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Ranitha Gnanarajah receives 'International Women of Courage' award from U.S. First Lady.



and women's rights in Sri Lanka. A lawyer, Ms. Gnanarajah advocates for Sri Lanka's most vulnerable populations, including families affected by enforced disappearances, survivors of gender-based violence, and religious and ethnic minorities. Ms. Gnanarajah has dedicated her career to the pursuit of justice for marginalized communities in Sri Lanka, covering a broad spectrum of human rights issues. She provides free legal aid to prisoners detained without charge under Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act and

remendous commitment to justice on behalf of all her fellow citizens. She's helped her country's most vulnerable people avail themselves of their rights and in doing so is a model of courage in Sri Lanka and around the world." Ms. Gnanarajah was among TBC women recognized for their enormous contributions to their communities and countries. Afterwards, these extraordinary women will participate in International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) virtual exchanges to connect with American universities, businesses, and non-profit organizations. Over the last 15 years, the U.S. Department of State has recognized more than 155 International Women of Courage from over 75 countries.

First Lady of the United States **Dr. Jill Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken** honored **Ranitha Gnanarajah** on March 8, 2021 as an 'International Women of Courage' (IWOC) award winner for her commitment to justice, accountability,

to families seeking to learn the fate of relatives believed to have been victims of enforced disappearances. U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives, **Alaina B. Teplitz**, said "Ms. Gnanarajah has demonstrated a t

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Protection for your biggest asset – your home



(NC) Moving into a new home or renovating your current one can be an exciting time with many decisions to be made – from renovations and upgrades, to landscaping and furniture selection. While these decisions are important, don't forget about helping to protect one of your biggest financial obligations – your home.

As a homebuyer, you probably already know about home insurance, as it's a requirement when applying for a mortgage. But you may not know that there are optional coverage choices available to you to help cover your mortgage to assist in protecting your home. Optional credit protection insurance, like TD mortgage protection, can reduce or pay off the remainder of your mortgage in the event of an unforeseen covered health event. Find more information at td.com.

**Snowstorm got you stuck indoors?
 How to keep the kids busy**

(NC) As the pandemic stretches on and winter sets in, we're all going a little stir crazy. If you're a parent feeling stuck on creative ideas for fun and educational activities to do with your kids, we've got you covered. Here are some suggestions from The Genius of Play, a nonprofit initiative whose mission is to raise awareness about the critical role of play in healthy child development:

Play with texture Kids love playing with sensory textures such as paints, slime, sand and foam, and this helps improve fine motor skills. Fortunately, you can now find less messy and sticky versions of these items for a hassle-free cleanup.

Revisit favourite games Consider classic board games like checkers and dominoes, or playing a game of crazy eights with a deck of cards. These games teach the importance of sharing and good sportsmanship while helping kids learn to strategize and plan ahead.

Experiment with costumes Encourage kids to develop their emotional, creative and communication skills by developing their own skit or play. Maintain a well-stocked costume trunk that they can use for dress-up and have toys on hand to use as props.

Build new things Whether your child prefers following step-by-step instructions or using their imagination, designing, creating and playing with construction toys can build problem-solving, spatial and fine motor skills.

Create an obstacle course Building a safe obstacle course is a fun way to keep little ones active indoors while building core muscles and developing balance. Pick three to five exercises to get their energy out. Check out STEAM toys Play with science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) toys and games. For example, use a science kit to erupt a volcano or code a robot. These important educational experiences can be fun supplements to classroom learning.

Transform tidying up It may not sound like play at first glance, but cleanup can be fun with the right attitude. Put on music and have kids dance as they put toys away, make the bed and help with chores. Or, make a game of it, racing each other to complete tasks.

Find play ideas, expert advice and other play resources at thegeniusofplay.org.



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Real Estate page compiled by Charles Devasagayam

UK Should Clarify Its Statement That There is No Support For Sri Lanka Referral to ICC In The UN Security Council: TGTE



“No record of any five permanent members of the UN Security Council would use their veto power to block any attempt for Sri Lanka’s referral to the ICC”

The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) has urged the United Kingdom to clarify its refusal to back initiatives to refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on grounds of “insufficient UN Security Council support”. The UK is persistent in taking the stand that Sri Lanka does not come under ICC jurisdiction as it is not a party to the Rome Statute, and that the idea of Sri Lanka’s

referral to the ICC would not have the support of the required UN Security Council members. & quot;We like to point out that, had Sri Lanka been a party to the Rome Statute, the TGTE would have submitted evidence to the ICC prosecutor directly without the involvement of the Human Rights Council or for that matter, the UK government itself."

