Johnson and Ratnayaka, who came to pick me up from the Bandaranaike International Airport in Katunayaka on Monday, kept mentioning China while talking. In their conversation in Sinhala, only the word China was understood.

"What are you talking about?"

"We are now going to the China Expressway" was the reply.

"The China Expressway?"

The reply was with a laugh, "All of ours belong to China."

He also mentioned the names of several projects that China has built and is building in Sri Lanka. By that time, the said China Expressway was reached.

This is the Katunayake Expressway built by Sri Lanka with the help of the Chinese Exim Bank. This four-lane road connecting the Bandaranaike International Airport with the capital Colombo is 25.8 km long. The project, which started in 2009 and opened in 2013, cost 29.2 crore dollars. EXIM Bank has given a loan of 24.8 crore dollars. Sri Lanka spent four and a half crore dollars.

"We are going through the Japan bridge now," they said. This Japan bridge is the new Kelani bridge. This bridge was built by JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), a partner of the Japan Drinking Water Scheme, which is familiar to Keralites. Although the structure is called the Japan-Sri Lanka friendship bridge, it was built on their loan. The first phase of the bridge, which is being built in two phases, was completed last year. Last year, Highways Minister Johnston Fernando said that this bridge is standing on huge steel piers because the old bridge is not able to support the traffic from the Kudunayake International Airport. The first phase was completed at the end of
last year after continuing the work during Covid days. Until the power crisis worsened, the beams of the bridge shed light. Now the light is off.

Apart from these constructions, there are two large Chinese projects on the right and left of the hotel where I stayed in Colombo. One is the Lotus Tower, which was completed in 2019 but is yet to be commissioned. The 350 meter high tower was built with a loan of 10.43 crore dollars from China's Exim Bank. It is designed with facilities like communication, surveillance and entertainment. The second is the Colombo Port City which is currently facing the most criticism. The work of this project, criticized by the Sri Lankan media as another Chinese project like the Mattala International Airport, Hambantota Stadium and the International Convention Center there, is still going on during this crisis.

**Development on loan**

As of 2021, China’s foreign debt stands at $3,500 crore (Rs 2.6 lakh crore). More than ten percent of this is loans taken from China. China is the fourth largest lender to Sri Lanka. The first is loans from the international financial market. Then loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan. Then come China’s. But the huge projects built with Chinese loans turned out to be unprofitable. Some had to be leased to China itself. That is what makes Chinese loans different from other loans. China has not responded to Sri Lanka’s demand for debt restructuring in the context of this extraordinary crisis in the country’s history.

Since 1971, many of Sri Lanka’s notable infrastructures have been built with China’s help. The Nelum Pokuna Performing Art Theater in Colombo (now called the Nelum Pokuna Mahinda Rajapaksa Theatre. Thus, the name Rajapaksa has been added to the name of many projects), the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, ports, airports, irrigation, electricity, road transport etc. China has loans in all sectors. From 1971 to 2004, the loan assistance from China was less than 50 crore dollars. In 2005, when Mahinda Rajapaksa became president, the acceptance of Chinese loans increased. Most of the projects thus made became the liability of Sri Lanka.

An example is the port and international airport built in Hambantota, the
constituency of the President. Both plunged from loss to loss. When the loss of revenue at the port was running into lakhs per day, it and the surrounding 15,000 acres of land were leased to China for 99 years. The Rajapaksa International Airport in Mattala is also known as the world's loneliest international airport. This airport in Mattala forest area also failed to attract tourists. So the international airport is struggling even to work as a domestic airport.

**Who is it for? We don't want it**

The Port City of Colombo (PCC) rises on the undulating Indian Ocean in front of Sri Lanka's old Parliament Building (now the President's Secretariat) in Colombo. Excavators work here even in high heat. There, inside the steel fence, facing the President's Secretariat is a small gate marked Port City with a guard. No financial crisis has affected this work.

