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'Sri Lanka all but a Chinese colony': CBK



"Sri Lanka has all but become a colony of China..." said **Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga**, former President of Sri Lanka. In the mean time "trade unionists and others who vehemently opposed a recent deal with India haven't said a word in protest", she further said.

The parties that opposed the Indian deal are keeping mum about every national asset allegedly being handed over to China, the former president said marking the death anniversary of her husband Vijaya kumarathunga. Kumaratunga may be referring to the now-scrapped plan to hand over a minority stake in the Eastern Container Terminal (ECT) of the Colombo Port to a firm in India. She further said that "Each administration keeps undermining the one that preceded it.

This is no way forward for this country. The people must change first. To change the people, the education system must be overhauled. We also need political leaders of a different calibre: young, educated, not given to corruption – people who do not treat politics as a business opportunity." "They don't all need to be educated either. We just need people who are willing to serve the country with integrity and go after two terms," she said. "I take a step every day. I don't know if it is to save the country, but I have no intention of stepping back," said Kumarathunga when asked if she will step forward to save the country.

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3 THINGS TO CHECK BEFORE BUYING OR SELLING A HOME

(NC) Buying or selling a home is an exciting step in anyone's life. But there's no denying it's a major undertaking. Here are three key things to remember whether you're buying or selling.

1. Consider your wants and needs

Before you buy or sell, it's important to think about what you value and what you want versus what you need. For example, is a big backyard a dealbreaker for you? Or, would you be okay with a tiny outdoor space if you found the right home? If you're selling, is it the price that matters the most? Or is a short closing that puts money in your hand faster more important?



2. Interview your agent

Everyone knows someone who knows a real estate agent. It can be tempting to make a quick choice and go with that friend of the family or in-law. While they could be the right person in the end, it's important to interview at least a couple of different agents to find the right fit. Real estate agents often have different specialties or mindsets and approaches that may or may not click with you. By having a chat with a few people, you'll know you're setting up a successful partnership.

3. Test for radon

Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from uranium in the ground that can get into your home undetected. All homes have some level of radon. However, long-term exposure to elevated levels increases your risk of developing lung cancer in fact, it's the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

If you're selling your home, reassure buyers about radon levels. And if you're buying, it's a good idea to do radon testing as well as your standard home inspection. You can purchase an easy do-it-yourself radon test kit or hire a certified professional. Costs to fix high radon levels are comparable to updating your furnace or air conditioner.

Find more information at canada.ca/radon

SPRING CLEANING: TIPS FOR SAFE USE OF HOUSEHOLD CHEMICAL PRODUCTS

(NC) As the days get noticeably longer and milder, we emerge from winter hibernation and giving our home a good spring cleaning suddenly appears on the to-do list. Household cleaning chemicals can have an important role in keeping kitchens and bathrooms clean. However, if they're not used safely, they can find their way beyond the kitchen or bathroom walls, posing a risk to your health and those around you. By following these tips, you can keep you and your family safe when you tackle household chores.

1. Carefully read the product label.

Is there a hazard symbol on the label? If there is, be sure you understand what it means and carefully follow the warnings.

2. Use chemicals carefully.

All that fine print under "directions for use" in household chemical products is there for a good reason. It explains how to use the product safely.

3. Let the fresh air in.

Ensure proper ventilation by opening windows or doors and running exhaust fans during and after cleaning.

4. Don't mix chemical products.

Never mix household chemical products together. Some mixtures can produce harmful gases. Bleach products should never be mixed with other cleaning products.

5. Store household chemicals safely.

Keep all household chemical products in their original containers, safely stored where children cannot see or reach them. Try not to store products that may release harmful fumes or catch fire inside your home. These items include solvents, gasoline, fuels or varnishes. Store them according to the instructions on the product's label in a separate building if you can, or in an area that is well vented to the outside.