We are also baffled by the UK government’s claim that there was not enough support in the Security Council for the option of Sri Lanka’s referral to the ICC. We say this because of the fact that the issue has not even been raised, let alone debated in the forum so far.

In fact, there is no record of any of the five permanent members of the Security Council indicating that they would use their veto power to block any attempt for Sri Lanka’s referral to the ICC.

Therefore, the UK government’s statement that there was “insufficient UN Security Council Support” is at best premature, and at worst baseless, if not outright

mischievous. & quot;If the UK has information about any opposition within the UNSC to the idea of referral of Sri Lanka to the ICC, they should make the details public, which would go a long way to maintain UK’s own credibility as a permanent member of the UN Security Council

with veto power."It is to be noted that the Hon Stephen Kinnock MP, Shadow Minister for Asia and the Pacific, stated in his letter to Nigel Adams MP, the Minister of State for Asia, in relation

to the UK Government’s presumed opposition at the Security Council that “two of the permanent members of the Security Council would likely veto such a referral were it to be tabled, but this is not an acceptable argument against trying."

The UK government’s approach to the UN Security Council should not be determined simply by the veto-wielding intentions of two of its permanent members. “We like to point out the fact that We hold the belief, as observed by the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken as well, in his article in Foreign Policy, that veto by two members of the Security Council would indeed galvanize all democratic powers to take action independent of the UN." 6142023377

The TGTE would like to point out here that even if the request by the Human Rights Council calling for the referral of Sri Lanka to the ICC were to be vetoed in the Security Council, such an act would not deprive the Human Rights Council its jurisdiction over other matters such as opening an office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in the North Eastern part of Sri Lanka etc derived from the Resolution.

The current High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Michelle Bachelet, in her Report dated 27th January 2021, has urged UN Human Rights Council Member States to take steps for referral of Sri Lanka to the ICC in view of the dire record of human rights violations in the country. A similar demand has been made by twenty former senior UN officials, including four former UN High Commissioners of Human Rights, nine independent UN experts and all members of the UN Secretary General’s Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka. In a joint statement on February 18, 2021 titled “Sowing the Seeds of Conflict” they said: “...the fact is that Sri Lanka has made its justice institutions unavailable to its own victims. Existing international avenues for accountability such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) should be considered”.

Tamil leaders in the island of Sri Lanka joined forces to send a letter to the UN Human Rights Council members on January 15, 2021, urging them to agree on Sri Lanka’s

referral to the ICC. This stand was validated by tens of thousands of Tamils in a recent rally called Pothuvil to Polikandy (P2P) which was organized by the North-East Civil Society. “Not referring Sri Lanka to ICC will not only open the doors for abusers of atrocity crimes to escape justice, but it will also embolden Sri Lankan political leaders and Security Force leaders to commit more international crimes against Tamil people without any hesitation, knowing well that they will not have to face justice” said P2P appeal.

The TGTE believes that even a putative vetoed referral of Sri Lanka to the ICC is better than the present clause in the draft resolution calling upon the Government of Sri Lanka to pursue a domestic accountability process. Granting the responsibility to the same Sri Lankan state to investigate and prosecute such serious crimes is a blatant contradiction of the fundamental judicial principle that the accused cannot ever be the judge. The harsh truth today is that the state of Sri Lanka, the government, its institutions, and the polity itself, are inextricably rooted in and operate with entrenched, pervasive racism.

No wonder there is no space in the island of Sri Lanka for Tamils to obtain justice! It is very unfortunate that UK, as a country that was in the forefront of creating the ICC, has today given in to self-doubt and an abandonment of its moral might by hesitating at the last moment to use this important platform to pursue justice for victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Not very becoming of a Global Britain!

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Help improve services in your community

(NC) With the COVID-19 pandemic changing the way we live, work and play, many of us are not just realizing the importance of key services such as health-care, education, and child care, but also finding out which ones have room for improvement. A great opportunity to make our voices heard is the upcoming census in spring 2021. The census gathers important information that can be used for community decision-making and self-governance around key topics such as education, labour and infrastructure.