This is the Rajapaksa government's dream project to make Colombo a financial center like Dubai and Singapore. The government hopes the project will transform the economy, which is dependent on tourism and exports of tea and spices. But if we see the figures, it seems that this is also going to be a liability for Sri Lanka.

The cost of the project is $1400 crores (Rs. One lakh crores). China is the money lender here too. But only $140 crore (Rs 1000 crore) has been disbursed so far. This amount is to help reclaim 269 hectares of land from the Indian Ocean for the project. In exchange for money, 116 hectares out of 269 hectares should be leased to China for 99 years.

It is envisaged as a public-private partnership project between the Government of Sri Lanka and the CHEC Port City Colombo Private Limited. CHEC is a subsidiary of China Communications Construction Company, which spearheads China's global infrastructure development initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative. It is alleged that the project, which is planned to be completed in 25 years, will not only affect the Sri Lankan economy but also the environment.

While taking a photo of the Lotus Tower, a man came. "Don't take photos from here madam. It is our president's office. Don't take photos when the president
is there. Come, I will show you another place" and came along. Prasanth is a
native of Kandy returning from work at the Colombo port. His question to me
is how Sri Lanka is. I said that transportation was very difficult and it was very
hot. Then he started to describe his struggles. "Do you know how much a
packet of bread costs, 120 rupees? Before this man (the president) came, there
were only 60 rupees. Look at this port city, who is it for? We don't want this." -
he said. Prashant asked me if I was coming to see a gem exhibition nearby, I
said no, then he waved a bye and left.
പള്ളിയിലെ ആന്തിക

20 വരിക്കടി, കൊല്ലവിളക്കിലെ നീർച്ചെളിയിൽ നിന്നുള്ള ഒരു ചെറിയ കാലുകളിൽ, കാലുകളിലുള്ള വനിതകളിൽ കാലുകളിലുള്ള പരിതിപ്പിക്കുന്ന പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു.

എല്ലാ വനിതകളും പെൺകുട്ടികളും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു. പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും പ്രാഥമിക ആന്തികവും കാണുന്നു.

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A deprived seashore

Sri Lankan Notes

Cissy Jacob

02/04/2022

Jaffna- a land reminiscent of Palakkad in Kerala. The doubt palms that stand high without even catching the wind. Scorching heat. Fertile soil. Unlike Palakkad, Jaffna has a coastline. Those shores are now searing with deprivation. The lack of money that gripped Sri Lanka completely impoverished the people who depended on the sea for their livelihood. "No money. There are no provisions at home. No rice, no sugar, no salt. A liter of coconut oil costs Rs 1,100 (Sri Lankan rupees)" said Anistini saddened at Point Pedro. All of Anistini's family, including her husband, brother and uncle, are seafarers. Those who go fishing in the deep sea.

Anistini, who is not interested in appearing on TV or in the newspaper, pointed to the two or three young people who sift their nets and said, "They have just retured from the sea. Didn't even get the amount spent. It's a loss. Rs. 10,000 has spent to go to the sea. They got two Trevally fish in total. About three kgs. Get only Rs. 600 per kg. Big loss. Five people went to the sea. This amonut is like a penny to one person."

Even before I leave the shore, a man came and bought the fish for the same price. This fish is going to Colombo market.

The lack of fuel and electricity made the coastal people poorer than the city dwellers. No ice because there is no electricity. So unable to keep fish intact. "There is no ice for seafarers. No oil. If there is no ice, the fish will rot. So the clients said they will not take the fish. No salt. So small fish cannot be dried. To whom should I tell" - Forty-three-year-old Sandiran, who took up fishing at the age of seventeen, was helpless.

Being in the coast, drinking water is also scarce. They rely on bottled water. The price of one and a half liter bottled water on Friday is Rs 120. Due to the frequent increase in price, instead of bottled water, well water is fetched from
a distance of three kilometers. "Milk powder was Rs 750 for 400 grams. Rs 800 today (Friday). What do we feed the babies? Sugar is Rs 230 today and Rs 280 tomorrow. So the price is going up. Then how will we live' - Sandhiran asked.

