



#MINORMATTERS



UNDERSTANDING PRESS COVERAGE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

PERIOD COVERED : APRIL 2019



INTRODUCTION

Ethno-religious violence has been a growing problem in post-war Sri Lanka. Events in Mawanella (2001),¹ Gintota (2017),² Aluthgama (2014)³, Digana (2018)⁴ and most recently in Kurunegala/Minuwangoda (May 2019)⁵ demonstrate the extent and frequency of this type of violence.

This report is the fifth in a series of reports prepared by Verité Research (VR) for Minor Matters. These reports examine how the print media reports on religious freedom in Sri Lanka. They aim to analyse the frequency and tonality of coverage in various newspapers in English, Sinhala and Tamil to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights.

The press coverage is assessed by observing press articles in terms of their sentiment on religious freedom, i.e. supporting, neutral or opposing. This sentiment analysis is based on an assessment of two components: a) news grading, in which the substance of the news article/content is analysed, and b) view grading, in which the tonality of the coverage, pictures, and any other additional cues used to position sentiment regarding the news item, are analysed.

The present report also qualitatively analyses articles related to religious freedom within the context of broader themes such as physical violence towards people and property; inflammatory speech; court cases, laws and regulations pertaining to religious freedom; religious inequality and discrimination; and other related reporting relevant to religious freedom. Newspaper summaries that have a bearing on religious freedom are listed in chronological order at the end of the report.

¹ G.H. Peiris, *A reappraisal of evidence and claims. Emerging Buddhist – Muslim rivalry in Sri Lanka?* The Island (2017). Accessed 11 December 2018

http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article_details&page=article_details&code_title=167737.

² Dharisha Bastians, *Gintota and the shadows of extremism*. Daily FT (2017). Accessed 11 December 2018 <http://www.ft.lk/opinion/Gintota-and-the-shadows-of-extremism/14-643843>.

³ Dharisha Bastians, *Death toll rises to 4 from Aluthgama riot..* Daily FT (2014). Accessed 11 December 2018 <http://www.ft.lk/article/308988/Death-toll-rises-to-4-from-Aluthgama-riots>.

⁴ *Digana turns divisive* Daily FT (2018). Accessed 11 December 2018 <http://www.ft.lk/top-story/Digana-turns-divisive-/26-650661>.

⁵ BBC, *Sri Lanka extends nationwide curfew after anti-Muslim riots* (2019), Accessed 21 May 2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48269240>

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, religious freedom can be understood to comprise:

- The freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice;⁶
The freedom not to be discriminated against or to suffer any disability on the
- grounds of religion;⁷
The freedom not to be subject to any restriction or condition with regard to access
- to places of public worship of one's own religion;⁸ and
The freedom to be entitled to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching.⁹

Press reports on religious freedom that appeared during the month of April 2019 were monitored. The following 13 daily and weekend newspapers in the two local languages—Sinhala, Tamil—and English were examined (see table below).

English Newspapers	Sinhala Newspapers	Tamil Newspapers
Sunday Observer/ Daily News	Lankadeepa/Sunday Lankadeepa	Virakesari
Daily Mirror	Divaina/Sunday Divaina	Thinakaran
	Dinamina/Silumina	Uthayan
	Anidda	

The above newspapers were selected based on readership data in the National Demographic and Media Survey produced by Kantar LMRB for the year 2017. *Lankadeepa* and *Virakesari* have the highest readership of the daily Sinhala and Tamil newspapers respectively. *Divaina* has the second highest readership of the daily Sinhala newspapers. *Sunday Observer* and *Daily News* have the highest readership of the weekend and daily English newspapers respectively. *Daily Mirror* has the second highest readership of the daily English newspapers.

Anidda was selected, despite the absence of its readership data, as its content generally differs from coverage in the mainstream press, and therefore can be considered as providing alternative insights into events. Likewise, *Uthayan*, a Jaffna-based publication, was selected, despite the absence of its readership data, as it is a regional publication. As state-owned newspapers were included for both the English and Sinhala samples,

⁶ Article 10 of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

⁷ Article 12 (2) and article 27 (6) of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

⁸ Article 12 (3) of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

⁹ Article 14 (1) (e) of the Sri Lanka Constitution.

Thinakaran was selected to represent a state-owned Tamil newspaper to maintain consistency, despite it having relatively low readership.

In these newspapers, articles that **had a bearing on religious freedom** were selected for assessment of the tonality of their reporting. These articles included:¹⁰

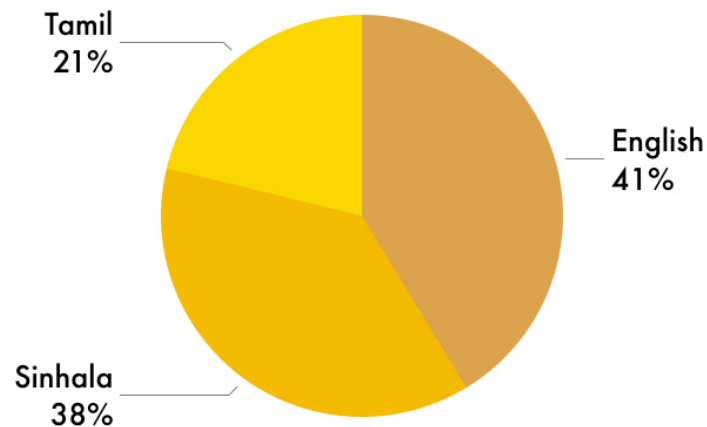
- Articles that referred to instances of physical violence that were religiously motivated, or targeted religious communities/figures or sites;
- Articles that referred to or contained speech prompting physical violence or threatening remarks targeted at religious communities, leaders or institutions;
- Articles that discussed court cases, laws or regulations pertaining to religious freedom.

¹⁰ N.B. the aforementioned list is only illustrative and not exhaustive.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

NUMBER OF ARTICLES CARRIED IN PRESS

English | Sinhala | Tamil
April 2019



For the month of April 2019, a total of 368 articles relating to religious freedom were carried in the English, Sinhala and Tamil newspapers that were monitored. Of this total, 41 per cent (152 articles) were carried in the English newspapers. Meanwhile, Sinhala and Tamil newspapers accounted for 38 per cent (138 articles) and 21 per cent (78 articles) of the coverage respectively.

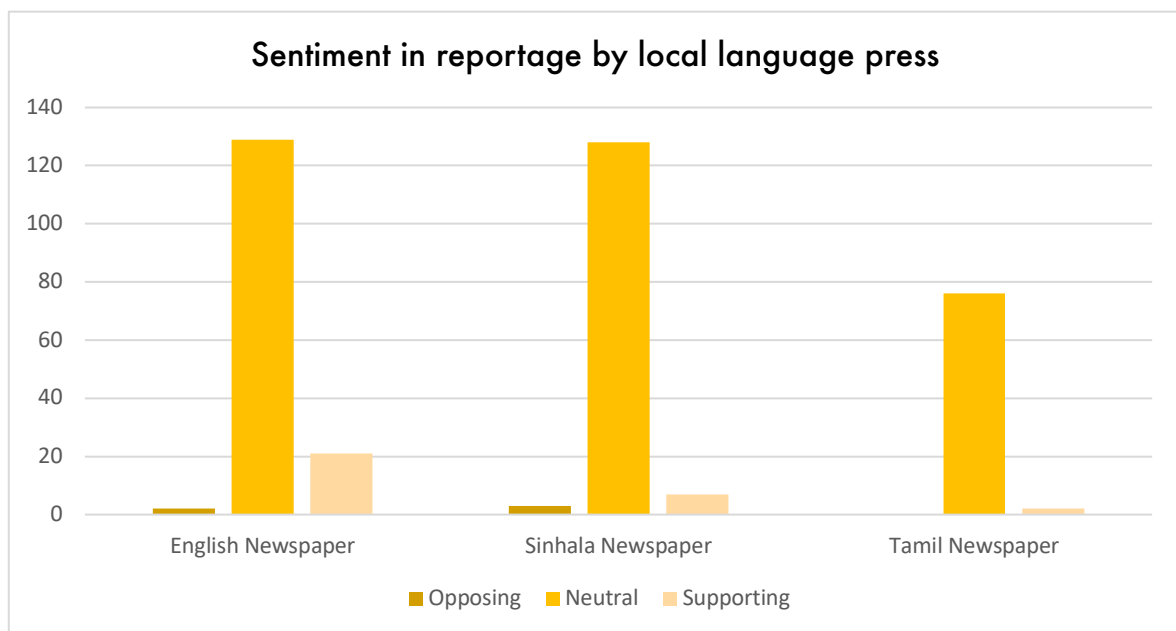
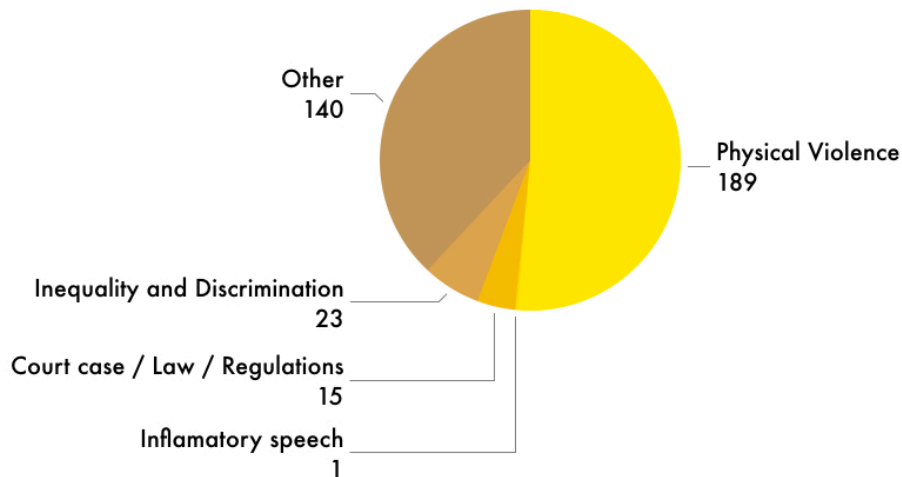
Religious freedom was discussed under the following five themes:

- a) Physical violence;
- b) Inflammatory speech;
- c) Court cases/law/regulations;
- d) Inequality and discrimination; and
- e) Other related reporting.