Participation in the census directly contributes to its success, which can help communities transform for the better. To ensure we get a representative picture, it's especially important for people living in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to participate. For example, population data that show community growth may make a difference in allocated funding to help plan more training, create more jobs and strengthen the local economy, just like some programs are based on age data to help plan for the future and facilities for seniors.

Statistics Canada ensures that census and survey data are kept confidential and protected at all times. It has also adapted to the reality of COVID-19 and is implementing precautions to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard in the best and safest way possible. Find more information at census.gc.ca.



Mortgage pitfalls to avoid

(NC) Throughout life, you may have moments where you'll make a large purchase or invest in a costly item, like your family home. But whether you're in the market for your first new property or already have a mortgage, leaving this asset unprotected can be costly. Insuring your housing financial debt, as well as debt for other big-ticket items like a new boat for your lakefront cottage or keepsake jewelry like an engagement ring, is a smart investment in your well-being.

To help protect your debt balances like a mortgage, your bank may have optional credit protection insurance products. "Your home is one of your biggest assets, yet illness can happen at any stage of life. Worrying about your mortgage when the focus should be on health isn't a situation anyone, would wish for," explains Shirley Malloy, vice president at TD. "Fortunately, we offer mortgage protection to provide coverage for your outstanding balance should you face a covered critical health event." Mortgage protection can be purchased whether you're in the process of applying for a mortgage or already have a home financing solution. But what about protection options for credit card debt? "Given the unprecedented circumstances of this year, many Canadians are trying to plan for the unexpected to protect themselves and their finances," says Malloy. "TD balance

protection plus is an optional product designed to help you deal with your credit card payment obligations in the event of a covered event, such as loss of employment."

protection plus is an optional product designed to help you deal with your credit card payment obligations in the event of a covered event, such as loss of employment."



Indigenous peoples' skills and knowledge support strong national census

(NC) With the COVID-19 pandemic changing so many aspects of our lives, it's more important than ever to get an accurate portrait of current needs and priorities. One way to do this is by participating in the next census coming in spring 2021. The information that comes from the census can be used to support communities across the country in key areas such as education, labour and infrastructure.

An essential part of gathering representative data is making sure Indigenous voices are heard and amplified. That's why Statistics Canada is looking to employ people living in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities who can lend their invaluable skills and local knowledge to support census data collection.

People living in Indigenous communities are encouraged to apply for a census job in their area when they become available in January 2021. The information collected can directly benefit the community you live in, helping to make informed decisions on opening businesses, skills and trade development and planning services like schools, health-care and transfer payments.

Applying for a census job is easy and allows you to gain new skills or expand existing ones in highly transferrable areas such as interviewing, data entry, data collection, filing, time management and scheduling. It's a great way to earn money on a flexible schedule.

With the pandemic top of mind for everyone, the safety of community residents and of census enumerators is a top priority. That's why the census has been re-designed to ensure communities and enumerators are safe by limiting the amount of contact needed to participate in this important exercise. Find more information at census.gc.ca/jobs



Concerned about lead in your drinking water?

(NC) Even if your drinking water looks clear, it's never completely pure. Clean water can pick up substances as it travels through pipes towards your home. One of these could be lead.

Lead is a metal found naturally in the environment, but not often found in natural water sources or in water leaving drinking water treatment plants. However, it can seep into drinking water from plumbing systems. Many factors can affect how much gets into the water, including chemistry of the water, age of the plumbing, and length of time the water sits in the pipes.

Often, the most significant source of lead in drinking water comes from old lead service lines. These are the water pipes that link houses to the main water supply. Some plumbing parts or fittings, such as solder or faucets or valves, may also contain lead that can seep into drinking water.

Until 1975, lead was an acceptable material in pipes, so it's more likely to be found in older homes and neighbourhoods. To find out if any service lines in your area contain this material, you can check with your municipality or water utility. If you are concerned, here are some things you can do to reduce the levels in your water:

1. Let tap water run until it's cold before using it for drinking, cooking and especially for making baby formula. This is particularly important after water has been sitting in the pipes for long periods of time, like first thing in the morning.
2. If you have a lead service line, the best solution is to have it replaced, but there is a cost to the homeowner and municipality. Ask your municipality about programs or incentives for replacing lead service lines.
3. Clean out aerators and/or screens at the tap monthly to remove any debris that could also contain lead.
4. Replace any brass faucets or valves with fittings that are certified as meeting the NSF international standard for low lead content for use with drinking water. Check the box or label for this information.
5. A water filter at the tap can serve as a temporary solution, but this will require proper installation, maintenance (according to the manufacturer's instructions) and testing to ensure it's working. Make sure the device is certified to meet the NSF international standard for removal of lead. Find more information on keeping a healthy home at canada.ca/healthy-home.