Overhearing all this conversation a six-year-old boy sits on the right. He is in school uniform. His name is Antonyraj. His father died in 2017 when he went fishing in the sea. He lost his mother too. This child is brought up by his uncle Sandiran.

No one goes to sea here because of lack of income. Boats and nets lie ashore and along the seashore. Some people are doing maintenance of fishing nets. "All the boats here have reached the shore. There is no one in the sea. The middlemen said they would not take small fish. So we don't catch them. Because there was no salt to dry, we gave up a catch of small fishes in the sea" -Sandiran and Jerome said the same thing.

Like many other household things, Sri Lanka importing salt also. Salt is imported from China, Thailand, India and Pakistan.

Neither large mechanized boats nor nets are used by the traditional fishermen of Jaffna. They are old fiber boats with kerosene powered engines. Therefore, the shortage of kerosene affected them severely. After standing in line for kerosene at six in the morning and reaching the shore at twelve, Jerome came straight to talk: "Before this, trawlers were the problem. Because of that we have lost lakhs of rupees." Jerome said that Indian boats crossed the maritime boundary and caught fish in Sri Lankan waters with nets that swept up even small fish and the issues that followed.

"It is said that oil is given by China and India. It doesn't matter, it's our problem. Those who have taken loans depending on their employment are also in trouble. Homes come to foreclosure because they don't have money to pay" -Jerome enumerated the problems of coastal residents.

Jerome is a man who went to Australia ten years ago in search of a better life. Traveled for 18 days and reached Australia. He was arrested for illegal immigration and spent a few months in jail. Then he got a work visa to work in Melbourne. He tried multiple jobs, starting from cutting wood to use in the fire pits. Returned to Jaffna three years ago. There is a reason for that.
Thirty-nine-year-old Jerome has two children. Both will study well. He returned to focus on their studies. He wants his son, who is a school leader, to become a doctor. "Tura (coast) needs its own doctor. That's why I came to this sea job again" - he said.

Unlike other places in Sri Lanka, Jaffna has a large Tamil population. After the civil war, many people from here migrated abroad, especially to European countries. People and traffic are less here. Therefore, the queue of vehicles queuing up for diesel is far less than other places in the country.

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Photo-1 Boats moored at Point Pedro, Jaffna, unable to go to sea due to shortage of essential commodities including kerosene

Photot-2 Sandhiran

Photo-3 Jerome
മലയാളം

03/04/2022 WAYANAD Pg 08
Colorless Jaffna tobacco

Sri Lankan Notes

Cissy Jacob

03/04/2022

Jaffna is called Yalpanam in Tamil. For Malayalis, it is Jappanam. The land of Jappanam tobacco in the age old stories. But Jappanam tobacco is no longer has its color. Farmers say that the lack of color affects the fame of tobacco.

Shallot is a renowned crop in Jaffna, the center of Sri Lanka’s vegetable production. Paddy is grown in the fields of Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu, which have been renovated so that not a single scar of the civil war remains. But this time the production of everything has decreased. Shallots became too small.

Farmers and traders I met at the Tirunelveli market in Jaffna blamed the Sri Lankan government’s ban on the import of chemical fertilizers. The Gotabaya Rajapaksa government banned the import of chemical fertilizers in Sri Lanka on May 5th last year. The ban was to make the country a fully organic farming nation. That decision, which was taken without sufficient preparation, hit Sri Lanka badly, which was already in the grip of an economic crisis. Production fell sharply. Due to the lack of dollars, imports have fallen and the reduction in production has now brought the price of rice to over Rs. 200 per kilogram.

