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CANADA IS DEEPLY CONCERNED AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SRI LANKA



Canadian Foreign Minister Hon Marc Garneau delivered the following statement on Sri Lanka on February 24, 2021 in his address at the 46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Canada is deeply concerned at the deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka, which include threats to human rights defenders and civil society organizations, suppression of memorialization, forced cremations of religious minorities and the deterioration of the rule of law. The recent report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights highlights the need for this Council to ensure accountability for crimes committed in Sri Lanka. Canada will continue to support measures that will support accountability, reconciliation and

Sri Lanka could descend swiftly back into violence and human rights abuses unless decisive international action is taken, the UN high commissioner for human rights and civil rights groups warned.

In a speech to the human rights council on March 24, Michelle Bachelet is issued a stark warning that the Sri Lankan government has "closed the door" on ending impunity for past

abuses and is facing a return to state repression of civil society and a militarisation of public







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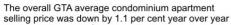


Condo Market Statistics for 2020 4th Quarter

Fourth quarter 2020 condominium apartment sales reported by Greater Toronto Area REALTORS® totalled 6,469 up 20.7 per cent compared to 5,358 in Q4 2019. The number of new listings in Q4 2020 amounted to

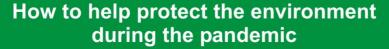
12,298 a 91.9 per cent increase over Q4 2019. Active listings totalling 4,294 at the end of Q4 were more than double that reported at the end of Q4 2019.

"While the prominent storyline has been the strong increase in condo listings over the last 12 months, it is important to point out that the demand for condominium apartments has remained very strong, with sales up substantially compared to 2019. The increase in supply, largely attributed to investor selling as both the traditional and short-term rental markets softened along with the looming possibility of a City of Toronto vacancy tax, resulted in much more choice and bargaining power for buyers and a moderate decline in average selling prices," said Lisa Patel, Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB) President.



selling price was down by 1.1 per cent year over year in the fourth quarter to \$610,044. The average selling price in Toronto, at \$644,516, was down by 2.4 per cent over the same period. Year-over-year price declines were especially evident for smaller units in the City, where investor-driven supply increases were strong.

"TRREB will be releasing its Market Year in Review and 2021 Outlook report at the beginning of February. With this said, we expect the demand for condo apartments to remain strong this year. Once global vaccine uptake is substantial, the exact timing for which remains uncertain, expect a resurgence in immigration and non-permanent migration into the GTA. This will provide continued support for both ownership and rental demand beyond 2021," said Jason Mercer, TRREB's Chief Market Analyst. Source: TRREB



(NC) Since the pandemic arrived in Canada, the use of single-use plastic has increased significantly as people and businesses introduced new measures to stay safe. If you're worried about the environment, check out some easy ways to help while staying safe.

Clean up and clear out

Use all this extra time at home to do a big clean up and clear out. Go through your closets and look for old clothes, household items and toys your family no longer uses. Donate anything in good condition to charities and clear out household hazardous waste including old electronics, paint cans, solvents and even batteries Remove used batteries from all gadgets and household items and recycle them. Since they can't go in your municipal recycling bin due to the special recycling process required, you can drop them off for recycling at a Call2Recycle convenient drop-off location near you.

Just say no

It's important to continue to support local restaurants by ordering takeout. However, if you're eating at home with your family there is no need to accept plastic cutlery, paper napkins or single-serve condiments. To cut down

on needless waste, when you place your order let the restaurant know you don't need anything other than the food

Repair instead of replace

With social engagements curbed and working from home common, many of us have considerably more free time on our hands. Use this extra time to repair items that you would normally replace. This could include replacing a zipper, mending a hole or fixing a broken item in your home. By repairing instead of replacing, you'll be contributing to the circular economy while saving money, too.



Cook smart

Household food waste has a significant impact on the environment. With many after-school activities cancelled, there's no longer the rush to get dinner on the table. Plan meals based on food that needs eating first. Look for perishables that have been in the fridge for a few days and experiment with new recipes based on canned and boxed food items that may have been in your pantry for longer than a few months. Find a battery collection location near you at call 2 recycle.ca/locator.

R eal Estate page compiled by Charles Devasagayam









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Sri Lanka's Desperate Damage Control Exercise To Degrade Draft UNHRC Resolution

by THAMBU KANAGASABAI

Recently. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa appointed a three man Commission to study and find out if any human rights violations have been revealed in the Lesson Learnt and Reconciliation Commission [LLRC] Paranagama and Udalagama Commissions by ignoring and rejecting the several Reports of the UN Special Rapporteurs including United Nations Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon's Report which detailed comprehensive human rights violations.