NUMBER OF ARTICLES PERTAINING TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BY THEME

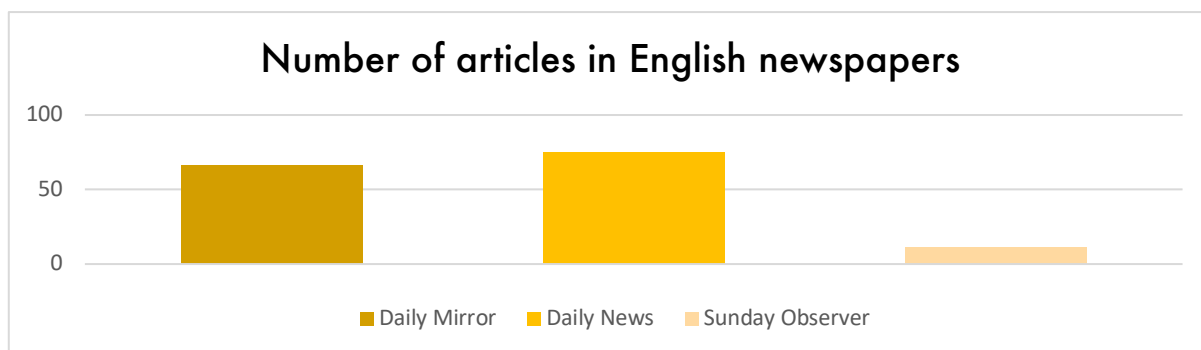
April 2019



- Of the 152 articles in the English newspapers, 21 were supporting religious freedom, while 129 were neutral and 2 were opposing religious freedom.
- Of the 138 articles in the Sinhala newspapers, 7 were supporting religious freedom, while 128 neutral and 3 were opposing religious freedom.
- Of the 78 articles in the Tamil newspapers, 2 were supporting religious freedom and 76 were neutral.



Coverage in English newspapers



English Newspapers	No. of Articles	Reportage		
		Supporting	Neutral	Opposing
Daily News	75	7	68	-
Daily Mirror	66	12	52	2
Sunday Observer	11	2	9	-
Total	152	21	129	2

English newspapers carried 152 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. 21 were supporting religious freedom, while 129 were neutral and 2 were opposing religious freedom.

- The **21 supporting articles** covered the following events:
- An article in *Daily News* opined that the ‘anti-Muslim campaign of the fringe Sinhala Buddhist ultra-nationalist bigotry is regenerative. The latest [campaign] is ostensibly to protect the forestry of Wilpattu, but it is the same old Islamophobic campaign that has resurfaced.’ Thus, the writer is of the view that ‘propagators of such anti-Muslim hate in real life and in virtual life should be identified, monitored and arrested. New laws should be incorporated under the proposed counter terrorism laws to enable preventive detention of bigots for a substantial period.’¹¹
- An article in *Daily News* reported on the complaint made to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) by four assistant teachers of Sri Shanmuga Hindu Ladies’ College, Trincomalee. The teachers were prohibited from wearing the abaya on the basis that it was not in line with Hindu traditions of the school.

¹¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 2, p. A14.

- HRCSL, in a statement, said national schools are bound by the Constitution and cannot violate the absolute right to religious freedom by asking teachers to refrain from wearing the abaya in schools.¹²
- An article in *Daily Mirror* drew a parallel between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in terms of culture and community. The writer states that in Sri Lanka, similar to New Zealand, different communities exist without any effort to understand each other. In this context, the writer gives suggestions as to how to bridge the understanding of each other's communities.¹³
- An editorial in *Daily News* noted that following the Kochchikade attack on 21 April, 'residents of all faiths and ethnicities in that very multicultural neighbourhood in central Colombo had already rushed in masses to help the victims. Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and Hindu citizens of that crowded, oldest, part of the city were the 'first responders' even before the emergency services arrived'. The editor opined that 'sheer spontaneity of the people's immediate collective response symbolised Lanka's social unity and sheer grit in the face of extreme violence and tragedy.'¹⁴
- An opinion article in *Daily Mirror* condemned the recent attacks. The opinion piece suggested that 'a Muslim group is behind the unpardonable crime'. However, the writer opined that 'one should not be hasty to blame an entire community for the crime, however much it is barbaric or however much its impact on the society at large would be.' It also claimed there was no historical evidence to suggest that the Muslims as a community had resorted to violence, despite there being isolated mobs and isolated incidents.¹⁵
- An article in *Daily Mirror* featured a letter to the editor, in which the Muslim writer condemned the 'cowardly' Easter Sunday attacks. The writer opines that he does not understand why such devastation has been inflicted, supposedly in the name of Islam, and calls on all Muslims to assist the authorities in the inquiries.¹⁶
- An article in *Daily Mirror* discussed the recent attacks and noted the recent trouble between the Sinhalese and Muslim communities that have been 'simmering for the past five or more years'. The author stated that terrorists, and not Muslims, must be blamed for the recent attacks.¹⁷

¹² *Daily News*, April 5, p. 2; *Sunday Observer*, April 14, p. 6.

¹³ *Daily News*, April 10, p. 11.

¹⁴ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 6.

¹⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A8.

¹⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A8.

¹⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A9.



- An article in *Daily Mirror* stated that the Easter Sunday attacks came as a ‘rude shock to the Muslim community’. It stated that ‘they could not believe that such a crime would be perpetrated in the name of a faith that has stood for peace for over a thousand years’. The perpetrators of the attacks are the ‘antithesis’ of Islam and are ‘worse than animals’. Furthermore, the writer discussed the importance of religious tolerance in Islam, and historical examples of said tolerance.¹⁸
- An editorial in *Daily News* noted the devastation of the Easter Sunday attacks. The editorial argued that extremist ideology of any form is bad and those who distort religious teachings to incite hatred and instigate violence should have no place in any civilised society. It further stated that religious leaders themselves must play a key role in the endeavour to curb the rise of extremism.¹⁹
- An opinion article in *Daily News* argued for restraint because ‘lashing out at the communities or groups from which the attackers were drawn will only ignite a cycle of violence.’ The writer advocated for a strong civic and political education to inculcate proper values within the populace, capable of protecting democracy and ensuring tolerance flourishes and coexistence is protected. Instead of an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality, people should view others as fellow members of humanity.²⁰
- An article in *Daily News* agreed that it is natural for people, including Christians to be overwhelmed with emotions and anger and call upon the authorities to impose maximum punishment on the perpetrators of the crime. However, the writer reminded people that to act in such a way would not be according to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ or Lord Buddha. The writer called upon people to respond by following the path of their religious leaders, who direct them to pursue peace.²¹
- An article in *Daily Mirror* recounted the attacks on churches and hotels. The author notes that political leaders, perhaps learning the lessons of the civil war, have united to condemn the attacks as perpetrated by ‘terrorists’ rather than ‘blame a particular community’.²²
- An article in *Daily Mirror* noted that everyone should have freedom of religion, and analyses bans on religious symbols in public in other countries. The writer was

¹⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A14.

¹⁹ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 6.

²⁰ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 7.

²¹ *Daily News*, April 25, p. 7.

²² *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A8.



strongly against banning religious attire. He argued that such a ban was incompatible with notions of democracy.²³

- An article in *Daily Mirror* portrayed Islam as ‘a peace loving and forgiving religion whose connection with the Christian community goes back 1400 years’. The writer views the Easter Sunday attacks by terrorists in the name of god as a blow to the spiritual bond the Muslims share with the Christians. While drawing attention to some of the differences in the belief systems of Muslims and Christians, he says that yet ‘our differences should not be an impediment to our friendship built on many theological and spiritual concepts we share’.²⁴
- A feature article in *Sunday Observer* provided a descriptive account of the Easter Sunday attacks. Furthermore, the article featured acts done by the Muslim community in response to the attacks. These acts included the statement made by Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs Abdul Haleem Mohammed Hashim urging Muslims to avoid gathering for congregational prayers on Friday as a sign of solidarity with the Catholic Community; and the Muslim community offering their mosques to Catholics to hold their holy masses among others.²⁵
- An editorial in *Daily News* conspiratorially questions whether the Easter Sunday attacks were allowed to go ahead in order to strike back against the Muslim community. The writer stressed the importance of not holding the Muslim community ‘hostage’ and alienating them through ‘knee jerk responses’, before going on to discuss anti-extremist programmes.²⁶
- An opinion article in *Daily Mirror* discussed how to deal with the challenge of extremism. The writer used Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the Middle East, Shiv Sena in India or the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) in Sri Lanka as examples. With regard to Islamic extremism, the writer opines that ‘extremism is incompatible with the Islamic faith, and many were the occasions when the Prophet spoke against it. But there are Muslims who are certainly extremists’. To counter this extremism, the author argues we need to ‘eliminate’ and ‘muzzle’ hate preachers, supervise madrasas ‘strictly’, have families send their smarter children to madrasas and crush terrorism ‘ruthlessly’.²⁷
- An opinion article in *Daily Mirror* argued that the Easter Sunday attacks ‘at least partially stemmed from the ghettoisation of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka’.

²³ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A12.

²⁴ *Daily Mirror*, April 26, p. A8.

²⁵ *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 7.

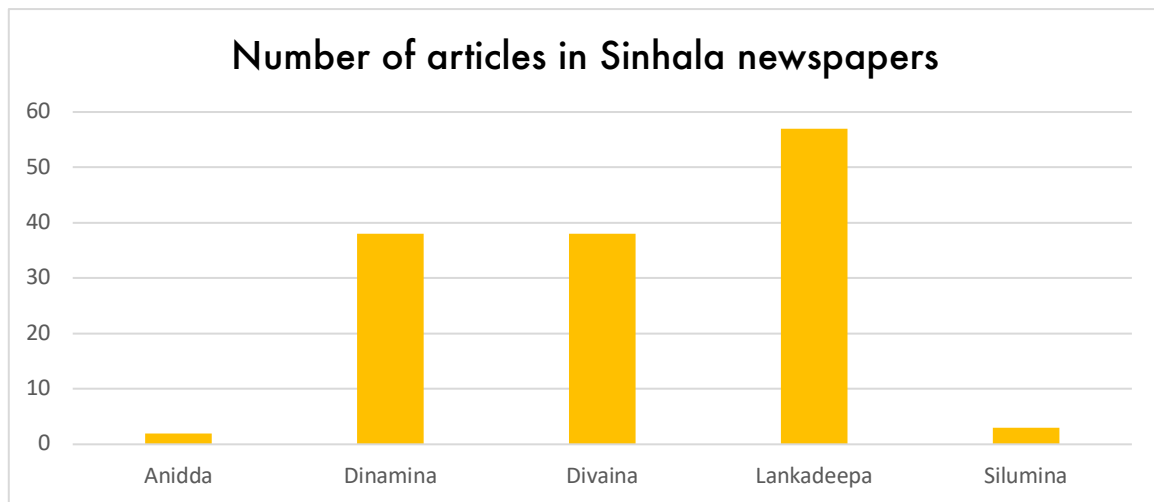
²⁶ *Daily News*, April 29, p. 6.

²⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A9.



- This reasoning was put forward by Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, who is a Sri Lankan researcher on radicalisation and terrorism. Dr. Gunaratna opines that the motivation and targets chosen by ISIS had little to do with the inter-communal relations in Sri Lanka itself, but a fact that cannot be ignored is that those who carried out the attacks were Sri Lankan Muslims. In this context, he states that the 21 April carnage cannot be seen entirely out of the local Sri Lankan context, and that context is a deep-rooted and progressive ghettoisation of Sri Lankan society. Dr. Gunaratna points out that there are separate schools for different ethnicities and religions and students of a particular religion study only his or her religion. Students do not follow an inter-faith course to study and appreciate each other's doctrines and practices. Dr. Gunaratna pointed out that Sri Lankan Muslims have progressively isolated themselves from other religious groups. He opined that a 'Harmony Act' along the line of the 1992 Singapore Act is a 'dire necessity' in Sri Lanka. He further called for a ban on segregation of all kinds and to prevent ghettoisation at the root.²⁸
 - An article in *Daily Mirror* stated that the 'greatest strength in Sri Lanka's fight against Islamic extremism is the local Muslim community.' The writer cites the raid in Sainthamarudu and commends the Muslim community for cooperating with the law enforcement authorities to help nab suspects. However, the writer notes that the greatest long-term threat to Sri Lanka is the radicalisation of the same Muslim community.²⁹
 - A letter to the editor featured in *Daily Mirror* stated that the ban on the face veil endorsed by Muslims and non-Muslims under the prevailing situation in the country should only be temporary because of the divergent views of the Islamic theologians.³⁰
 - In comparison, the **2 opposing articles** covered the following issues:
An article in *Daily Mirror* provided a lengthy descriptive account of the events of 21 April. The article framed the events as the 'coming of age of Islamic extremism in Sri Lanka'. The writer stated that he previously warned about the 'radicalisation of Muslims in the country'. He highlights as problematic the 'Arabisation' of local Muslims, as well as doctrinaire preaching in unregulated madrasas – threatening the 'social fabric' of the country. He further stated that women in burqas, and Muslims as a community, are 'self-alienating' themselves from the wider society, leading to parallel Muslim societies. He concluded that Sri Lanka cannot allow itself to continue living in denial.³¹
- A letter to the editor featured in *Daily Mirror* advocates for the burqa and niqab to be proscribed to avert a 'very dangerous threat to society'.³²
- ²⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A9.
²⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11.
³⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11.
³¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A11.
³² *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A10.

Coverage in Sinhala newspapers



Sinhala Newspapers	No. of Articles	Reportage		
		Supporting	Neutral	Opposing
Anidda	2	1	1	-
Dinamina	38	3	35	-
Divaina	38	-	35	3
Lankadeepa	57	3	54	-
Silumina	3	-	3	-
Total	138	7	128	3

The Sinhala press featured 138 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. 7 of these were supporting religious freedom, while 128 were neutral and 3 were opposing religious freedom.

The **7 supporting articles** covered the following events:

- An article in *Anidda* discussed the arrest of Shakthika Sathkumara, who was remanded for allegedly writing and publishing a short story on Facebook that offended Lord Buddha. Shakthika was charged under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The writer noted that the freedom of expression is not the freedom to express anything. However, the writer argued that this notion could be used dangerously to curtail and plunder the creative rights or the right to expression of artists. The writer argued that the short story did not promote religious or ethnic hatred but love.³³

³³ *Anidda*, April 7, p. 4.

- An editorial in *Dinamina* discussed the importance of defeating extremism. The editorial quoted Prophet Muhammad on practicing religion freely. It noted that no other religion or philosophy in the world is considered inferior and no religious leader had disparaged any other religion or a philosophy. It further stated that if Sri Lanka is to develop, the country needs religious coexistence and unity.³⁴
- Opinion articles in *Dinamina* and *Lankadeepa* denounced any tensions between Muslims and Christians in a religious context. The writer pointed out that many Muslims in the country live in fear and anxiety. In light of this, the writer further pointed out that extremists only form a small fraction of the Muslim community.³⁵
- An editorial in *Lankadeepa* calls for Muslim religious leaders to come to the forefront to fight against extremism within the religion. The editorial notes that although the attacks were carried out by an 'extremist Muslim group', the whole Muslim community should not be held responsible for the attacks.³⁶
- An article in *Dinamina* pointed out that possible 'strained relationships' between communities in Sri Lanka, especially between Muslims and the Sinhalese, in the aftermath of the Easter attacks should not be the reality. The article noted the messages condemning the attacks, which came from Muslim leaders across the country and the general Muslim community.³⁷
- An editorial in *Lankadeepa* expressed condolences on the bomb explosions that occurred on Easter Sunday. The editorial cautioned masses that they should not be misled by the 'opportunistic fundamentalists and extra care should be exercised related to the baseless reports coming from the social media. What should be done is not to add fuel to the conflagration but the extinguishing of the existing fire and to eliminate reasons that trigger the conflagrations.'³⁸
- In comparison, the **3 opposing articles** covered the following issues:
 - An article in *Divaina* condemned the 'Tamil regions' in the northern and southern parts of the country for not observing 'Thripitaka week'. The writer points out that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala-Buddhist country and 'other religious groups have taken 'control' of the North after colonisation by the British. The article hints at anti- Tamil sentiments, while promoting majoritarian religious interests. ³⁹

³⁴ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 4.

³⁵ *Dinamina*, April 26, p. 9; *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 11. ³⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 4.

³⁷ *Dinamina*, April 29, p. 4.

³⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 22, p. 4.

³⁹ *Divaina*, April 7, p. 21.



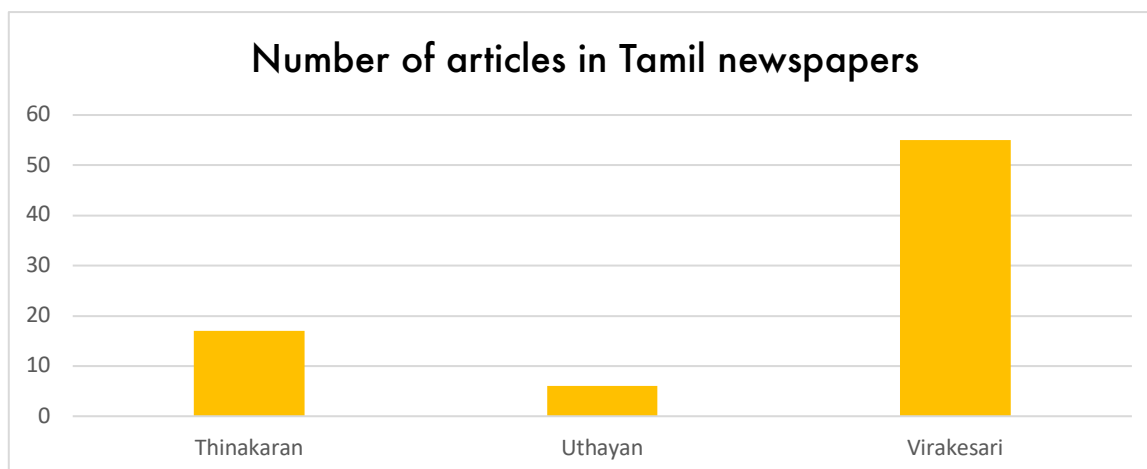
- An article in *Divaina* expressed concern over expansion of the Muslim world population in 2060. It further expressed concern over the perceived annihilation of the Buddhists because of an increase in the Muslim population.⁴⁰
- An article in *Divaina* expressed concern regarding the spread of Wahhabism within the Muslims community in Sri Lanka. The writer remarked that it was ‘an obvious fact that Wahhabism was behind the Sinhala-Muslim issue in Grandpass.’ The writer further remarked that if the general Muslim community becomes ‘victim’ of Wahhabism, it would create an issue for the entire country. In effect, the article hinted at Wahhabism as a threat to religious freedom.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Divaina*, April 21, p. 4.

⁴¹ *Divaina*, April 22, p. 9.



Coverage in Tamil newspapers



Tamil Newspapers	No. of Articles	Reportage		
		Supporting	Neutral	Opposing
Thinakaran	17	-	17	-
Uthayan	6	-	6	-
Virakesari	55	2	53	-
Total	78	2	76	-

- There were 78 articles relating to religious freedom in the Tamil press. 2 were supporting religious freedom and 76 were neutral. There were no opposing articles.
- The **2 supporting articles** included coverage of the following:
- An editorial in *Virakesari* condemned the Easter Sunday attacks on Christian churches and luxury hotels. Additionally, it highlighted the need to prevent a repetition of such incidents, and the importance of strengthening security to ensure the former.⁴²
- An editorial in *Virakesari* emphasised the responsibility of religious leaders during the country's prevailing state of uncertainty. The editorial pointed out that currently there are divisions and gaps among communities. Therefore, the responsibility lies with the religious leaders to ensure that all communities are united.⁴³

⁴² *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 4.

⁴³ *Virakesari*, April 30, p. 4.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The articles monitored during the month of April 2019 can be categorised under five overarching themes pertaining to religious freedom. These themes are: *physical violence towards people and/or property; inflammatory speech; court cases, laws and regulations pertaining to religious freedom; religious inequality and discrimination; and other related reporting.*

This section aims to identify and understand press sentiment in reporting on events/issues related to the overarching themes. These events/issues are selected on the basis of coverage in editorials, opinion articles, feature articles, and statements made by political/non- political actors and groups. The events/issues that were selected for the analysis received the most coverage in Sinhala and/or Tamil and/or English print media in the monitoring period. The event selected for the month of April 2019 concerned the Easter Sunday attacks that took place on 21 April 2019.

The event was categorised under the theme of physical violence towards people and/or property.

Coverage of issues/events under the other four themes, i.e. inflammatory speech; court cases, laws and regulations pertaining to religious freedom; religious inequality and discrimination; and other related reporting was low, and therefore did not qualify for in- depth qualitative analysis in this report.

Overarching Theme	Event
Physical violence	(1) Easter Sunday attacks



Physical violence towards people and/or property

This theme covers religiously motivated violence or attempted violence perpetrated against a person and/or property. Reporting under this theme appeared in relation to one incident that took place during the month of April: the Easter Sunday attacks. Coverage of the incident dominated Sinhala, English and Tamil press reportage in the month of April 2019.