A 40 percent decrease in tea production is anticipated this year. Russia is the second largest importer of Sri Lankan tea. Due to the war in Ukraine, the sanctions imposed by Western countries on Russia has also hit Sri Lanka’s tea farmers.

The Gotabaya government partially lifted the ban on fertilizer imports on November 30 following strong protests by farmers. By then, two harvest seasons of many crops had passed. The price of fertilizer has increased by twenty to thirty percent. The farmer’s tears fell in the paddy fields, tobacco fields and tea gardens.

Saraswathiamma, whom I met in the tobacco fields of Kondav, and Gopi, whom
I met in the drying center, said the same thing. Two types of tobacco grow here. One is for chewing and the other for smoking. There are eight varieties of these. Farming season is between February and June when the rains stop. Tobacco is harvested when it is three months old. The leaves are cut and dried in the sun for six days. And dried in smoke for a day. Dry tobacco is taken to a place called Puthalam for selling. Less takers for tobacco now. Fertilizer import has affected agriculture. Fertilizer is needed to keep tobacco green. Dark colored tobacco is obtained only by drying the green leaves. Gopi says market needs only that kind of tobacco. Fertilizer which used to be bought for Rs 1500 is now being bought for Rs 30000.

At Tirunelveli Market, Yalpanam shallots are collected in one place. The seller and helper did not want to be named. But they had given the information. The size of onion has decreased due to non-fertilization. Even the locals are not interested in undersized shallots. Shallots, which used to be sold at Rs 350 per kg, now cost Rs 200. Sixty-four-year-old Saraswathiamma, who has been selling vegetables here for 23 years, complains that there is no good crop in the land due to lack of fertiliser.

Maheswaran and his wife Srimalar are sellers of leafy vegetables in the market. "Spinach, which used to be sold at Rs 20-30, is now being sold at Rs 80. Sales are very low. Due to unavailability of fertilizer and medicine (insecticide), the color of spinach has decreased. Pests come because of non-medication. Untreated vegetables are good. But people don't want it because it doesn't have color and size," said Maheshwaran.

Srimalar spoke more philosophically. "There is no electricity. So there is no life. Everything needs electricity. We depend on tube well for water. Electricity is also required to draw water from it. It has not rained for some time" - she said.

However, the banana sellers in the market are a little happy. Due to lack of import of fruit from abroad, the price of banana is high. "Earlier, banana was Rs. 20-30 per kg. Now selling for Rs.50. As it is harvested from a nearby plantation, lack of diesel is not an issue. It's not winter, so it's banana season" - said Raja, who is a Tik Tok star but is not interested in appearing in any newspaper.
13 ദിവസത്തെ പ്രതീക്ഷയിലാണ് ചെയ്ത കേന്ദ്രധാരികൾ നിയമം വിവരിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത്. വിവിധ സ്വാഭാവിക, വാസ്തുവിദ്യാ സദസ്സുകളിലെ ഭാഗങ്ങളിലായിരിക്കുന്ന മുന്നിൽ തന്നെ തൊട്ട് നിരക്കുന്ന പ്രമാണങ്ങൾ. 40-50 എണ്ണം മാസം യോജിക്കുകയും നിരവധി വിവിധ രാഷ്ട്രീയ വിധികൾ പ്രചാരം ചെയ്യുകയും ചെയ്യും. പുലിത്തയൂൺ സംസ്ഥാനത്ത് നിലനിന്നില്ല.
No work, no study

Sri Lankan Notes

Cissy Jacob

04/04/2022

Saturday's trip was to Kilinochchi via the Jaffna-Kandy National Highway. To the same Kilinochchi which was once the center of Tamil Eelam. All traces of the brutal war are covered. But wounds in the minds of a section of people that are still not be cured.

The Jaffna-Kandy road, which opened in June 2013, was part of the 'Northern Spring' project introduced by the post-war Mahinda Rajapaksa government for the development of northern Sri Lanka. It was also funded by the Chinese government. The work was done jointly by the Sri Lankan government and China Aero Technology International Construction Company Limited. On both sides of the road there is a wide expanse of land with shrubs, brambles and doub palms. Occasional fields, lagoons and marshes. During the rainy season, the salt marshes dry up in the boiling heat.