6. Dispose products properly.

Check your city or town's guidelines for instructions on how to dispose of hazardous household waste. As well, check the label for disposal directions. Don't pour unused chemical products down the drain or burn or bury them.

Find more information on keeping a healthy home at canada.ca/healthy-home.

Real Estate page compiled by Charles Devasagayam

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UNHRC 46th session – Judgement day for Sri Lanka and its War Victims

THAMBU KANAGASABAI

Thambu Kanagasabai The forthcoming 46th UNHRC Sessions in February/March 2021 holds the key to uphold accountability, justice and human rights in Sri Lanka while halting Sri Lanka's history of evasions and denials of its obligations to comply with and implement the recommendations in the 30/1 of 2015 and 40/1 of 2019 Resolutions. It has so far successfully resorted to devalue and delay the implementation hoping that the recommendations would become stale and pale with the passage of time.

The present dynastic rule of Rajapakshas who are the architects of alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity etc. has declared their rejection and withdrawal from these Resolutions hoping that this move would provide the shield to shut out culpability and provide the impunity for the alleged commission of those war crimes, crimes against humanity etc. by the Sri Lankan security forces while functioning as Commanders of the genocidal war from 2006-2009.

Their Command Responsibility is unshakable and unassailable as there is no impunity for those crimes in the books of International Human Rights Law or in the Charters of UN or UNHRC who are the protectors of human rights whenever and wherever they are defied and breached. In this respect, their steps to investigate allegations of human rights violations in Sudan, Israel, Cambodia, Myanmar, Kosovo and East Tumor are laudable.

The Government run by Rajapakshas clan by their conduct during the 'KILL ALL' genocidal war from 2006-2009 has dealt striking blows to the sustainment of human rights and its enjoyment by a citizen wherever he lives. The present Government has now dismissed the UNHRC and its Recommendations with contempt and arrogance while creating a dangerous precedent for other rogue nations to indulge in committing human rights violations without accountability.

It therefore befalls on the UNHRC, UN and International Community to take cognisance of Sri Lanka's high handed and deplorable steps and initiate appropriate measures to rein in Sri Lanka to behave as a responsible member of the United Nations and comply with its provisions and implement its commitments as pledged.

In this respect, UNHRC shoulders the responsibility to pass a further Resolution in the forthcoming UNHRC 46th Session not only for a dressing down of Sri Lanka but above all to ensure and fortify the application of human rights, accountability, justice and rule of law among the United Nations and UNHRC members. There is no inkling of doubt that Sri Lanka's daring and contemptuous attitude needs to be addressed by the UNHRC in a fitting and stronger manner. It becomes therefore absolutely necessary to pass a Resolution against Sri Lanka not merely to show the correct path to Sri Lanka to treat all its citizen equally without any discrimination based on race, language and religion. The following dismal record of Sri Lanka in this respect particularly with its discriminatory treatment of minorities, Tamils and Muslims has to be reversed and remedied by a strong and punitive



UNHRC Resolution. Viewing the open challenge made by the Foreign Minister directed against the UNHRC and the Tamil political parties by stating that UNHRC Resolutions are already dead and no more valid and Sri Lanka cannot be threatened by anyone, it is all the more imperative for the UNHRC and United Nations to act decisively and firmly against Sri Lanka by passing a Resolution requesting United Nations and Security Council to consider the following measures against Sri Lanka, not only to uphold accountability and justice for the war victims but to fortify, preserve and entrench the enjoyment, sustainment and enforcement of human rights among nations which have subscribed to the United Nations and UNHRC Charters.

It is therefore suggested that UNHRC considers the following recommendations in its final Resolution without granting any further extension to Sri Lanka as Sri Lanka has flatly and squarely declared its refusal and rejection of the UNHRC's role and its Resolutions. Setting up of an Independent International Investigation by the United Nations.

Referring Sri Lanka to International Criminal Court by the UN Security Council: Recommending the application of Universal Jurisdiction and Magnitsky sanctions by countries which have subscribed to it.