However, Sri Lanka has amply demonstrated its defiance to not to implement the Recommendations contained in the 30/1, 34/1 and 40/1 UNHRC Resolutions.

In response Sri Lanka adopted the usual and convenient tactics of requesting extensions and obtaining them easily with the support of UNHRC member countries but Sri Lanka has thereby successfully achieved its goals by keeping the Resolutions in vacuum and at bay for the last five years.

Now it has dealt the final blow by informing its withdrawals and rejections of those Recommendations and Resolutions

describing them as external interference on Sri Lanka's sovereignty and integrity though they were also the cosponsors of those Resolutions.

UNHRC High Commissioner for Human Rights Michalle Bachelet's leaked report which could be submitted in the forthcoming UNHRC 46th Session in March 2021 is forthright, frank and has exposed the tantrums and gimmicks of Sri Lanka enabling it to discard, ignore and finally reject those Resolutions with contempt while challenging the credibility, status and strength of the prestigious UN body UNHRC among the World of Nations.

UNHRC High Commissioner for Human Right's proposed draft Resolution has brought Sri Lanka down to its knees and has sent shivers and panic. As a result, it is now busy scrambling and searching for futile damage control exercises which could be laced with empty pledges and promises as before including face saving measures like the recent three man Presidential Commission hurriedly assembled by a panicky President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

This eye washing Commission is mandated "To find out whether Presidential Commissions of inquiry and Committees which have been appointed to investigate human rights violations have revealed any human rights violations of international law and other such serious offences".

It is learnt that LLRC appointed in 2011, and Udalgama and Paranagama Commissions appointed in 2014 to look into enforced disappearances would fall within the "Search and reveal for any human rights violations". It is to be noted that said Commissioner's Reports will be retrieved from the archives for this purpose.

It is a palpable truth that human rights violations are entrenched in the politics of Sri Lanka which was



inaugurated in 1948 by late Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake and continues unabated with some respites at occasional periods. So far more than 15 State Commissions have been appointed since 1977 starting with the Sansoni Commission with a majority of them dealing with human rights violations committed against the Tamils including Tamils of Indian Origin.

The mandate itself is hollow and farcical which targets to confirm the positions that so far no human rights violations have occurred in Sri Lanka. As such the Commission is attempting to scan some of the state appointed commissioners' Reports for search and possibly reveal if any human rights violations have been reported by the Commissioners.

In this respect, the several graphic pictures of extra judicial killings by security forces photographed by Sri Lankan soldiers and given for publications by Channel 4 TV in United Kingdom provide on the spot and direct evidence including rape and murders of Isaipriya and others by the soldiers who were seen gleefully enjoying the cruel and inhuman treatment of captured Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LITTE] cadres who were stripped and naked.

The Commission appointed by the President is nothing but a mockery of justice and travesty of accountability aiming to hoodwink the United Nations, UNHRC at its worst level. The shallowness and hollowness of this Commission can be seen when one considers the timing and motivation.

It is crystal clear that if not for the UNHRC High Commissioner's harsher and punitive measures recommended in the draft Resolution, the President would not have even dreamt of appointing the latest or any Commission to deal with human rights violations as Rajapakaas' position right from the end of the war in 2009 has been outright denial of any commission of war crimes etc. even the killing of a single civilian during the genocidal war from 2006 2009. Furthermore the members of the appointed Commission are of questionable reputation and standing. One member is the retired Inspector General of Police Chandra Fernando who carries the dubious reputation and name as an officer who extolled and justified torture to detainees as far for him it was the only method available to extract involuntary confessions from the detainees.

In addition, the ulterior motive behind the appointment of the Commission is to shield the several alleged war crimes accused and protect them from prosecution for the alleged war crimes etc. In short, the Commission is empowered and bound to recommend exculpatory measures. In the end. all suspects and those involved in the alleged commissions of war crimes etc. would be finally sheltered under Sri Lanka's historical entrenched culture of impunity.

In this respect, International Commission of Jurists and Human Rights Watch's comments on the Commission are as follows:

"It is a travesty of justice and attention to deflect robust action. [ICJ 26th January 2021] while Human Rights Watch commented that "It is a dangerous attempt to avert urgently needed international action".

In short, they have aptly described the hollow credibility of this Commission.

