intended target and what prompted the strike. Witness accounts and verified information from the scene could help establish where people were when it occurred.

The location alone leaves considerable uncertainty about the circumstances and the status of those killed or injured.

The ceasefire has also left unresolved the question of Hamas's disarmament. As the parties dispute how to implement the agreement, those involved in mediation can still press for clearer procedures when a deadly incident is reported.

A workable process would identify who receives notifications, how quickly the sides must respond and what information can be released to local residents. A reliable channel for coordinating medical access would address one of the most urgent needs after a strike.

For families in Khan Younis, the immediate concern is to establish who was killed, who is undergoing treatment and whether there is a continuing danger near the site. For the governments involved in the truce, the incident raises a wider question about how recurring violence is examined and addressed. A public account that separates verified facts from claims would give families and mediators a firmer basis for demanding answers.

HORMUZ | BRENT NEARS A THREE-MONTH LOW, BUT THE COST OF SHIPPING REMAINS A CONCERN

Brent crude traded at US$88.97 a barrel early on Tuesday, near a three-month low, as expectations of greater global supply weighed on the market. The price was recorded at 7:17 a.m. Sri Lanka time. It came as Iranian state television relayed a claim by the Revolutionary Guards' navy that three oil tankers had caught fire in the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. Independent confirmation of the tanker claim was unavailable when it was reported.

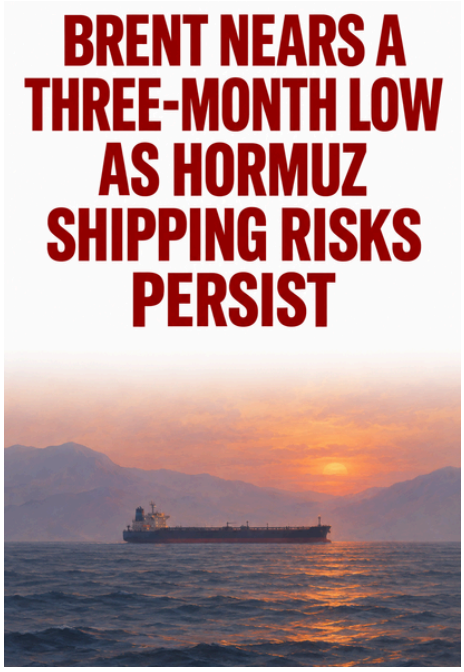
The two developments reflect different pressures on the fuel trade. Traders pricing Brent are looking at how much crude may be available across the world in the weeks ahead. A company booking a tanker has to decide whether it can obtain and insure a particular ship, whether the route is acceptable to its crew and when the cargo can arrive. An increase in global supply can bring down the benchmark price while risk on a particular route keeps the cost of delivery high.

For Sri Lanka, the distinction begins with what the country is buying. A shipment of finished diesel or petrol carries a price linked to the market for that product at the time of purchase. The final cost also takes in freight, insurance and the exchange rate. The timing matters because a shipment arriving this week may have been bought when international prices were higher. A fall in the price quoted on a trading screen can therefore take time to work through to the pump.

Changes in the price of delivered fuel also affect businesses differently. A bus operator may be closely watching the next retail price revision.

An exporter with an order to ship next month needs to know how much transport will cost and whether delivery schedules are dependable. Both are making decisions in rupees while several of the costs ultimately depend on contracts priced in dollars.

The Treasury and fuel importers could make the pricing mechanism easier to follow by publishing the average landed cost used for each price revision, the period it covers and the exchange rate applied. Broad figures for freight and insurance would help explain why local prices can move by a different amount from Brent. Contract-specific information can remain commercially confidential while consumers see which factors are affecting the price they pay.



The immediate question for importers is whether lower crude prices are carrying through to the cargoes they can actually buy and deliver.

For the public, the next fuel price decision will be more meaningful if it comes with enough information to trace the move from the international market to Sri Lanka. At US$88.97 a barrel, Brent gives the country one reason to look for relief.

The cost of getting the fuel here will show how much of that relief is available.



NEWSLINE
Daily by Faraz
"Questioning The Answers"

IRAN | TEHRAN VOWS TO CONFRONT US BLOCKADE AS THE TERMS FOR REOPENING HORMUZ HARDEN

Iran says it will use every means available to confront the United States naval blockade on its oil exports. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei described the blockade on Monday as military aggression and said Iran reserved the right to defend itself. Washington imposed the blockade in April, lifted it in June after reaching a draft understanding with Tehran, and restored it in July after the understanding fell apart.

Tehran says reopening the Strait of Hormuz depends on Washington halting hostilities, lifting the blockade and waiving sanctions. Baghaei also dismissed as speculation reports that Iranian crude was being loaded for export. Visible Iranian crude exports have fallen close to zero in recent months under the blockade. A confirmed shipment would therefore attract close attention, although a single cargo would offer limited evidence about whether regular exports could resume.