Easter Sunday attacks

On 21 April 2019, a series of suicide bomb explosions took place at three Christian churches, three luxury hotels and in two other locations – New Tropical Inn in Dehiwala and a house in Dematagoda.⁴⁴ As per a recent press release by the Ministry of Health, the attacks have resulted in over 250 deaths and left over 485 people injured.⁴⁵ Following the incident, news reports have held that the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) and Jammiyathul Millathu Ibrahim (JMI) groups were responsible for the suicide attacks.⁴⁶ Subsequently, raids by the police force have resulted in multiple arrests in connection with the attacks.⁴⁷ Furthermore, a number of other explosives and weapons have been discovered in multiple locations around the country.⁴⁸ In response to these attacks, the National Security Council imposed a conditional State of Emergency, which came into effect at midnight on 22 April.⁴⁹ Under the Emergency Regulations adopted, President Maithripala Sirisena ordered a ban on clothing that conceals the full face, including the burqa.⁵⁰ This ban came into effect on 29 April.

The following analysis will aim to explain (i) the incident as a departure from patterns of religious violence that exist within the local context, and (ii) press reporting on the incident across all local language newspapers.

Easter Sunday attacks as a departure from existing patterns of religious violence

This series of reports prepared by Verité Research (VR) have highlighted numerous incidents of ethno-religious violence across the country, covering the final months of 2018 and early 2019. However, the Easter Sunday attacks mark a significant departure from an enduring pattern of religious violence, in terms of a) the victim-perpetrator dichotomy, and b) the scale of the attack.

⁴⁴ For a timeline of the attacks that took on Easter Sunday please refer

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-blasts-timeline/timeline-sri-lankan-bomb-attacks-on-hotels-churches-20-minutes-of-carnage-idUSKCN1RX0NS>.

⁴⁵ <http://www.adaderana.lk/news/54668/health-ministry-revises-easter-attacks-death-toll-down-to-253>.

⁴⁶ *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 1; *Daily News*, April 29, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Chaturanga Samarawickrama, *Easter Sunday attack: 89 suspects arrested* (2019)

Accessed 22 May 2019 http://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking_news/Easter-Sunday-attack-89-suspects-arrested/108-167484.

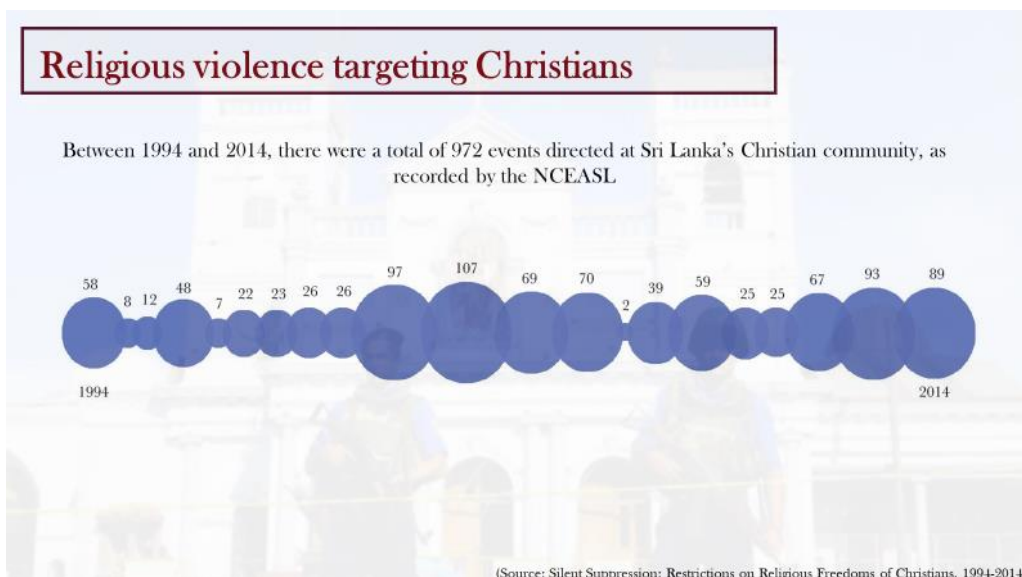
⁴⁸ *Newfirst.lk*, *Police raids across Sri Lanka: Anti-aircraft shells among findings* (2019). Accessed on 22 May 2019 <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2019/04/29/police-raids-across-sri-lanka-anti-aircraft-shells-among-findings/>.

⁴⁹ http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2019/5/2124-10_E.pdf.

⁵⁰ http://www.documents.gov.lk/files/egz/2019/4/2121-01_E.pdf.

(a) Victim – perpetrator dichotomy

The series of bombings on Easter Sunday, a significant date in the Christian calendar, were widely viewed as targeting the Christian minority community that accounts for only 7.6 percent of the total population of Sri Lanka.⁵¹ Notably, an article in *Daily News* reported that “while religious tensions have grown in recent years, with the emergence of radical Islamist groups on the one hand and a surge in ultra-nationalist Buddhism led by the Bodu Bala Sena [BBS] on the other, Christians had so far not been the targets of [religious] violence in Sri Lanka”. However, Minormatters.org has recorded 40 incidents of violence and discrimination against Christians during the period between January – April 2019.⁵² In the past, a report by Verité Research in 2014 reported a total of 972 incidents of religious discrimination and violence targeting Christians in Sri Lanka over 20 years from 1994-2014 (illustrated below).⁵³ The most recent incident, prior to the Easter Sunday attacks, involved intimidation and the throwing of stones at a Methodist Church in Anuradhapura by a group of individuals on Palm Sunday (14 April).⁵⁴



Accordingly, violence against Christians is not a new phenomenon in Sri Lanka and Christians are a frequently targeted religious minority.⁵⁵

⁵¹ <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/FinalReport/FinalReport E.pdf> (page 160).

⁵² *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 6; *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11. For more information on the incidents of violence and discrimination against Christians please see

<http://www.minormatters.org/en/crisis-map>. ⁵³ Verité Research, *Silent Suppression: Restrictions on Religious Freedoms of Christians 1994-2014* (2014). Accessed 21 May 2019 <http://minormatters.org/storage/app/uploads/public/5b5/6f2/ca3/5b56f2ca3b806736825385.pdf>.

⁵⁴ *Daily News*, April 17, p. 2; *Daily Mirror*, April 19, p. A6; *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 6; *Anidda*, April 28, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 11.



However, the naming of the NTJ and JMI, reportedly extremist Islamist groups, as responsible for the attacks, is a departure from the typical victim-perpetrator dichotomy. Notably, prior to the Easter Sunday attacks, Christians and Muslims were collectively viewed as frequently targeted religious minority groups.⁵⁶ Both religious groups often faced discrimination and violence by Sinhala-Buddhist extremists.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the Easter Sunday attacks may potentially give rise to a new localised ‘victim-perpetrator dichotomy’.

(b) Scale of the attacks

Although violence against Christians is familiar in Sri Lanka, the highly coordinated and sophisticated nature of the suicide bombings targeting Christian places of worship (and hotels) are without precedent in Sri Lanka. Studies indicate that “non-physical forms of violence such as threats, intimidation, coercion, and structural forms of violence such as discrimination remain the most prevalent forms of violence against Christians”.⁵⁸ For instance, out of the 972 incidents mentioned above, under 45 percent involved either physical violence or property damage against Christians.⁵⁹ However, considering violence against Muslims, data for the period of January 2015 to March 2018 sourced from press reports complied in the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) database recorded 33 incidents of violence against Muslims.⁶⁰ Out of the 33 incidents, over 55 percent of the incidents against Muslims involved either physical violence or property damage.⁶¹ Further, examples of such anti-Muslims attacks include attacks against Muslim-owned businesses, homes and people in Althugama (June 2014), Gintota (November 2017), Ampara (March 2018) and Digana (March 2018), among others. Accordingly, violence against Christians often occurs at ‘low’ levels of intensity and more frequently whereas the violence against the Muslims happens at high levels of intensity and low level of frequency. Against this backdrop, the Easter Sunday attacks, which resulted in over 200 deaths including people belonging to the Christian faith, marks a departure from the typical form and scale of violence against the Christian minority community. Notably, the above discussion on the departure of existing patterns of religious violence was featured marginally – and only in the English press. Certain voices in the English

⁵⁶ *Dinamina*, April 26, p. 9.

⁵⁷ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 7; *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Gehan Gunatilleke, *The Chronic and the Entrenched: Ethno-religious Violence in Sri Lanka* (Equitas and ICES 2018), at 46. Accessed on 21 May 2019 <http://ices.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-Chronic-and-the-Entrenched-Mr.-Gihan-Book-FINAL-WEB-PDF.pdf>.

Verité Research, *Silent Suppression: Restrictions on Religious Freedoms of Christians 1994-2014* (2014), at 23. Accessed 21 May 2019.

<http://minormatters.org/storage/app/uploads/public/5b5/6f2/ca3/5b56f2ca3b806736825385.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Verité Research, *Silent Suppression: Restrictions on Religious Freedoms of Christians 1994-2014* (2014), at 8.

⁶⁰ Data for specific event types, actors and region over specific periods of time are available for public download at <https://www.acleddata.com/data/>.

⁶¹ Data for specific event types, actors and region over specific periods of time are available for public download at <https://www.acleddata.com/data/>.



press relied on global narratives to explain the departure from the existing patterns of religious violence.⁶² This global narrative can be understood as the ‘perceived clash between Islam and the West that provides ideological inspiration for al Qaeda and Islamic State-led global Jihad’.⁶³ Accordingly, English press voices claimed that such narratives ‘seemingly influenced Sri Lanka’s local conflict’, resulting in the targeting of Christians on Easter Sunday.⁶⁴ Notably, only the English press explored the idea of global narratives at play in the Easter Sunday attacks.

Press reporting on Easter Sunday attacks

There was unanimous condemnation of the series of bombings targeting Christian places of worship and other public places across all language newspapers. The press discussion contained two conversations: (i) the response of public figures in the aftermath of the attacks, and (ii) the apportionment of responsibility (or blame) in the aftermath of the attacks. These two lines of conversation were dominant in both the Sinhala and English press. By contrast, only the former line of conversation, on the response of public figures, was featured in the Tamil press, which abstained from apportioning blame for the attacks.

(i) Response

Voices across all three local language newspapers called for religious coexistence to strengthen social integration and unity among the citizens in the aftermath of the attacks. These voices included politicians, religious leaders, press commentators and editorials.⁶⁵ Press voices drew on the history of coexistence among ethno-religious communities to discourage further religious extremism and praised the role of religious leaders, especially that of Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, for having played a crucial role in not letting hatred or intolerance spread.⁶⁶ The press also carried news of religious leaders including Buddhist monks, Christian priests, nuns and Muslim leaders visiting mosques and damaged churches as a token of solidarity which was seen as necessary for religious harmony and co-existence.⁶⁷

⁶² *Daily News*, April 26, p. 7.