Therefore, there is no iota of doubt that this Commission will perform its functions as guided and controlled and the expectations would be the solidification and continuance of entrenched culture of impunity for alleged war criminals while throwing the basic pillars of democracy, accountability, justice and rule of law to no man's land and deserting the victims of war to languish and abandoning them to live in limbo.

It is therefore of paramount and crucial importance for the United Nations, UNHRC and the International Community to rise to this serious occasion and exercise their powers and authority and rein in Sri Lanka to behave as a respected UN member while halting the hoodwinking and contemptuous defiant postures and daringly challenging the role, strength and credibility of respected world bodies United Na\ions and UN Human Rights Council.

The irony of this commission is that it includes a member who is alleged to have committed human rights violations while he was entrusted to investigate detainees and was alleged to have inflicted torture and also facing allegations of extra judicial killings and enforced disappearances. In this respect this member has donned the role of an accused functioning as judge and jury.

It is learnt that a consensus Resolution is being prepared by some UNHRC Members which is actively supported by Sri Lanka. A would be diluted consensus Resolution if adopted would favour Sri Lanka which will not hesitate to exploit its delay and discard the UNHRC Recommendations while crowning human rights violations in Sri Lanka firmly rooted as a permanent political weapon against minorities and others opposing the Government.

*Thambu Kanagasabai LLM [London] Former Lecturer in Law, University of Colombo Sri Lanka

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Unauthorized credit or debit transactions can happen to anyone

(NC) More of us are using our credit and debit cards to make purchases as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. But with incidences of fraud increasing as well, it's important that you understand your rights if someone uses your card without your permission.

You also have certain responsibilities to make sure you are protected, including taking reasonable care to keep your account and PIN safe. Here are three things to keep in mind:

Protect your PIN

Keep your PIN secret. Never share it with anyone, even a family member or your caregiver. This means you cannot share your PIN with your spouse even if you have a joint account. Do not use a PIN that someone can easily guess, such as a birthday or telephone number, or keep it written down on the back of your card or on a piece of paper in your wallet. It's also a good idea to change your PIN from time to time.

Report unauthorized use of your card right away

If your card is lost or stolen or you become aware of an unauthorized transaction, let your financial institution know right away. It's a good practice to regularly review your credit and debit card statements to check for any transaction you didn't make. Your credit card or debit agreement will tell you if you have to report the unauthorized transaction within a specific amount of time.

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Your right to an investigation

Even if the chip and PIN were used, your financial intuition cannot automatically hold you liable for the transaction until they complete an investigation. During its investigation, the financial institution should consider all factors that contributed to the unauthorized use of your credit or debit card account. It's important that you work with your financial institution to ensure a positive outcome.

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada provides unbiased and fact-based information you can count on. You can learn more about how to protect yourself from unauthorized transactions at canada.ca/money

Experts say knowing six neighbours can reduce loneliness

(NC) Can you remember the days when you knew everyone on your street? Or when you would turn to a neighbour to borrow a cup of sugar or to water your plants?

According to a new study, knowing as few as six neighbours reduces loneliness and is linked to lowering depression, social anxiety, and financial concerns related to COVID-19.

The study, which was conducted in partnership with a team of leading mental health experts, also found that performing small acts of kindness for neighbours reduced the likelihood of feeling lonely.

Looking for ways to safely get involved in your neighbourhood? Here are a few ways to get started:

1. Introduce yourself to your neighbours, digitally.

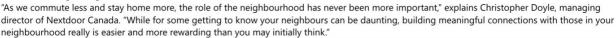
Join a neighbourhood platform like Nextdoor, the neighbourhood app, to connect with the people and places near you. Start with a simple introduction or join a group to build connections with neighbours who share similar interests.

2. Check in with neighbours, from a distance or virtually.

See if your neighbours, particularly the vulnerable or elderly, need any help. Consider picking up groceries for them next time you head to the store or helping them with work in the vard.

3. Contribute to your local culture and businesses

Whether you're ordering in from your local pizza place or writing a positive review for a nearby business -- support the businesses in your community that may be suffering during this difficult time.



2021 trends people are talking about

(NC) Every year new or improved ways of taking care of ourselves become popular. Chances are you may have heard of self-care or yoga, whether you've tried it or not. Here are few of the themes making a splash in health and wellness in 2021.

Gym comes home

After years of enjoying the studio experience for activities like spin class, at-home gyms and workout routines are a top trend this year. Spending more time at home due to the pandemic is helping people get creative about getting active.

Self-care as community care

Another lesson brought home by the pandemic was our need for community. There's more understanding now that taking care of ourselves includes connecting with the people we care about. We can all lift each other's spirits, even if that means meeting up online or connecting through a phone call.