The failed opening in June is central to the current dispute. It showed that Washington and Tehran could reach a preliminary understanding and briefly ease restrictions. It also showed how quickly the relief could be reversed.

Any new agreement would need to spell out which measures each side would lift, when those changes would take effect and how each side could establish that the other had complied. Vague commitments are especially difficult for shipowners and insurers to act on when their decisions involve large contracts and the safety of crews.

Baghaei's statement also makes clear that Tehran is treating its oil exports and the passage of other commercial shipping as connected issues in the negotiations. For an importing country, dependable movement through the strait matters even if it buys no Iranian crude. Buyers still need confidence that ships serving other Gulf suppliers can sail on predictable schedules, that companies can secure insurance and that contracts will be honoured.

Countries outside the dispute have an interest in asking for practical steps while the wider negotiations remain unresolved. A dependable channel for reporting incidents at sea, clear notices to commercial operators and agreed procedures for assisting crews in distress would address immediate needs.

Such measures would require cooperation across governments and maritime authorities. They could also give both sides a way to reduce risks to civilian shipping while they continue to disagree over the blockade and sanctions.

The development to watch is whether either government offers a proposal with a sequence the other can accept. An agreement that starts with limited steps should specify what those steps cover and when wider relief becomes available. Importers will judge a diplomatic opening by whether ships can move regularly and contracts can be priced with some confidence. Until that happens, the gap between a government statement and a dependable commercial sailing remains considerable.

UNITED STATES | CONGRESS CALLS IN NVIDIA CHIEF AFTER TRUMP-BACKED RETURN

Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang is due to testify publicly before the US Senate Banking Committee on December 3 after the company's board reinstated him with the backing of President Donald Trump. Republican Senator Tim Scott, the committee's outgoing chairman, announced the hearing. Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren, the incoming chair, has called for an explanation of the administration's role. The decision drew questions from lawmakers in both parties over how it was reached and what it means for oversight of a company central to the artificial intelligence industry.

Trump publicly argued for Huang's return and took credit for the result after Nvidia reversed course. That puts the board's judgement and the administration's intervention before the same committee. Senators can ask directors what led them to reconsider their earlier position and ask the administration to explain what it communicated to the company. Recording those accounts in a public hearing would give shareholders and lawmakers a clearer picture of who was responsible for each decision.

A board appointing a chief executive is accountable to its shareholders for how it weighs the risks and merits of that person's return. An administration responsible for export controls and national security has a different set of obligations. The two can have a legitimate reason to speak, especially in a sector critical to economic and security policy. The hearing can establish where those discussions touched on public policy and where officials sought a particular outcome inside the company.

Nvidia's place in the global industry gives the case a significance beyond its boardroom. Companies building data centres buy its chips to train and run AI systems. Governments are weighing which advanced technologies can be sold abroad and which transactions should come under tighter scrutiny.

A change in policy can affect manufacturers, cloud providers and their customers across several countries. Those businesses have an interest in knowing how rules are set and whether they will be applied consistently.



The committee could begin with a chronology. When did the board first decide against restoring Huang? What information or representations did it subsequently receive? Which officials contacted the company, and in what capacity? What reasons did directors record for their final decision? Huang can account for what he knew and when he knew it. Directors and officials may have to answer separately for discussions in which he took no part.

The hearing's value will depend on how far it moves beyond the political argument over Huang himself. Shareholders have reason to expect directors to explain their decision. Lawmakers have reason to ask how the executive branch uses its influence over companies in strategic sectors. Clear testimony about contacts, decisions and responsibilities would make it possible to judge what happened at Nvidia and how a similar case ought to be handled.

UNITED KINGDOM | BURNHAM SAYS RETURNING TO THE EUROPEAN UNION WOULD REQUIRE A REFERENDUM

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham has told the House of Commons it would be unthinkable for the United Kingdom to rejoin the European Union without a referendum. His statement came after last week's summit with the EU, where the two sides reached a reset agreement covering food and drink checks, emissions trading and youth mobility.

The Government intends to set out options for the longer-term relationship, giving Parliament a fresh debate over how far Britain should go in rebuilding ties with its largest neighbouring market.



"Questioning The Answers"

UNITED KINGDOM...

The practical gains from the agreement will depend on when its provisions begin and who can use them. A British food exporter wants to know whether a consignment still requires the same certificates, how long a border check is likely to take and what happens when rules change. A small producer shipping a handful of orders may feel the fixed cost of paperwork more sharply than a large company sending full truckloads. Dates and instructions will matter more to both than the language used at the summit.