Individual countries and or groups of countries like European Union, African Union to consider taking economic/diplomatic and political sanctions. Initiating an international mechanism through an United Nations office in the North and East of Sri Lanka to monitor the Human Rights practice of the Government and its Security Forces.

Very strong measures have thus become urgent and necessary due to serious human rights violations that have been unleashed recently against the minorities, Tamils and Muslims. Government initiated forced land seizure by Security Forces in the North and East are being carried out overtly and covertly to expedite the agenda of SINHALISISATION AND BUDDHISISATION.

Recently the Muslims have been denied their basic religious rights and the practice of burial of the dead and ordered to cremate their dead by legislation which is a violation of UN Charter and Human Rights Law.

Sri Lanka is thus, claiming the first and only country to be ranked in the world to prohibit a religious practice by law and insulting the Muslims and their religion practiced all over the world by about 1.8 billion or 24% of the world population.

Sri Lanka's record of human rights violations, Commissions of war crimes and crimes against humanity etc.

which amount to genocide is an open book reported and recorded by United Nations, UNHRC, Human Rights Organizations and Human Rights Activists all over the world.

Therefore an urgent action is needed by the co-members of the UNHRC and the Core-sponsors of UNHRC Resolutions 30/1 of 2015 and 40/1 of 2019, particularly United Kingdom who is the bastion of human rights to right the historical wrongs and deliver the deserving punishment for the violators of human rights and provide the solace, relief, remedies and justice to the victims of genocidal killings and human rights violations which commenced from 1956 pogrom against the Tamils and is still continuing under a dynastic and dictatorial rule.

It has to be stated that China's open declaration of support and its promise to protect Sri Lanka in any international bodies like the United Nations and UNHRC has emboldened Sri Lanka and it will be foolhardy to expect Sri Lanka to deliver justice and accountability for the affected war victims. In this respect, it is relevant to quote the United Kingdom's Shadow Minister for Asia Hon. Stephen Kinnock who in his letter to his Government expressed and warned about the alarming threats to democratic governance, rule of law and human rights and has asked for applying MAGNITSKY sanctions against Sri Lanka's human rights violations. Thambu Kanagasabai, LL.M London, Former Lecturer in Law, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. President, Tamil Canadian Elders for Human Rights Org.

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Pandemic making us more comfortable talking about mental health

(NC) At a time when COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on so many lives, its impact on mental health is well documented, and many of us are starting to talk about it more.

In fact, Canadians are now increasingly likely to disclose a mental illness, with three quarters indicating they would either comfortably or reluctantly disclose it, according to a recent survey from RBC Insurance. The survey also shows that half of us view depression and anxiety as a disability.

However, the findings reveal that having personal experience with disability plays an important role. Those who have taken time off for a disability whether for themselves or for someone they know are more likely to feel completely comfortable admitting to mental health struggles. However, among those who have no personal experience with disability at all, this number drops.

"Canadians who have seen the impact that disabilities can have on the lives of those around them better understand the seriousness of mental illness, and the fact that they are more willing to communicate openly will hopefully set a positive example for others moving forward," says Maria Winslow, senior director of life and health at RBC Insurance.

A personal history with mental health also affects attitudes about disability insurance, which provides money that can replace lost income if someone needs to take time off.

Furthermore, a quarter of respondents agree that buying personal disability coverage is more important to them since the pandemic, while one in five say they are more likely to purchase coverage that can protect them from the risk of financial hardship.

Early intervention is critical when dealing with mental illnesses so check with your benefits provider for programs that offer rapid access to psychologists, and options for telemedicine or digital tools that can be used from the privacy and comfort of home.



3 tips to stay healthy while staying at home

(NC) More and more of us are spending increased time at home to stop the spread of COVID-19. It's the right choice, but it also has it downsides.

That's especially true when it comes to maintaining healthy habits. It can be all too easy to grab the junk food snacks or sit in one place all day. Here are three simple tips to help you be healthy.