After Murihandi, which is famous for groundnuts, and Thanangilap, where the windmills are towering, they were seen when we approached Poonagari Lagoon. At the descent of the Sangupidi Bridge, on the right side of the road, a group of women are eating on the stones lined up near the lagoon. All are relatives. A photo shoot of one of them is going on at the 'view point' of the bridge. That's why everyone came together.

Sanuja in the group is an A Level (Class XII) student. Sanuja said how the crisis faced by Sri Lanka has affected the students. "There is no study at night due to 13-hour power cut. The school is seven kilometers away from the house. Traveling by bus. Season tickets (concession pass) for buses were stopped after the diesel problem started. Now the fare is Rs 40 if in uniform. Rs 50 if you go to school without uniform." 7th grader Priyanka also has the same difficulties to say.

The eldest of the group is 38-year-old Manjula. Manjula's husband is a daily
wage laborer. Manjula and Akanila, who were with her, repeated all the incidents we heard in the past few days, such as the lack of materials for the work and the fact that the work was not being carried out.

Audikan, whom I met at Kontavil in Jaffna on Friday, also described the plight of the masons. Audikan reached tobacco field, where I was talking to the farmers, through the small road attached to it. This young man was the one who took me to the tobacco drying center and convinced the reluctant workers and shared the information. This twenty five year old is a tiler. Tiles arrive here from India. Due to reduced availability of tiles and raw materials like cement and gravel, the work has slowed down. But the wages which were previously Rs 1,500 have now gone up to Rs 2,000.

Went to Audikan's workplace. It is a house built for a 60-year-old man named Durairaja, who was a driver in a government department. Durai Raja is also there. "The cost of living and the cost of wages are high. The work should be finished somehow before the new year. Otherwise the cost will increase further" - he said.

April 14 is Sri Lankan New Year. Before that, India brought 40,000 tonnes of rice to the market. 60,000 tonnes of diesel was also provided to reduce power cut time.

When returning through the deserted road after seeing Killinochi where a lot of blood and tears were fell, and Nandikadal where the fierce battle took the life of LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran, the curfew announcement sounded on the FM radio in the vehicle. Island wide curfew from 6pm on Saturday to 6am on Monday.

The bus to return to Colombo was on Saturday night. It was a private bus. Called them. I was informed that there will be no interruption of the bus as there are passengers going to Colombo airport. After six, the news came that Sri Lankan government buses had stopped running. The private bus operators still said that the bus would run. When I arrived in front of the Rolex store in Jaffna in an auto called 'tuk tuk' for the bus leaving at 8:30 pm, only darkness and a few dogs were there. Power cut. Kerosene lamps are lit in a couple of shops. Everything else is locked. Empty Sri Lanka Transport Board buses meet
at the nearest bus stand. The guide called the bus he had booked. After calling several times, I got an answer. "The bus will not go. Another bus going to Colombo after 5 pm was stopped at Anuradhapura." Returned to the hotel in the same tuk tuk through the dark road. Checked in again.

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Photo

Manjula (far right) and her team near the Sangupidi Bridge
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Sri Lanka in political uncertainty

Sri Lankan Notes
Cissy Jacob
05/04/'2022

Sri Lanka's political leadership seemed unsure of what to do when the country was heading into the depths of economic crisis. The government's political crackdown has plunged the country into political uncertainty, defying the state of emergency and curfew.

All 26 ministers of the Sri Lankan cabinet resigned on Sunday night saying that they would pave the way for the formation of a national unity government. But not only was the unity government not immediately formed, the single largest party in the ruling coalition, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), also decided to leave it. The reason is the anger in the reconstitution of government. It is reported that the reason is dissatisfaction with the appointment of Ali Sabri, a member of the Sri Lanka Pothujana Perumuna, the president's party, as a minister and the appointment of a new national highways minister at the time of the financial crisis.