How census data help Canadian farmers

(NC) With the pandemic continuing to influence how we shop and prepare meals for our families, national agriculture and sustainable local food supplies are top of mind for many of us. That's why it is important for our farmers to have access to critical information required to make informed decisions about their operations to help feed Canadians and to continue to be competitive and strong trading partners.

Statistics Canada's Census of Agriculture is an important tool that helps farmers see emerging trends in agricultural technologies and practices. Its results allow the industry and the public to get a snapshot of the state of agriculture in Canada, and the importance of this sector.

The census is the only source of community-level data that ensures that the unique perspectives of farmers, farm communities and agricultural operations are included when making decisions that affect them and their livelihood. The data are essential to defend the interests of farmers and the agriculture industry in trade disputes and to ensure market access. They provide fact-based evidence to inform government decisions regarding financial support programs for Canadian farmers. They also help to measure the impacts of disease outbreaks and climate change (such as fires, floods, droughts and storms).

The 2021 version of the census is almost here, and there are a few things Canadian farm operators should know. In early May, all Canadian farmers will receive an invitation letter with easy-to-follow instructions on how to complete the questionnaire online. To best support farmers at this busy time of year and to help reduce their reporting burden, concrete steps have been taken to make the 2021 questionnaire quicker and easier for them to respond. This means that only questions relevant to each operator's farm will be asked when filling out the census questionnaire online. It also means that selected questions may be replaced using high-quality alternative data sources when available. Find more information at census.gc.ca.



New agriculture census faster and easier for farmers to complete

(NC) Agriculture is a critical industry for all Canadians, providing us with a nutritious food supply and healthy local produce.

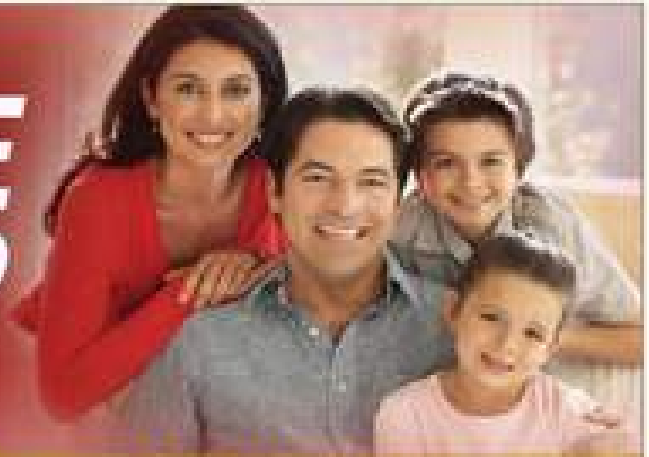
To help support these efforts, the government collects information with the Census of Agriculture to provide a statistical portrait of our national agricultural and agri-food industry, as well as its farm operators and families. The 2021 questionnaire will have returning key content for ongoing trend analysis and include new and modified questions to identify emerging agricultural products and changes in the adoption of technologies, direct marketing, succession planning and renewable energy production. New for the upcoming census, high-quality alternative data sources will be used when possible to reduce the time farmers must spend completing the questionnaire. For example, only those questions that are relevant to each operator's farm will be asked when filling out the online survey. Select questions may be replaced using alternative data sources when available and totals will automatically be calculated.

This approach is part of an ongoing part of Statistics Canada's modernization initiative to move beyond a survey-first approach by replacing traditional surveys with alternative data such as Earth Observation data. This initiative has its goal to reduce the response burden on

farmers while continuing to provide the same high quality information that Canadians expect and deserve.



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Connecting GTA is an above average 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. -Angelo Bellkai



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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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Next - Door Boy

By Kuru Aravinthan

I heard the doorbell. As I opened the door and looked out, I saw an eight-year-old boy standing at the entrance. There was vibrancy in his face. "Nikki T-shirt", Naikki shoes, Nikki cap, everything was Nikki. He was wearing his cap with the front side back.
 "Yes, may I help you?" I said.