Youth mobility presents its own questions. A scheme can open opportunities for young people to live, work or study abroad, depending on its terms. The practical reach will depend on who is eligible, how long people can stay, what an application costs and whether places are limited. Families, employers and education providers will need those details before they can plan around it.



The emissions-trading agreement concerns businesses whose costs depend on how carbon is priced and accounted for. Firms trading across the Channel will want to know what the arrangement changes about the obligations they face in each market and whether it reduces duplicate work. Companies making long-term decisions about equipment and energy will also need confidence that the rules can be applied on a predictable timetable.

An eventual return to EU membership raises a broader question. It would require terms acceptable to both Britain and the European Union. A British vote would settle whether voters accepted the proposition put to them, while the terms themselves would depend on negotiations. If the Government pursues that route, Parliament will need to see what it intends to negotiate, at what point it would ask voters to decide and which obligations would come with the agreement.

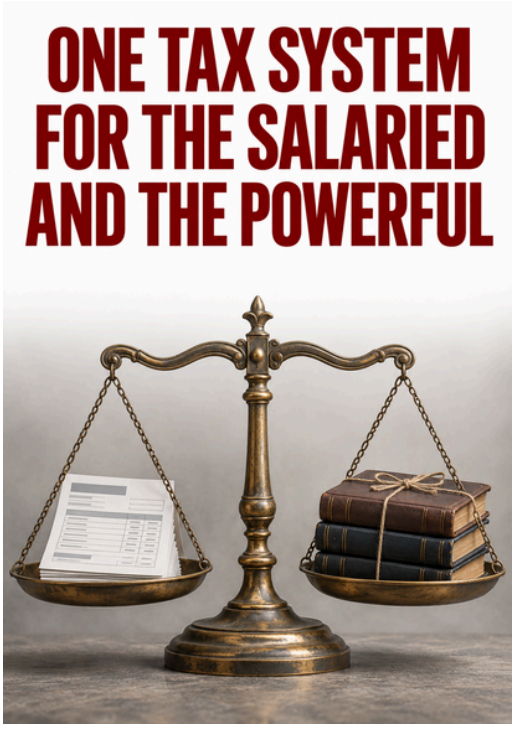
Burnham has given voters an assurance about a decision that would fundamentally change the country's relationship with Europe. The closer deadline belongs to the agreements already reached. The Government can show what they are worth by publishing clear implementation dates and explaining what changes for exporters, young people and regulated firms. A useful public debate about Britain's longer-term choices can then draw on evidence of what closer cooperation has delivered in practice.

EDITORIAL | ONE TAX SYSTEM FOR THE SALARIED AND THE POWERFUL

A salaried worker sees the tax deduction on a payslip before a rupee reaches the bank. An employer reports the income, the deduction is recorded and the worker has little influence over when the money is taken. Earnings from private transactions can be more difficult to establish, especially where payments arrive from several sources.

The Treasury is right to ask how much taxable income Sri Lanka misses because the effort to find it is greater than the effort required to tax a salary.

Be that as it may, a large transaction can have an ordinary explanation. The family that buys a car may have saved for a decade and borrowed the balance. A woman who sells inherited land may use the proceeds to repay a mortgage. A trader may bank substantial takings, most of which will go to suppliers and wages. If Inland Revenue uses bank, Customs and land records to find discrepancies, it must give people a fair chance to explain what those records show before raising an assessment.



The Government should publish the rules in advance. People should know what information the State intends to share, how long it will keep it and what can prompt an inquiry.

When a query is opened, the taxpayer should receive a written explanation, a realistic deadline and a way to submit records without having to visit several offices. The department also needs a straightforward way to correct an error. A name attached to the wrong property or a payment counted twice can be difficult for a citizen to put right once it has travelled through several databases.

Start with cases involving substantial, recurring discrepancies and give investigators the resources to follow them through. A programme that sends thousands of notices can consume time on both sides while collecting very little.

A first round should report how many cases led to additional assessments, how much was actually paid and how often the department corrected or withdrew an assessment.

Those figures would also give Parliament something concrete to examine before the Treasury builds projected receipts into a budget.

The public should also be able to see how the system treats people who have the means to challenge or delay a decision.

A well-connected taxpayer deserves the same safeguards as anyone else and should face the same diligence. A worker assessed in error deserves a review that is affordable in money and time.

Publishing turnaround times for objections and making decisions available in plain language would give both taxpayers and Parliament a way to judge whether that promise holds in practice.

The question for Sri Lanka is whether widening the tax net will make the burden fairer for people who already pay and bring in revenue the State can demonstrate it is owed.

That takes personnel who can investigate difficult cases, clear rules about the records they can use and a credible process for challenging mistakes.

The Treasury should put those commitments before the country alongside its plans to identify more taxpayers.