Former president Maithripala Sirisena's SLFP is the party that asked the president to form a national unity government. But none of the four ministers who took oath on Monday were from it. After that, all 14 MPs of SLFP decided to leave the government and work as an independent group in Parliament.

Opposition parties rejected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's Monday invitation to accept a ministerial post. People are set to protest until President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa step down. The presence of opposition leader Sajith Premadasa, who participated in the nation-wide protest on Sunday, was notable.

The general sentiment is that the Rajapaksa brothers should be completely removed from power. That is what the small and large protest groups seen at many places on the bus journey from Jaffna to Colombo are shouting. 'Go Home Gota' (Gothabaya Rajapaksa). The demand is that he should resign
taking responsibility for the financial crisis in the country. He felt the heat of that protest on his journey from Jaffna to Colombo. The bus left Jaffna at 6.50 am and reached Colombo at 6 pm. The overnight journey to Jaffna took only seven hours and 25 minutes.

When the bus stops at Kotahena, there is a demonstration of more than 500 people, worried that if it goes inside the city, it will be delayed due to protests. Twelve and thirteen-year-old children chant 'Go Home Gota' in front of St Anthony's Church in Colombo 13. Current political changes cannot quell these protests.

Police fired tear gas and water cannons at those who tried to barge into Mahinda Rajapaksa's house in Tangol, Hambantota, demanding that he leave. Protests were held in front of the houses of almost all the MPs.
మొదలు మరణించబడిన ప్రత్యేకించారు.

1. ప్రామాణిక వంటి విధానాలు ఉపయోగించబడింది.
2. ఇవి సాధారణ అవసరాలు ఉపయోగించబడింది.
3. ఇవి ప్రత్యేక అవసరాలు ఉపయోగించబడింది.

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Let no more blood fall on this soil

Interview with Arjuna Ranathunga by Cissy Jacob, 08/04/2022

After retiring from cricket, Arjuna Ranatunga's innings was in politics. First in Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Then in UNP. He administered the Port, Shipping, Petroleum, Transport, Aviation and Tourism departments. Ranatunga shares his views as Sri Lanka goes through troubled times, both economically and politically.

Q: Protests all over the country. Leaders are leaving the country. All the people I met say they have no money. What happened to Sri Lanka?

A: If you ask what happened to this country, in 2019 elections the president got a big majority and in 2020 the parliament got a big majority. 69 lakh people voted for Gotabaya Rajapaksa in the presidential election hoping to change the political culture of the country. When the parliamentary elections came, they bought off a few opposition MPs and won a two-thirds majority. Then the 19th Amendment of the Constitution was amended. Under the 19th Amendment, the power was vested in Parliament. This amendment was introduced in 2015 to reduce the powers of the President. We did not want an all-powerful president to lead the country. We have seen the results before. There were good leaders and bad leaders. We decided that the power should rest with the Parliament and the Prime Minister. But they changed it in 2020. Power was again concentrated in the President. They were arrogant on their first day in office. They thought they could do anything with the power in their hands. So they started collecting loans. Constructions have started. Concessions were given to the needy. With that, the entire economy collapsed. I am not an economist. But even the smallest things did not go smoothly. They were overconfident about their majority in Parliament. Unfortunately, along came Covid. But all the countries have handled covid well. They point to covid as an excuse for their own laziness. But they failed in managing the wealth and managing the country. As a family (Rajapaksa family) they control 60 percent of the ministries in the country. This family should take the blame for the current situation.
Q: How can Sri Lanka recover from the current economic and political crisis?