"Hai! I am Christopher. We are going to be your neighbours", he showed the house by hand. When I peeped out, I saw household goods being unloaded from a vehicle. "Hai! I am Siva. Glad to meet you !!"

"Dad!" from my entrance itself he shouted. A person roughly 35 years of age came up. "Meet my Dad. Dad, he is Mr. Siva said" Christopher. I said "Hai" and shook hands. "I am Mike. We are your new neighbours. So, pleased to meet you. Shall meet you later." The way they introduced themselves, touched my heart. If you do not get good neighbours, daily, there will be problems.

As my son and Christopher were in the same class in school, they chummed up and every evening they used to play in our front garden. Winter was approaching. To save the rose plants from the winter I was pruning them. "Hai! Siva!! How are you?" These words made my head turn back and I saw Mike, "Oh, I am fine! How are you, Mike?"

"I am keeping well Siva. Unlike in our village, we have more privacy here and we are happy". I thought that I had problems in my village, but to see they too seem to have problems in their village.

I wanted to ask him what the problems was, when Mike himself started the story. "Siva, was your marriage an arranged marriage?" "No Mike, it was a love marriage," I said "Love marriage? Then your relatives would have raised objections?" "Yes, yes, always there are objections to love marriages. People in the villages are very conservative and they will not even dream of love marriages."

"True, they will always object." "We must explain the correct situation to them and bring them to our way of thinking. Failing, we have to fight them. "Fight them?"

How?"

"First, we have to have the confidence of loading a successful married life we had that confidence. Therefore, we did not worry about their objections. "Like you, we too had objections to our love marriage. We too fought, but failed" "Is that so? You too fought?" "Yes, the result was that I was to get out of my ancestral home. We were, however, determined that we will be together. Comparing ourselves to various

monarchs who gave up their Kingdoms for their love we did not consider this as very serious. "Truly, love must be like that. You have taken the correct decision. So, when your child was born didn't your parents come to see their grandchild? Suddenly I saw a change in Mike's countenance. I felt that he was hesitating to say something. "No Siva, we have no children.

That worry has always been gnawing our hearts. That is why we have adopted Christopher. "Christopher is an adopted son?" "Yes, He is very smart. We like him a lot. We are

looking after him as if he is our own." "Thank lord! He has blessed us. Don't worry Mike, God will never abandon you", I consoled him. Despite advances in medical science, still there are unsolved problems for people. They are still a young couple with many more years of life before them.

Only time can answer their problem. Perhaps it is those who do not have who realise the full significance of not having. It had been snowing from morning and the driveway was full of snow.

To remove the car from the driveway, I was shoveling the snow. My neighbour's entire family was engaged in the same operation at their driveway. "Hai Siva!" said Mike. "Hai!" I said in response. Like Eskimos, fully covered except for the face the three of them were playing in the snow.

Christopher was rolling, catching the snowballs being thrown by his parents. A happy family, I thought to myself. That night, there was a snowstorm and my telephone connection got disrupted. As I had to contact a friend on an urgent matter, I went to Mike's house. Mike was the one who opened the door and I told him the purpose of my visit. "What Siva, why are you hesitant? You are most welcome," and he showed me where the telephone was. After finishing my call, as I was trying to leave after thanking him, he insisted that I have a coffee.

Unable to resist his loving invitation, I sat down. "Come here!! See our next-door neighbour Siva is here!!!"

"Jani, nice, beautiful name. Like the name, would she be beautiful. I was wondering. I heard footsteps coming down the stairs I was excited to see Mike's lover, till the last, who stood by him, forsaking all her relatives and binding herself to Mike. How would she look? I early looked towards the stair way. First, I saw her exposed feet which were fair and lean. Looking up I saw her wearing jeans, and a light blue flowered Naikki shirt, unbuttoned at the top.

She came near me, bowed and said, "Hai Mr. Siva", I am Jane! Glad to meet you!! While she shook hands, I could observe the curly hair on her chest and ring in one ear. "What, would you like to have? Coffee or some juice?"

I do not remember what I replied but I must have replied juice, because I remember drinking juice. I left after thanking them and pressed my doorbell and my wife answered. "Dad, did you see Christopher's Mom? Is she nice?" He asked anxiously. I went inside without answering him. "Christopher's mother...?", what reply can I give him?

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