⁶³ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11.

⁶⁴ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 7.

⁶⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 22, p. A4; *Daily Mirror*, April 22, p. A4; *Daily News*, April 22, p. 1, 8; *Daily News*, April 22, p. 4; *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A6; *Daily News*, April 25, p. 7; *Daily News*, April 26, p. 2; *Daily News*, April 26, p. 5; *Daily News*, April 26, p. 9; *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A1, A2; *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 4; *Daily News*, April 29, p. 1, 8; *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 4; *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 6; *Lankadeepa*, April 22, p. 4; *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 17; *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 5; *Virakesari*, April 27, p. 2; *Virakesari*, April 27, p. 11; *Virakesari*, April 30, p. 4; *Uthayan*, April 29, p. 17; *Uthayan*, April 25, p. 15; *Uthayan*, April 23, p. 2.

⁶⁶ This idea has previously been explored by Verité Research in its weekly publication *The Media Analysis*. For example, refer Verité Research, *The Media Analysis*, Vol.9 #16 (29 April – 5 May, 2019).

⁶⁷ This idea has previously been explored by Verité Research in its weekly publication *The Media Analysis*. For example, refer Verité Research, *The Media Analysis*, Vol.9 #16 (29 April – 5 May, 2019).



(ii) Responsibility

The press conversation on responsibility (or blame) for the attacks was apportioned to three groups of actors. Notably, the apportionment of blame to the three groups discussed below received equal traction in both the English and Sinhala press.

1. A faction of the press placed responsibility on the **Muslim community** to eradicate Islamist extremism in the country.⁶⁸ While it was acknowledged that all Muslims are not terrorists, press and political voices noted that the terrorists responsible for the attacks were identified as Muslims.⁶⁹ Against this backdrop, an editorial in *Daily Mirror* pointed out that ‘it would not be so easy for them [Muslims] to clear their faith of allegation of violence, unless they...weed out the extremist elements from the community, on their own and with the help of the law enforcement authorities.’⁷⁰ Furthermore, an article in *Daily Mirror* held that ‘[the] ‘Arabization’ of local Muslims, as well as doctrinaire preaching in unregulated Madrasas threatens the ‘social fabric’ of the country.’⁷¹ By implication, this view appears to prejudicially hold the Muslim community accountable for its alleged inability to prevent the extremism that led to the Easter Sunday attacks.

This blame placed on the Muslim community may be explained by the ‘host-guest’ mindset held by the majority group. According to the ‘host-guest’ mindset, the majority Sinhala-Buddhists perceive themselves to be the primary citizens or ‘hosts’ of the nation, while viewing minority groups, including the Muslims, as ‘guests’.⁷² In effect, the ‘guests’ are expected to conform to the standard set out by the ‘host’. Against this backdrop, the press commentary on the Muslim community can be seen through types of policing: (1) external policing, and (2) internal policing. First, external policing included the ban on the burqa, and the proscribing of Islamist extremist groups under Emergency Regulations (discussed above).⁷³ Second, internal policing included calls for the Muslim community to eradicate

⁶⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A8; *Daily News*, April 24, p. 6; *Daily News*, April 25, p. 7; *Lankadeepa*, April 25, p. 6(II); *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 4.

⁶⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A9; *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A10; *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A14; *Daily News*, April 24, p. 7; *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A8; *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 2; *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 14; *Daily News*, April 29, p. 6; *Daily News*, April 30, p. 5; *Divaina*, April 22, p. 9; *Divaina*, April 23, p. 1, 4; *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 6; *Divaina*, April 24, p. 8; *Divaina*, April 24, p. 13; *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 10; *Dinamina*, April 29, p. 6; *Dinamina*, April 25, p. 13; *Divaina*, April 25, p. 15; *Thinakaran*, April 26, p. 6.

⁷⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A8.

⁷¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A11;

⁷² This idea has previously been explored by Verité Research in its weekly publication *The Media Analysis*. For example, refer Verité Research, *The Media Analysis*, Vol.4 #16 (21 – 27 April, 2014). Also see Verité Research, *Understanding Press Coverage on Religious Freedom: March 2019*, p. 19.

⁷³ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A1; *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A6; *Daily News*, April 25, p. 2; *Daily Mirror*, April 26, p. A1, A2; *Daily News*, April 26, p. 7; *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 1; *Daily News*, April 29, p. 8; *Daily News*, April 29, p. 9; *Lankadeepa*, April 26, p. 5; *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 6; *Lankadeepa*, April 25, p. 12; *Virakesari*, April 24, p. 2; *Virakesari*, April 26, p. 1; *Virakesari*, April 27, p. 2.



extremism within its own community.⁷⁴ For an instance, an article in *Daily Mirror* advocates for the ‘elimination’ and ‘muzzle’ of hate preachers, to supervise madrasas ‘strictly’ and to have Muslim families ‘send their smarter children to madrasa and crush terrorism ruthlessly’.⁷⁵ Notably, and by contrast, such calls for policing of Sinhala-Buddhist extremist groups were minimal following previous instances of religious violence perpetrated by members of the Sinhala-Buddhist community. For instance, following the religious clashes in 2018, some in the print media were critical of perpetrators and of political actors alleged to have been behind those clashes. However, they were not seen as holding the Sinhala-Buddhists accountable for violence that was unleashed in the way the responsibility was apportioned to Muslims for Easter bombings.

2. Press reportage also blamed the **previous government** for creating social and political conditions that led to the emergence of Islamist extremism.⁷⁶ This narrative viewed the economic, social and political conditions of the past as pushing members of the Muslim youth towards extremism.⁷⁷ In particular, voices presenting this view saw the previous government as responsible for forming and supporting extremist organisations such as the BBS which has for some years been ‘demonising the Sri Lankan Muslims’.⁷⁸ As such, the previous government was blamed for mishandling social integration and creating a ‘new [post-war] danger’ i.e., ‘ethnic over-determination being replaced by religious over-determination’.⁷⁹ Notably, this view appeals to previous criticisms, made by the press, of the previous administration as advancing the interests of the Sinhala- Buddhist demographic at the cost of other ethnic and religious groups.⁸⁰

Press narratives also blamed the **incumbent government** along similar lines of criticism levelled at the previous government. The *yahapaalanaya* government was held responsible for adopting a ‘laissez-faire attitude towards religious extremism’.⁸¹ Although, the incumbent government was not viewed to have ‘proactively exacerbated religious tensions (as its predecessor did)’, its reluctance to take a stand was seen to have tacitly contributed towards ‘encouraging extremism’.⁸²

⁷⁴ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A6; *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A8; *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 7; *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A9; *Daily News*, April 30, p. 5; *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11; *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 4; *Lankadeepa*, April 25, p. 6(II).

⁷⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A9.

⁷⁶ *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 6; *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11.

⁷⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11; *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A9; *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 11; *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11; *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A9.

⁷⁸ *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11.

⁷⁹ *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11.

⁸⁰ This idea has previously been explored by Verité Research in its weekly publication *The Media Analysis*. For example, refer Verité Research, *The Media Analysis*, Vol.09, #15 (22 – 28 April, 2019). ⁸¹ *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11.

⁸² *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11.

Outside these two lines of conversation, a notable feature of press reporting on the attacks was the largely objective nature of the reportage. Past trends in reporting on ethno-religious violence, especially in the Sinhala press, have included prejudicial terminology, especially by more nationalist-leaning segments of the press. In this instance however, press and political voices can be seen to have acted responsibly in terms of refraining from using terminology that could potentially incite further hostility or tensions. For instance, Sinhala press reporting on the vandalism of Buddha Statues in Mawanella in December 2018 used prejudicial terminology such as, ‘Muslim fanatics’, ‘Sri Lankan Taliban’, ‘violent beggars who lack ideology’, and disclosed the suspects’ personal information including their postal addresses.⁸³

By contrast, reporting on the Easter attacks featured political and religious voices calling for the general public to remain calm, peaceful and supportive of government investigations. Additionally, politicians, religious leaders and editorials have sought to distance the ‘terrorists’/‘extremists’ from the general Muslim community. These voices emphasised the fact that Islam does not condone violence and that the Muslim community rejects these terrorists/extremists. The press, for the most part, exercised discipline in following internationally accepted codes of ethics in reporting during the period of monitoring, marking a shift from a past tendency to demonise allegedly Muslim perpetrators.⁸⁴

⁸³ Verité Research, *Understanding Press Coverage on Religious Freedom: Oct-Dec 2018*, p. 14.

⁸⁴ Gehan Gunatilleke, *Explaining Sri Lanka’s New Emergency Regulations on ‘Publication’* (2019). Accessed 21 May 2019 <https://www.veriteresearch.org/insight/er-on-publication/>.



CONCLUSION

This study was based on media coverage produced during the month of April 2019 in all three languages on issues related to religious freedom. The analysis in the study considered 368 articles dealing with religious freedom under five overarching themes. The events/issues that were qualitatively analysed in this report related to one out of these five themes, i.e., ***physical violence towards people and/or property***. These articles were chosen for analysis based on the high degree of traction that they received in the English and/or Tamil and/or Sinhala press. These articles were analysed by taking into account the sentiment contained therein. Sentiment was identified through content, perspective and tone of reporting. A qualitative analysis of the reported content led to the following key findings:

The Easter Sunday attacks marked a significant departure from an enduring pattern of religious violence in the local context, in terms of a) the victim- perpetrator dichotomy, and b) the scale of the attack. Additionally, reporting on the incident contained two conversations: (i) the response of public figures in the aftermath of the attacks, and (ii) the apportionment of responsibility (or blame) in the aftermath of the attacks. Lastly, press reporting across all language newspapers (especially the Sinhala press) largely abstained from past tendencies to demonise allegedly Muslim perpetrators in reporting on ethno-religious violence issues. Notably, the English press marginally captured the discussion on the departure of the existing pattern of religious violence in the local context. Further, a faction in the English press relied on global narratives to explain this departure. However, the Sinhala and Tamil press did not highlight this departure nor rely on global narratives to explain the local conflict. The section on press reporting on the Easter Sunday attacks revealed a division among the local language newspapers. Specifically, the Tamil press only featured the first line of conversation on the response of public figures in the aftermath of the attacks and abstained from apportioning responsibility. By contrast, the English and Sinhala press equally featured both lines of conversation mentioned above.