A: There are two things. First is the financial problem. The second is the political issue. But from what I understand from the experts, Sri Lanka should have gone to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank earlier. We had a big ego. We thought we should not go to the IMF. The IMF has conditions. We don't know how to turn those conditions in our favor. They have some good terms like transparency and tender procedures. None of this is of interest to the Rajapaksa government. So we went to the IMF too late. And so we got into this mess.

Q: Many people I have seen blame themselves

A: The Rajapaksas have been ruling the country for a long time. What happened in 2015? We defeated the president, Mahinda Rajapaksa. That is, the people wanted a change. And then we ran this country in a very democratic way. There was transparency. We don't claim to be very smart. Our government also had its faults. Aren't there the people I mentioned earlier? By bringing in Gotabaya Rajapaksa they introduced a new idea. He is not even a politician capable of leading Sri Lanka. He is a soldier. The Rajapaksas had no choice. So they presented him as a separate person with the support of some Buddhist monks, few but not all monks, with the blessings of some influential channel. People fell for it. We tried to explain this when we were in opposition. But unfortunately he came to power. He won an absolute majority in Parliament. The constitution was amended for (former finance minister) Basil Rajapaksa, who was a dual citizen and held an American passport and therefore could not be a parliamentarian. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was amended. He was brought to Parliament by passing the 20th Amendment. So now the country has been brought to this state.

Q: You were the Minister of Ports, Shipping, Petroleum, Transport, Aviation and Tourism. Now Sri Lanka is a country without any Ministers

A: One thing we need to understand is that the former president and prime minister made us ministers after understanding our capabilities. What did they do this time? All important ministerial positions were given to their
supporters. That's how the country went down the wrong path. When I was managing the port department, it started making profits within a year and a half. I looked after the Ministry of Petroleum for two years. Petrol crisis does not happen overnight. Orders for petrol, diesel and kerosene are placed three months in advance. And not overnight. They don't even seem to know that this is the method. Instead of awarding a long-term contract, they issue a spot tender. There are procedures for long-term contracts. Ministers or other officials can grab money while giving spot tenders. So they were promoting this practice.

Q: How can the tourism sector, which contributed 10 percent of the GDP, be revived?

A: People love to come to this country. But the tourism sector needs to be marketed properly. My brother is tourism minister. But unfortunately they are not promoting tourism in the best way. They are trying to bring in Russians and Ukrainians. The relatives of this president have many interests there. Sri Lanka should be looking to attract tourists who spend more money. There are such people not only in Europe and America but also in India. Big spending tourists no longer come from India. They are all going to the Maldives. If as many people are coming as they say, where does the money go? Not how many people came. It's about how many dollars they brought here.

Q: It is understood that even during the war there was no such severe crisis. How about then and now?

A: We went through war for almost thirty years. We were fighting terrorists that day. We won that battle. My personal opinion is that since then there have been no better emulation efforts. It could have been done so much better. In 2015, we started development in North and East regions (war zones). The people there felt that they were a part of Sri Lanka. One of the happiest moments of my life. When we won the World Cup, the LTTE made people watch cricket. A ceasefire was announced. Sports can bring people together. People also suffered during the war. But they knew that suffering was for a purpose. Today people are suffering for no reason. That is why they are on the streets.
Photo: Arjuna Ranatunga in his office on the outskirts of Colombo
TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Ms. Cissy Jacob, Senior Sub Editor, Mathrubhumi, Thiruvananthapuram, was deputed to Sri Lanka to cover the economic crisis of Sri Lanka from 28th March 2022 to 8th April 2022 and has done the following articles, which was published in the Editorial Column of the Mathrubhumi Daily dated 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 8th of April 2022;

1.  China's white elephants

2.  A deprived seashore

3.  Colorless Jaffna tobacco

4.  No work, no study

5.  Sri Lanka in political uncertainty

6.  Let no more blood fall on this soil

This certificate is being issued to her for submitting entry to the PII-ICRC Award of 2023 instituted by Press Institute of India.

SENIOR EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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Mathrubhumi
Thiruvananthapuram