Stay active keep moving.

We all know this one, but it's important. There are countless online workouts and yoga classes to try for free or by subscription, but you can also dance while cooking or doing the dishes, take jumping jack breaks, or go for a walk to mark the end of your workday. Every move counts, and so try to bring the fun into everyday activities.

Make sure your home is safe test for radon

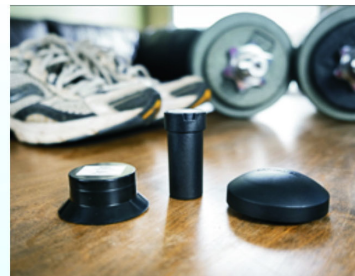
Radon is a radioactive gas that's in all our homes. If your home has high levels of radon, all the time you're spending at home these days could be increasing your exposure and your risk of lung cancer. Long-term exposure to elevated levels of radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

The only way to know the radon levels in your home is to test. You can buy an inexpensive DIY kit or have a professional come in and do the test for you.

Get the right set up ease your pain

Whatever your workspace looks like, making it ergonomic is crucial. It'll save you a lot of neck and back pain or discomfort, eye strain and visits to chiropractors. You can purchase a dedicated standing desk or the latest supportive office chair, but if you want to save some cash or you feel like a project, head to YouTube for some DIY tutorials. If you've been doing online shopping, hang on to some of those boxes and try making a foot stool or computer riser.

Find more information about radon testing at takeactiononradon.ca



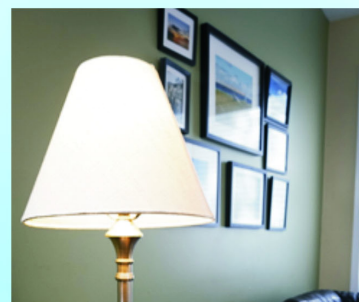
Why you need to test your home's radon levels

(NC) The COVID-19 pandemic is shaping our lives in countless ways. For many of us, it's meant spending more time at home this past year than ever before.

Even as we stay inside to keep ourselves and our family safe from COVID, clocking so many hours at home means we may be unwittingly exposing ourselves to another danger: radon gas.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that comes from uranium in the ground. You can't see it or smell it, but it's there. Whether your home is newly built or has been around for centuries it has some radon gas in it, the question is how much?

Long-term exposure to high levels of radon gas increases your risk of developing lung cancer. In fact, it's the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, and in Canada it's estimated that more than 3000 deaths a year are from radon-induced lung cancer.



When should you start your child's RESP savings account?

(NC) As a parent, if you're simply focused on getting through this strange and challenging school year, you're not alone. But while virtual and modified in-person classes may take up a lot of headspace, neglecting long-term plans is a costly mistake. This includes post-secondary planning.

When it comes to making sure your child has a solid education that doesn't put them into a ton of debt, starting early with their Registered Education Savings Plan is the best option. Here, Ryan Weiss, vice-president, group customer product and experience, for Canada Life, explains why it's important to make an RESP a priority now:

1. Access to free money.

Only available through an RESP, the Canadian education savings grant kicks in a 20% matching contribution, equal to \$1 for every \$5 you put in, for up to \$500 a year to a maximum of \$7,200.

If money is tight, the Canada Learning Bond, aimed at lower-income families, provides an initial \$500 lump sum just for opening an RESP - no contributions needed. You might also qualify for a provincial grant.

2. Every little bit adds up.

If you can save \$50 a month in an RESP, over 18 years that equals \$10,800. Even \$5 a week can quickly add up, especially when the Government of Canada adds money to your savings. The best part? Grants, bonds and any investment income grow tax-free until withdrawn as education payments, which are taxable to the student. Since students often have low or no other income, these payments could even be tax-free.