Cannahis moves into the mainstream

In 2021, you can expect more discussion of once-taboo topics such as recreational cannabis use, due to its legal status. Cannabis producers are now creating products that aim to focus on the users' well-being, with a focus on CBD and strains to help tailor your experience.

If you're buying cannabis or cannabis products, remember that legal cannabis products are only sold through retailers authorized by your provincial or territorial government. For products with THC, look for the excise stamp on the package. The stamp guarantees the product was produced by a federally authorized licensed producer, which ensures the highest health and safety standards, and that the product has accurate THC levels and is free from other harmful substances.



Legal cannabis products will also include risk of use information. If a website claims they ship anywhere in Canada, it is an illegal vendor and your shipment could be seized. Find more information on how to identify legal cannabis products, including online retailers in your province or territory at Canada.ca/cannabis.



How safe is that online shop? 3 questions to ask

(NC) Shopping online is an easy and convenient way to get the items we need, especially as we go through the pandemic. But it's important to look out for fraudulent sellers to keep your personal information safe.

Whether you're an online shopping pro or are newer to the game, here are some key questions to ask before you press purchase.

1. Is this website secure?

When you share financial information like your credit card details with an online seller, make sure the web address includes "https://". You can also look for a locked padlock symbol.

2. Is this website legal?

When it comes to specialty products like cannabis, there are ways to check if the site is legal and the products sold are safe to consume. Beware of websites asking for e-transfer or cryptocurrency payments, and if the website states that they ship anywhere in Canada, that is an illegal vendor and your shipment may be seized.

3. Is it too good to be true?

As always, if you see a deal way too good to be true, take another look. Chances are you'll find some red flags. If there's no way anyone would sell the product that cheaply they probably aren't.

Taken together, these questions outline key tips for spotting a fraudulent shopping outlet.

Find more information on how to identify legal cannabis products, including online retailers in your province or territory, at Canada.ca/cannabis.



(NC) Making a healthy dinner every night can be tiring and tedious, and living with arthritis and other illnesses can make it much worse.

Here are six tips from the Arthritis Society to make mealtime easier.

1. Preparation

Before you begin cooking, organize your workspace and make sure you have all the items and ingredients you will need close by.

2. One pot or pan

Making your meal in one pot or pan will reduce the number of dishes you have to wash. Those that can be placed in the dishwasher (if you have one) are an added bonus.

3. Pre-cut fruit and vegetables

Today, there are plenty of options when it comes to fresh and frozen pre-cut fruits and vegetables. Removing the steps of washing, peeling and chopping can help you save time and energy.

4. Helpful kitchen gadgets

There are many kitchen gadgets on the market that are specifically designed for people living with arthritis.

5. Batch cooking

Make many servings at a time, then store them in individual containers to help you save energy and eat healthy. By preparing meals only once, you'll prevent any unnecessary overexertion.

6. Try a new recipe

Make meal preparation something to look forward to by using it as an opportunity to try a new recipe or experience a new food.

Learn how to live well with arthritis and find healthy recipes at arthritis.ca.

5 ways you can manage pain without drugs

(NC) For anyone living with a chronic condition, medication can make a world of difference to ease your symptoms. But according to the Arthritis Society, there's also a lot you can do to manage pain without drugs.

1. Physical activity

Regular physical activity can help relieve arthritis symptoms, reduce pain, and improve your overall health. Exercise can also strengthen your muscles, which is crucial to supporting your joints. Stay as active as your health allows. Some physical activity is always better than none.

2. Meditation

While meditation can't take away pain, research shows it can help you approach and manage it in a healthy way.

3. Heat and cold therapy

The use of gentle heat may help relax muscles and stimulate circulation, thereby decreasing pain. Cold therapy in the form of frozen gel packs or ice can reduce inflammation and swelling during a flareup. After using heat or cold, gently move the arthritic joint to reduce stiffness.

4. Rest

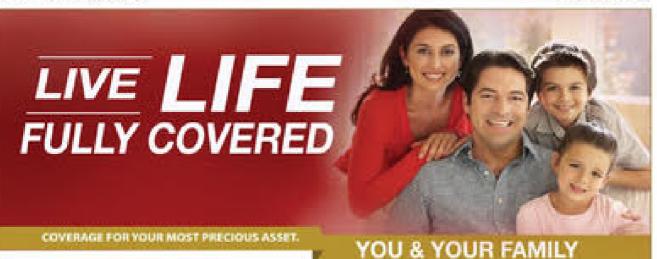
While physical activity can be beneficial, listening to your body and resting when you notice pain, swelling or increased heat around an affected joint can reduce the length of a flareup.