RELATED REPORTING

Rishad blames Muslim leaders (by A.M.A. Fareed) – While stating that the law and order of the country will never be side-lined, Minister Rishad Bathiudeen also pointed out that several Muslim leaders and MP Sampanthan have initiated acts against him. He also stated that several NGOs slung mud at him on the Wilpattu land issue.⁸⁵

Premadasa awarded the ‘Sasana Deepana’ award (by Asela Kuruluwansa) – Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa was awarded with the 'Sasana Deepana Abhimani Sri Lanka Janaranjana' honorary title by the Malwatta sect yesterday (31st) at the Malwatta Temple, Kandy. President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe partook in this event.⁸⁶

“Everybody should know the good as well as the bad of history” – President – The article extensively covers the speech delivered by President Maithripala Sirisena as the chief guest of the opening event of an exhibition organised for the 100th anniversary of the Bambalapitiya Siri Wajiragnana Dhamma school. The article further covers the exhibition, which had 19 stalls which illustrate the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism, the history of Dhamma schools and the Siri Wajiragnana Dhamma school and Ven. Palane Siri Wajiragana Thera.⁸⁷

“Premadasa is suitable for honors and respect – Deputy Chief Prelate of Asgiri Sect Ven. Wendaruwe Upali Thera in the ceremony to bestow the honorary title ‘Sasana Deepana Abhimani Sri Lanka Janaranjana’ (by Asela Kuruluwansa) – The article extensively covers the speech delivered by the Deputy Chief Prelate of Asgiri Sect Ven. Wendaruwe Upali Thera and other chief prelates and venerable theras’ regarding Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa and his service to Buddhism. The article further delves into the speech given by Premadasa at the event.⁸⁸

The first Buddhist conference in North concluded successfully (by Dinasena Rathugamage) – The first Buddhist conference in the North was concluded successfully. Based on a concept by the Governor of the North Dr. Suren Raghavan, the Buddhist conference was held at the Vavuniya Sri Bodhi Dhakshinarama Temple for a whole day under the leadership of many chief incumbents, including Ven. Walamitiyawewa Kusala Dhamma Thera. The main reason behind the decision to hold the Buddhist conference in Vavuniya is to take measures to develop the destroyed temples in the North and create a suitable religious atmosphere for the monks in the region.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ *Daily News*, April 1, p. 5.

⁸⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 1, p. 1.

⁸⁷ *Lankadeepa*, April 1, p. 5.

⁸⁸ *Dinamina*, April 1, p. 12.

⁸⁹ *Divaina*, April 1, p. 4.



“It's a pride to bestow an honorary title to Premadasa who is dedicated for the future of Buddhism” – PM – The article covers the event of bestowing the 'Sasana Deepana Abhimani Sri Lanka Janaranjana' honorary title to Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa by the Malwatta Sect. It further covers the speeches delivered by the prime minister, venerable theras and Premadasa.⁹⁰

“Premadasa likes to work for poor. The honorary title he received from the Malwatta Sect is a strength to him for that” – PM (by Cyril Wimalasurendra) – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa, who went to Hambantota for his appetite to serve the poor, will be empowered with this honorary title bestowed from the Malwatta Temple. Wickremesinghe made this statement at an event held to bestow the honorary title to Premadasa by the chief prelate of Malwatta Sect and the Bhikku Sabha.⁹¹

Wilpattu, Islamophobia and looming prospect of Islamisation (by Ranga Jayasuriya)

- The anti-Muslim campaign of the fringe Sinhala Buddhist ultra-nationalist bigotry is regenerative. The latest is ostensibly to protect the forestry of Wilpattu, but it is the same old Islamophobic campaign that has resurfaced. In 2012, a presidential task force headed by then Minister Basil Rajapaksa recommended that the department of forest conservation release land for the Muslim families who were chased away by the LTTE in 1990. However, while the resettlement was underway, Bodu Bala Sena and other ultra-nationalist fringe groups launched a campaign, alleging that the Wilpattu forest was being cleared to resettle the returning Muslim families. The writer is of the view that “propagators of such anti-Muslim hate in real life and in virtual life should be identified, monitored, and arrested. New laws should be incorporated under the proposed counter terrorism laws to enable preventive detention of bigots for a substantial period.” It is also important to dissect the role of increasing Islamisation within the Muslim community, which in effect ignites islamophobia, and uncertainty within the other communities. Increasing madrasas where Muslim youth are taught an austere version of Salafi Islam against moderate local Islam are also purveyors of Islamisation. Mainstream political leaders who rely on Muslim votes for their re-election are not willing to question this unfolding Islamisation. As much as it should confront islamophobia, Sri Lanka should act now to reverse the on-going Islamisation of its Muslims.⁹²

PM lauds Sajith's service to Buddha Sasana and SL (by Asela Kuruluwansa) – The bestowal of an honorary title by the Malwatte Chapter on Minister Sajith Premadasa in appreciation of the national and religious services was praised by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. The prime minister said that the Malwatte Maha Viharaya decided to confer this honorary title on Minister Premadasa in recognition of his unblemished character and the colossal service he has done for the people. The premier also assured that the government on its part gives priority to Buddhist activities.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 2, p. 10.

⁹¹ *Divaina*, April 2, p. 11.

⁹² *Daily Mirror*, April 2, p. A14.

⁹³ *Daily News*, April 2, p. 2.



“There is a huge interest on Buddhist philosophy in western countries” – PM – Addressing an event to lay the foundation stone for the Buddhist Education and Pali Post Graduate Institute, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that since there’s a special interest in Buddhist philosophy in Western countries, the responsibility of this institute is to facilitate the service not only to the Asian Buddhist countries, but to the foreign countries where the sources to learn Buddhism is scarce but the need is present.⁹⁴

Establish Hindu University – Saravanapavan (by Camelia Nathaniel Amali Mallawaarachchi and Menaka Indrakumar) – Jaffna MP E. Saravanapavan stated in parliament that there should be a Hindu University to research and enhance knowledge, like the Buddhist University. The MP pointed out that no temple affected by the war has been reconstructed and yet a Buddhist statue was erected near the Keerimalai, Nageswaran Temple. The MP also pointed out that there were liquor shops working during the Hindu festivals, whereas they were instructed to close down during Buddhist religious festivals.⁹⁵

Award winning writer reportedly remanded – An award-winning writer S. Sathyakumara has been charged by the police under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) following a complaint lodged by a Buddhist organisation for inciting religious hatred. The short story he put on Facebook is said to be about a Buddhist monk who renounced the saffron robe and his experiences while being a monk. He has been reportedly remanded by the Polgahawela Magistrate’s Courts till 09 April.⁹⁶

The short story writer who insulted Buddhism was remanded (by Saman Gamage) - Shakthika Sathkumara, who works at the Polgahawela Pradeshiya Sabha, was remanded till May 09 for allegedly writing and publishing a short story which abuses Buddhism on Facebook. Following his arrest, he was produced in front of the Polgahawela court by the police. This happened as he wrote about the sexual activities in a Buddhist temple through an imaginary character who was robed once. Shakthika was produced in court in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Act introduced in 2007. A magistrate has no power to set bail for a suspect produced in court under this act. In such an instance, bail should be requested from a high court. The complaint against him was filed by the *Shasanarakshaka Balamandalaya* (a body which assists relevant authorities to promote, develop and protect the Buddha Sasana in Sri Lanka) of the region. The complaint said that the writer supported religious hatred through his short story.⁹⁷

A development officer was arrested for insulting Buddha on Facebook – Following a complaint; the police arrested a development officer who had insulted Lord Buddha on Facebook. Following an order by the Polgahawela Magistrate, the officer was remanded until May 09. The lawyer representing the prosecution said that the suspect was insulting

⁹⁴ *Dinamina*, April 3, p. 7.

⁹⁵ *Daily News*, April 3, p. 5.

⁹⁶ *Daily News*, April 3, p. 5.

⁹⁷ *Divaina*, April 3, p. 7.



Buddha and characters such as Queen Yashodara and Princess Rahula on his Facebook account through short stories written as pieces for a long time and the account should be shut down. He further claimed that this could lead to religious clashes as well.⁹⁸

Open Mosque day program at Jayawadanagama today – The Kaduwela Divisional Secretariat, Jayawadanagama Mosque and the Islamic Study Center organised an event for the open mosque day (A day which the mosque is open for anyone from any religion). Anyone with any religious belief can join the event.⁹⁹

Police grant Rs. 600,000 for three people who caught the person that damaged the Buddha statue in Mawanella (by Shrinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) – Rs. 600,000 was awarded to three youngsters who caught a person that tried to escape after damaging a Buddha statue in Mawanella. Police were able to arrest 16 other people who damaged Buddha and Hindu statues in Mawanella and surrounding areas.¹⁰⁰

Officer held over insulting Buddhism (by S. M. Wijayarathne) – A Sinhalese development officer attached to the Polgahawela Divisional Secretariat in Kurunegala was taken into custody by the police for publishing defamatory stories and articles on Facebook that insult Buddha's life, Queen Yashodhara, and Prince Rahula. The complaint was made by Sathkoral Maha Disawe Chief Addhikarana Sangha Nayaka Ven. Deldeniye Rathanasara Nayake Thera.¹⁰¹

HRCSL roots for teachers' right to wear *abaya* – Four assistant teachers of Sri Shanmuga Hindu Ladies College, Trincomalee, made a complaint to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) as they were prohibited from wearing the abaya on the basis that it was not in line with Hindu traditions of the school. HRCSL in a statement said national schools are bound by the constitution and cannot violate the absolute right to religious freedom by asking teachers to refrain from wearing the abaya in schools.¹⁰²

Cleric in Wellawatte ignites racial disharmony – Rishad – MP Rishad Bathuideen in parliament said the issue involving Wilpattu-Musali was politically motivated by a cleric who resided in Wellawatte.¹⁰³

Letters to the editor – Islamophobia and Islamisation (by Surangani Rat.)- “No one is superior to another just because he or she belongs to the majority.” It is the responsibility of parents, clergy and teachers to instil such values in young children's minds. The writer advises the politicians not to take political mileage from an issue, but to do the right thing and address the issue.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 3, p. 6.

⁹⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 4, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 4, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ *Daily News*, April 4, p. 8.

¹⁰² *Daily News*, April 5, p. 2.

¹⁰³ *Daily News*, April 5, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ *Daily Mirror*, April 5, p. A10.