3. Prepare for an unpredictable future.

COVID-19 is proof that life is uncertain. If you're banking on your teen working for the summer to save up for school, consider the challenges of this past year that saw many student-level jobs cut. Putting aside money now will help take care of the surprises later.

4. It's easier than you may think.

Thanks to online banking, you can do anything from paying bills to renewing your mortgage online. Now, when a company offers a Canada Life RESP in their employee benefits plan, those employees can open an RESP as easily as setting up an online bill payment, without touching pen to paper.



3 things parents should teach their kids about money

(NC) Parents have a key role to play in teaching their kids about money and helping them develop good money habits early. Knowledge, skills and confidence when managing money will help young people throughout their life and will contribute to stronger financial well-being as adults.

When your kids reach their teen years, focusing on money matters becomes even more important. Here are a few things you can teach them:

1. Sending and accepting money transfers

Treat e-transfers like cash, because they cannot be cancelled once they have been deposited. When sending an e-transfer, your teen should make sure to:

- send money only to someone they know and trust, because some scammers may try to get money by e-transfer in exchange for goods, services, or a prize;
- choose a security answer that someone cannot easily guess;
- safely share the answer with the recipient. This means do not share it in the email notification message.

2. The importance of protecting personal financial information

It may be tempting for your teen to download and use a third-party fintech app to help manage their finances like their student budget, get rewards or check their credit score. Here are some general principles you can share with them.

It's their responsibility to keep their personal financial information confidential. Sharing personal financial information could mean that no matter what security features the app has in place, the financial institution may hold them responsible for any losses resulting from unauthorized transactions.

3. The importance of reading bank account agreements

Bank account agreements contain important information, such as fees for certain types of transactions and the steps that your teen must take to protect themselves from unauthorized use of their account. For example, it's important that your teen read their bank account agreement to know what fees are associated with each type of transaction, such as e-transfers.

As young people enter new life stages, the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada provides unbiased and fact-based information you can count on at canada.ca/money.



3 smart things to do with your tax refund

(NC) Tax season is here, and many of us will be getting some money back. Perhaps one of the most important findings from new Financial Consumer Agency of Canada research is that by doing small things today, you can significantly improve your long-term financial situation, regardless of your income.

Here are three small steps you can take with your refund in 2021.

Pay off your debt

Use your tax refund to help pay off your debts. There are different strategies for paying down debt. The most common is to pay off debts with high interest rates first, in order to pay less interest in the long run and become debt free sooner. But you could also choose to pay off your smallest debt first to achieve a "quick win" that motivates you to keep going.

Create or add to your emergency fund

An emergency fund can help you prepare for future situations that are out of your control, like an unexpected job loss, healthcare costs or repairs to your car or appliances.

While reaching your emergency saving goals may seem overwhelming, start small. It's a good idea to save gradually and supplement your emergency fund with extra money when you receive it. A tax refund is a great way to add to it.

Save for short-term or long-term goals

Whether you're saving for a down payment on a house, adding to your retirement savings or planning for a dream vacation after the pandemic, it's important to develop a savings plan to reach your objectives.

Identifying your goals and understanding how much money you need to achieve them can help you decide how to allocate extra money. Putting your tax refund towards them while continuing to make regular, smaller contributions, can help you reach your goals faster.

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada provides unbiased and fact-based information you can count on. You can learn more about making a plan to be debt-free, creating an emergency fund or setting savings goals at canada.ca/money.



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The Connecting GTA Networking Club was founded by Suresh Kumar, President & CEO of Kashden Consulting Group.

Suresh is passionate about delivering value in every connection that he makes. As a Specialist Business Strategist & Coach, he revels in efficiently maximizing potential and fostering professional relationships within organizations. And as the Founder and CEO of Connecting GTA, he is dedicated to help propel your business forward.