5. Massage therapy and acupuncture

These treatments are helpful for some people. Consult your physician before trying them for yourself and use a registered practitioner if you do. Find more ideas at arthritis.ca.



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business group. The members are extremely supportive and welcoming. Their events are fun and educational. In my 20 years of business I have experienced many business groups. This one is different. I highly recommend it. - Angele Baltkeis

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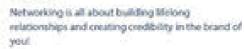


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UNHCR office will support judicial proceedings against Sri Lankan perpetrators in other countries - Bachelet



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has vowed to support judicial proceedings in other countries against perpetrators of grave human rights violations in Sri Lanka, after the Government had effectively 'closed the door' to achieving justice locally for alleged war time abuses.

High Commissioner Bachelet said In her statement to the 46th Session of the UN Human Rights Council on Feb 24th, 2021, her office would support judicial measures in outside jurisdictions because the Sri Lankan Government had "closed the door" to justice for grave rights abuses nationally.

"By repeatedly failing to advance accountability for past human rights violations committed, and by withdrawing its support for the Council's resolution 30/1 and related measures, the Government has largely closed the door on the possibility of genuine progress to end impunity through a national process," the UN Rights Chief told the 47-member Council.

In her report to the Council released on 9 February, Bachelet called on member states of the UN to pursue justice against Sri Lankan perpetrators of human rights violations by using universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction to provide redress to victims of abuses during Sri Lanka's brutal civil war. The Government of Sri Lanka has rejected the High Commissioner's

In a landmark ruling earlier this year a top German court ruled that foreign military officials can be tried for war crimes in Germany. Last year, a German court convicted a Tamil accused of conspiring to kill former Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar by tipping the LTTE off to the Minister's whereabouts.

The High Commissioner reiterated her call that there were clear warning signs that past patterns of violations could recur in Sri Lanka. "The Government of Sri Lanka had obstructed investigations and judicial proceedings into emblematic human rights cases," she asserted.

Bachelet also criticised the latest Commission of Inquiry appointed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to review the findings of previous commissions, saying it promised to repeat the cycle of Government obstruction and failure to credibly pursue truth and justice.

Bachelet, a former President of Chile and survivor of torture under the regime of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, reiterated her call for the Council to support a dedicated capacity to collect and preserve evidence and information for future accountability.

The draft resolution on Sri Lanka submitted to the UNHRC secretariat on Feb 22 by the United Kingdom, already includes a call for a mechanism led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to 'collect, preserve and analyse' evidence pertaining to violations in Sri Lanka. The recommendation follows mounting fears that evidence collected by investigators who probed crimes the UN has called 'emblematic cases' could be suppressed or destroyed.

Bachelet said that "This is a key juncture for the Council's engagement with Sri Lanka"

Like its predecessor, the current Government had failed to pursue genuine truth-seeking or accountability processes.

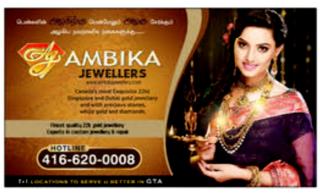
Bachelet also said that "The impact on thousands of survivors, from all communities, is devastating. Moreover, the systems, structures, policies and personnel that gave rise to such grave violations in the past remain and have recently been reinforced."

Mean time, addressing the UN Human Rights Council for the first time since its exit in 2018, the US on Feb 24th urged member states of the Council to back a resolution on Sri Lanka

to address the lack of accountability for past atrocities in the island.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the 46th Session of the UNHRC currently underway that the US was "placing democracy and human rights at the centre" of its foreign policy.

"We encourage the Council to support resolutions at this session addressing issues of concern around the world, including ongoing human rights violations in Syria and North Korea, the lack of accountability for past atrocities in Sri Lanka, and the need for further investigation into the situation in South Sudan," the US Secretary of State said. "I'm here to reaffirm America's commitment to respect and defend the human rights of all people, everywhere," Blinken said in a speech that took a hard-line against authoritarianism and impunity for human rights abuses.



"There is no moral equivalence between the actions of the United States, which are subject to robust, impartial, and transparent accountability mechanisms and those of authoritarian regimes, which violate and abuse human rights with impunity."

Blinken said that those who hide under the mantle of promoting economic development while seeking to undermine human rights will be held to account, including for their own human rights violations.

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