All must get together to promote communal harmony – Hakeem – Minister of City Planning, Water Supply and Higher Education and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Leader Rauff Hakeem said spiritualism, tolerance and compromise should go hand in hand to promote communal harmony and improve reconciliation in the country. While the minister assured that it is the wish of the government to develop all religious places in the country, a fraction of the country's population is trying to raise the ugly head of racism by creating dissention with their petty ideological differences. He said that all the religious leaders should be aware of these threats and act responsibly to strengthen unity and amity among people of all religions.¹⁰⁵

Wilpattu Islamophobia and looming prospect of Islamisation (by S. I. M. Khaleel) – In this opinion piece, the author highlighted several vested interests to escalate Sinhala- Muslim clashes. Some of the reasons he highlighted are politicians, businessmen, extremist Tamil politics and the Tamil diaspora bidding international support for their demand of a federal government, those campaigning for the merge of the North and East. Islam is the fastest spreading religion in the West. Churches are being converted into Islamic places of worship. Westerners have lost faith in their religions and find Islam a solution to their problems. Free thinking and freedom of choice of religion is the result of growth in the West. People all around the world have begun to realise that the religion that claims to follow is merely ceremonial. If there were freedom of thought and freedom for choice of religion, people in our region too may follow the West.¹⁰⁶

Sinhala novelist faces opposition from certain quarters (by Aanya Wipulasena) – This feature piece discusses the arrest and charging of Shakthika Sathkumara. He wrote a short story, published on Facebook that included homosexuality and sexual harassment within Buddhist temples. This work offended certain monks and members of the Buddhist community. On the 1st of April Sathkumara was charged under section 3(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Act of 2007. The article argues that this is inapplicable, as it deals with inciting violence. This is not the first time Sri Lanka's "religious policing" of artistic work has taken an ugly turn. Last year, several creations were 'deemed "offensive" towards 'religion and culture'. Among them were the radio dramas by Malaka Dewapriya. In 1992, Stanley Jeyaraja Thambiah's "Buddhism Betrayed?" was banned in Sri Lanka upon publication. The uproar was focused on the cover of the book, which depicted Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera gesturing with a clenched fist. Even earlier, 1975, beloved author Martin Wickramasinghe's final publication "Bhava Tharanaya" triggered and offended certain Buddhists who claimed the novel, that observed the life of Prince Siddhartha in cultural and pragmatic terms, "insulted the religion."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Daily News*, April 6, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 6, p. A8.

¹⁰⁷ *Sunday Observer*, April 7, p. 6.



***Tripitaka* week won't be held in Tamil regions. Could this be a command came from a higher rank, bypassing the president?** (by Mathugama Seneviruwan) – The *Tripitaka* worshipping week, organised to declare the *Tripitaka* a national heritage, was held around the country with many blessing celebrations. But in the North and South, which are so-called Tamil areas, there were no celebratory events organised as per a command that came from high up. Everybody knows that the *Tripitaka* wouldn't be a national heritage if this series of events could not cover the whole island. But this happened even without the knowledge of the venerable chief prelates. Sri Lanka was a Sinhala Buddhist country not only in the ancient history, but even when English invaded the island. The venerable monks who were in North had to migrate to the South leaving historical temples when the invasions came. From that gap, other religious groups took hold of the North. Due to this history, temples in the North have a right to be a part of this Sinhala Buddhist heritage. Politicians don't have an idea of the depth of worshipping the *Tripitaka* and even the president didn't do anything with regard to this issue.¹⁰⁸

Plunder the freedom of expression of an artist under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (by Gamini Viyangoda) – Shakthika Sathkumara is a short story writer. He wrote a short story named “Ardha” and published it on his Facebook account about a month ago. In this short story, he discusses the life of a clergy after he leaves monkhood and homosexuality. He is representing these symbolically. In one occasion, he mentioned the nature of the sexual relationship between Siddhartha and Yashodara and regarding Rahula as per some *Mahayana* texts. Freedom of expression is not the freedom to express anything. But this notion could be used dangerously to curtail and plunder the creative rights or the right to expression of artists. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) was used by the authorities to make a case against Sathkumara. If the intention was to just a make a case against the writer, that could have been done under the Sri Lankan Penal Code. However, we believe that this decision came from a political high up as they have decided to go to ICCPR in this matter. That high up political authority is likely to be equipped with a religious and ethnic ideology. The context of the case is that the writer perpetrated religious hatred through his creation, which is covered under the 20th clause of the covenant. But it can be argued easily that this short story never promoted religious or ethnic hatred, but love. We all should unite for the rights and freedom of this writer as freedom of expression through art should be firm in modern civilisation.¹⁰⁹

Digana riot victim's family needs help (by Ajith Gangoda) – W.G. Tilaka Pathma Kumari of Ambale, Medamahanuwara has undergone hardships and sorrow, ever since her husband was killed in the racial riot in Digana. Even though several politicians pledged that they would support her and her daughter and differently-abled son, none have come forward after her husband's funeral.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ *Divaina*, April 7, p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ *Anidda*, April 7, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Daily News*, April 8, p. 10.

Protest in Polonnaruwa against illegal deforestation (by K. G Karunaratthna) – A protest was held in Polonnaruwa Town against the destruction of the forests in the country. Protesters walk with the theme “Let's Protect the Earth that Gave the Heart Life.” Ven. Pahiyanigala Ananda Sagara Thera accused the politicians of destroying the forests on a large scale, including Wilpattu National Forest Reserve and river valleys in Polonnaruwa. He also said, “If the government does not take immediate action to stop the destruction of the forest, a large force of people, together with the Maha Sangha, without racial or religious or political differences will come forward against the present rulers.”¹¹¹

‘Politicians causing divisions among people’ – President Maithripala Sirisena stated that all politicians should be held responsible for division among citizens based on spoken language. Speaking at the launch of the simplified Sinhala language translation of the holy Quran, the president emphasised the significance of the translation being in simplified Sinhala in order for the people to understand the history of Islam. The president said the division of society according to spoken language has been a hindrance to the programme of building national peace and reconciliation in the country. The initiative of translating the holy Quran into simplified Sinhala was taken under the patronage of All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama.¹¹²

Al Quran Sinhala translation is released – Al Quran, which was translated to simple Sinhala language, was unveiled recently at the BMICH with President Maithripala Sirisena as the chief guest. This was translated in a manner that people from other religious beliefs can read and understand the history of Islam and the culture and religious beliefs of Muslims.¹¹³

“We are divided in languages and hatred towards each other due to the faults of politicians” – President says in the ceremony to launch the Al Quran Sinhala translation – President Maithripala Sirisena said that the translation of the Al Quran will be written in history as a significant event in this era. He said that all Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims fought together against British rulers and it was because of that we were able to free ourselves from colonial control. Sirisena added that translating the Al Quran to Sinhala is another step towards reconciliation in country.¹¹⁴

“Division between ethnic groups is a barrier to development. Translating Al Quran is an excellent step for national reconciliation” – President says during the launch of the Al Quran Sinhala translation – President Maithripala Sirisena said that everyone should learn the *Thripitaka*, Al Quran and *Bhagavad Gita* without ethnic differences to produce respectable people.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 8, p. A4.

¹¹² *Daily News*, April 9, p. 3.

¹¹³ *Dinamina*, April 9, p. 13.

¹¹⁴ *Lankadeepa*, April 10, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ *Dinamina*, April 10, p. 5.

Disgracing religions with literary creations – On May 3, *Lankadeepa* revealed that a case has been filed against a development officer based on the charge that a story he wrote on Facebook disgraced Buddhism. Publishing such material can disrupt religious reconciliation as there are extremists that weaponised such material for their use.¹¹⁶

Some thoughts on Christchurch (by Dr. Asoka Thenuwara)- In this opinion, the writer draws a parallel between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in terms of culture and community. “In Sri Lanka, like in New Zealand, different communities exist without any effort to understand each other and the inevitable disaster must surely happen...” The author gives a certain degree of warning to the authorities to act before Sri Lanka becomes the next Christchurch. “It is only a matter of time before another massacre will take place as retaliation for what happened at Christchurch... Will the next place be chosen to be a small island in the Indian Ocean? Impossible? I hope so.” The author also gives suggestions on how to bridge the understanding between each other’s communities.¹¹⁷

Furore in PS over roadside *devalaya* (by Kapila Somaratne) – Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) councillors in the Pradheshiya Sabha (PS) had a verbal argument over a shrine to Huniyan Devi constructed at the roadside on Galle Road in Wadduwa Town by a kapusamy of Suniyan Devalaya in Habaralagaslande, with the permission of the PS Chairman and the Ministry of Hindu Affairs. Viharadhipathi Bhikkus in Wadduwa were against the construction of the shrine as they said it created a religious conflict, and wanted it removed. The SLFP councillor and PS vice chairman said the chairman had issued an unauthorised order to place a statue of a god on the side of Galle Road in Wadduwa Town. The Bhikkus and the Wadduwa Buddhist Youth Organisation submitted a report to the Panadura Magistrate’s Court under the Public Nuisance Ordinance.¹¹⁸

Felling of sandalwood trees in temple garden – Bhikku urges authorities to take stern action – Ven. Arampola Sugathawansa Thera requested the authorities to take action to protect the temple premises abound with white sandalwood trees and artefacts.¹¹⁹

Army participates in mass at Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu – Army Commander Lieutenant General Mahesh Senanayake attended a special mass organised at Our Holy Lady of Madhu as a gesture of religious amity. He also participated in a tree-planting campaign under the theme 'Ranaviru Haritha Arana'.¹²⁰

‘Respecting others paves the way for communal harmony’ (by M. A Phakurdeen) – “Due recognition should be given to other religions and their practices. This should pave

¹¹⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 10, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *Daily News*, April 10, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ *Daily News*, April 11, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Daily News*, April 11, p. 8. ¹

²⁰ *Daily News*, April 12, p. 2.

the way for communal amity and intercommunal harmony,” said Jaffna Security Force Commander Major General Dharshana Hettiarrachchi.¹²¹

HRCSL rules: *Abaya* restrictions on teachers invalid – The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) in a landmark ruling earlier this month recommended that “preventing teachers from wearing the abaya while performing their duties is a violation of Articles 10, 12 (1), 12 (2) and 14 (e)” of the Sri Lankan Constitution. In its recommendation, the HRCSL stated that national schools are bound by the constitution and cannot violate the absolute right to religious freedom under Article 10, and reiterated the need for respecting diversity and pluralism in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country such as Sri Lanka. They called upon the Ministry of Education and the Zonal Education Director to conduct “awareness raising programs” on diversity and pluralism, for school principals, teachers, students, and parents. This prohibition and demonstrations against teachers wearing abaya to school took place in the context of ethnic violence against Muslim communities, both in the East and the central hills of the country, by extremist Sinhala factions. In February 2018, violence broke out in Ampara against Muslim owned eateries and shops, alleging that a restaurant owned by a Muslim businessman offered rice mixed with sterilisation pills to its Sinhalese customers. Even before the embers of this incident cooled down, anti-Muslim violence began in the central hills. Starting as a minor incident between a driver and a few youth, this situation claimed at least two lives and even spread to Kandy in the Central Province by the next day. Later, the four assistant teachers were reportedly transferred to other Muslim schools in the district. The HRCSL recommends that the denial of the right of the complainants to wear their traditional dress, as well as the arbitrary nature of the transfers to other schools, were done on the basis of the religion of the complainants. Hence, the rights to which the complainants are entitled as per Article 12(1) and 12(2) of the constitution had been violated. The commission stated in its recommendation that although the manifestation of religion, under Article 14(1)(e), can be restricted in order to recognise and respect the rights and freedoms of others, ensuring another person’s religious freedom does not require barring the wearing of the abaya at school.¹²²

Methodist Church denounces Anuradhapura incident (by Amali Mallawaarachchi) – On 14 April (Palm Sunday), the Methodist Church in Anuradhapura was disturbed by a group of youths who had pelted stones and lit firecrackers at the church. The group continued the activity for several weeks prior to this incident. Bishop Rev. Asiri Perera said that the group used abusive language and padlocked the gates, making them prisoners inside the church. After seeking the assistance of the police, the police rescued the people but did not make any arrest of those involved in this attack. Rev. Perera urged the president, prime minister, opposition leader, and all political authorities to assure the people the right to follow any faith, as ensured by the constitution.¹²³

¹²¹ *Daily News*, April 13, p. 2.