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OLD GHOSTS IN NEW GARB: SRI LANKA'S RETURN TO FEAR : A I

Sri Lanka: Government suffocating dissent and obstructing justice for historic crimes says Amnesty report

The Sri Lankan Government has launched a renewed crackdown on dissent that is severely curtailing civil society freedom and obstructing efforts to deliver justice for conflict-era crimes under international law, said Amnesty International, in a new report published today.

The report, *Old ghosts in new garb: Sri Lanka's return to fear*, exposes how the Sri Lankan government has targeted human rights organisations, media, lawyers, political opponents, and law enforcement officers in a concerted bid to suppress opposing voices and hamper the transitional justice process for crimes committed during the country's 30-year armed conflict.

"Over the past year, the Sri Lankan government has radically transformed the country's civic space, which is now defined by an increasing hostility and intolerance towards dissenting voices," said David Griffiths, Director of the Office of the Secretary General at Amnesty International.

"People from all walks of life have been threatened, intimidated, harassed and jailed, simply for expressing views or doing their jobs in ways that displease the authorities. The Sri Lankan government must cease this campaign against dissent and respect its obligations under international law to protect freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, the right to personal security, and freedom from arbitrary detention."

Since withdrawing from the UN Human Rights Council-driven justice and reconciliation process for conflict-era crimes in February 2020, the authorities have cracked down on those pursuing justice while deliberately hindering ongoing efforts to secure justice and accountability.

Amnesty International is calling on the UN Human Rights Council to implement the recommendations of a damning report on Sri Lanka published by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights last month, when it meets from 22 February to 23 March. This includes more robust monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation, and the collection and preservation of evidence for future prosecutions.

"The international community must not turn a blind eye to the deteriorating human rights situation in Sri Lanka, which is being abetted by the government's regressive moves on justice and accountability. The Human Rights Council must take steps to end the cycle of impunity by holding the Sri Lankan government fully to account, and launching a new internationally agreed justice process," said David Griffiths.

Justice and Accountability

Amnesty International's findings reveal a pattern of targeting those who have played an active role in investigating, documenting, litigating, or reporting on human rights violations and abuses, and advocating on behalf of the victims, including at least six incidents where lawyers were targeted.

The country's draconian Prevention of Terrorism



Act was used, among others, against Hejaaz Hizbullah, a prominent minority rights advocate and lawyer, who has been detained for 10 months, without a shred of evidence of wrongdoing produced before a court.

Attorney Achala Seneviratne, who appeared on behalf of families of the disappeared in an enforced disappearance case, has been threatened with violence and sexualized abuse not only on social media but also by officials accused in the case.

Criminal investigators who pursued justice for crimes under international law have also come under increased scrutiny. The former director of the Criminal Investigations Department was demoted and later arrested for allegedly fabricating evidence in a case. He remains in custody and believes he is being targeted in reprisal for leading investigations in cases of abuses allegedly committed by the armed forces.

Members of the military leadership that were in command during the last phase of the war, when allegations of human rights and humanitarian law violations are widespread, were rewarded with promotions and positions of power under the new administration, including to civilian positions. This has had a chilling effect on victims demanding justice.

The report also details how legislative amendments brought by government have undermined any credible avenues locally available for justice, and how President-appointed Commissions of Inquiry are attempting to reverse accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations.

**Assault on civic space **

The Sri Lankan government did not waste any time in introducing new instruments and techniques to muzzle dissent.

State actors have led smear campaigns against NGOs and human rights organisations, while journalists have received death threats and have been summoned for investigations and interrogations after exposing human rights abuses.

Visits by state security officials to the offices of human rights NGOs have increased over the past fourteen months. Amnesty International recorded 18 such visits in that period, during which officials made enquiries about registration details, staff and donors' bank details. Some staff members were even visited at their private residences.

Laws are also being misused to stifle free speech, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Act, which was used to arrest and detain Ramzy Razeek for more than five months without charge or proper access to a lawyer, for a Facebook post in which he criticised the forced cremation of COVID-19 victims and called for an ideological struggle using the pen and keyboard as weapons.



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