¹²² *Sunday Observer*, April 14, p. 6.

¹²³ *Daily News*, April 17, p. 2.

Rare Valampuri stolen from kovil (by S. M Wijayaratne) – Two rare conch shell, valued at around Rs. 5 million, were stolen from the ancient sacred Sohon Kali Amman Kovil in Chilaw. After making a complaint, a special police team was deployed to apprehend the suspects.¹²⁴

Mob attack on Anurdhapura Methodist Church: Six individuals issued notices (by Sheain Fernandopulle) – Six individuals were issued notices to appear in court on 5 May over their alleged involvement in the attack on a Methodist Church in Anuradhapura on 31 March. The mob insisted that the worship centre be closed down as the provincial council (PC) was about to launch a development project in the area. Following a complaint by the priest-in-charge and the Methodist Church Bishop, the police summoned both parties, but no action was taken against the offenders at that point. The bishop told media that there was a discussion between the prime minister and the Inspector General of Police (IGP) at the Temple Trees concerning the issue. The bishop was of the opinion that there was a political force behind the incident, which had become evident with the alleged involvement of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) PC member in the attack.¹²⁵

40 incidents against churches in 2019 – According to minormatters.org, 40 incidents against Christian churches and places of worship occurred from January to April 14 this year. In 2018, 86 incidents were reported. Methodists and Evangelical Christian chapters have been the targets most often.¹²⁶

What would be the Buddhist's destiny in 2060? (By Chatura Pamunuwa) – According to a prediction by the PEW Research Center on world population in 2060, the Buddhist population, which was seven per cent in 2015, would decrease to five per cent. Wouldn't this be a grave matter? Wouldn't Buddhists be annihilated by the Muslim extension? In 2060, the Muslim population will rise up to 31 per cent in the world population. Western countries were anxious when the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) in Sri Lanka united with the 969 movement in Burma. However, currently an organisation in the US unveils data on Muslim expansionism. The US organisation claims that the Muslim expansionism is a real threat.¹²⁷

Mannar people came to the road to protect coexistence (by Rasula Dilhara Gamage) – Non-Buddhists in Mannar were in the front in events organised by the government to worship the *Thripitaka*. Many appreciated it. Meanwhile many religious places around Mannar area were targets for attacks. Although none of the Buddhist temples were subjected for those attacks, other every religious shrine or holy place came under attack. Sometimes religious statues brought to the road and destroyed. Although Buddhists are

¹²⁴ *Daily News*, April 19, p. 3.

¹²⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 19, p. A6.

¹²⁶ *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 6.

¹²⁷ *Divaina*, April 21, p. 4.



a minority religion in Mannar and no Buddhist temple were damaged from any attack, no one blamed or pointed fingers to Buddhists for those attacks.¹²⁸

Adam's Peak legacy and the guardianship (by Wijeratne Athurupana) – Today Adam's Peak is under the administration of Sinhala Buddhists. As it is a sacred place which is worshipped by many religions but under the control of Buddhists, some claim that the reason behind that situation is Sinhala nationalism. Hence it is a matter to probe if it is an injustice. For that, one has to dig into the history of Adam's Peak.¹²⁹

Palm Sunday violence against Anuradhapura Methodist Church (by Rajitha Jagoda Arachchi) - The small Methodist Prayer Centre in Kundichchaankulama, Anuradhapura held Good Friday services this week under police protection. The church was previously pelted with stones and firecrackers on 14 April. The local police "typically" showed "great reluctance to act against the assailants". On 19 April afternoon, a silent vigil was held for religious freedom in Sri Lanka outside the Kollupitiya Methodist Church, after a week of tension in Anuradhapura, (and what religious groups call a subtle campaign of intimidation of religious minorities) since the beginning of the year. The article provides a descriptive account of the incident on 14 April. A similar disturbance occurred on 31 March too, where stones were pelted, and a mob entered the prayer house 'led by Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) man Nalin Siriwardane'. No arrests were made for the 31 March incident, and "naturally, the mob felt emboldened and struck again two weeks later". "The head of the Methodist Church also asserted that Buddhist monks had not been involved in this campaign of intimidation against the church. 'Anuradhapura is a sacred city, and it was a place where not only Buddhists, but people of other faiths lived peacefully for centuries. The official cross I wear is also called the Anuradhapura Cross. It symbolises the religious harmony of the country,' he said." "The escalation of ethno-religious tensions in the country began with the heavy state patronage afforded to groups like the Bodu Bala Sena in the 2011-2014 period, culminating in the Aluthgama communal violence that laid siege to the Muslim township of Dharga. The attacks subsided for a few years, but the central town of Digana became another flashpoint in March last year, weeks after the SLPP swept the local government elections in February. Police investigations found that a few SLPP local government members were instrumental in instigating the vicious attacks targeting the Muslim community. Several of them were arrested by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID). Over 200 arrests were made in connection with the violence in Digana, but with no prosecutions to date. In fact, the alleged protagonist of the violence, Leader of the Mahason Balakaya Amith Weerasinghe was released on bail (after several months in remand custody) late last year."¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *Silumina*, April 21, p. 5.

¹²⁹ *Silumina*, April 21, p. 1.

¹³⁰ *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 6.



Christians and religious freedom under fire (by Ruki Fernando) – From 3 February 3 to 14 April this year, across Sri Lanka, there has been some sort of disruption against a Christian worship service every Sunday. The author states that violence against Christians does not get coverage – on news or even on Twitter. These violations include disrupting services, damaging property, throwing stones, and gathering outside places of worship in a threatening manner, threats, and obscene language. Assault has also occurred during two separate incidents. The article notes that at least 13 churches have been affected in nine districts, with about 35 incidents and 70 violations. This "occurred regularly in Sri Lanka over several years, under successive governments". "A report by Verite Research in 2014 reported that a state institution or public servant was recorded as the key perpetrator of religious violence against Christians in 175 incidents (18%) of 972 incidents examined between 1994 and 2014. Many of these were diligently documented for years by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka. 226 incidents of violence against Christians were reported between January 2015 and June 2017 and 86 incidents in 2018. Many of the Christians under attack were small rural Christian communities." "They have had little support from Churches that wield more political-social influence such as the Catholic Church, and various inter-religious bodies operating at local and national level. Though I have focused on the situation of Christians here, Muslims too have been under fire in Sri Lanka, with some of the harshest violence against them being concentrated within a few days in towns such as Aluthgama in 2014 and Digana in 2018. There have also been reports of violations against Hindus." The piece then provides a lengthy descriptive account of seven different violations inflicted upon Christians in 2019.¹³¹

8 Serial bombs - 207 dead; 450 injured (by Mahesh Prasath and Subramaniam Nishanthan) - 207 persons were killed in eight bomb blasts in Colombo and other parts of the country on the 21st of April. The attacks were suspected to be suicide attacks. 450 persons who were injured are being treated in six hospitals island wide. The attacks were carried out in St. Anthony's church, Kochchikade, St. Sebastian's Church Katuwapitiya, Zion Church in Batticaloa, and three five-star hotels in Colombo.¹³²

Bomb blasts were planned terrorist attacks (by Subramaniam Nishanthan) - Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith says that the bomb attacks on churches in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa were planned terrorist attacks. While stating that this was a brutal attack, the Cardinal pointed out that he was not aware whether the attackers were local or foreigners.¹³³

The holy day which ended in grief - The commentary discusses the bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels in Colombo. The commentary points out that the attacks were carried out on Easter Sunday, an important day for Christians who celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.. The commentary also questions the reasons behind attacking Christian worship places.¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Sunday Observer*, April 21, p. 11.

¹³² *Thinakaran*, April 21, p. 1.

¹³³ *Thinakaran*, April, p. 1.

¹³⁴ *Thinakaran*, April 21 p. 7.



Batticaloa church bomb blast: 27 dead; 75 injure - At least 27 were dead and 75 injured in the bomb attack carried out on the Zion church in Batticaloa. An emergency meeting was held at the Batticaloa District Secretariat which was convened by the Eastern Province Governor, M.L.A.M. Hizbullah. The meeting saw the participation of State Ministers Ameer Ali, Ali Zahir Mowlana, Parliamentarians S. Viyalendran, S. Yogeswaran, Srinesan, Batticaloa District Secretary M. Uthayakumar. The meeting discussed the current situation and the availability of resources and medicine for the injured. It was also decided to provide Rs. 100,000 to each family that had lost a member.¹³⁵

Easter Sunday Terror (by Kurulu Koojana Kariyaka and Darshana Sanjeewa) – This article provides a descriptive account of the attacks on Easter Sunday. The piece notes that all "leading places of religious importance, including Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy, were closed indefinitely to the public".¹³⁶

207 died on Easter Sunday, making the country tearful (by Wijeyani Edirisinghe, Gayan Kumara Weerasinghe & Chameera Aldeniya) – According to Police Media Spokesperson Ruwan Gunasekara, there were six bomb attacks targeting three churches in Katana, Kochchikade and Batticaloa while the service was ongoing and three hotels on Easter Sunday killing 207 and injuring 450. Eight were arrested for questioning and the van that transported bombs was detained. An island-wide curfew was imposed whilst the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) conducted investigations.¹³⁷

228 killed from the suicide bomb attack (by Hemanth Randunu, Chaminda Silva & Ranil Dharmasena) – Katuapitiya, Kochchikade and Batticaloa churches and five-star hotels attacked. From nine bomb blasts yesterday (21st), more than 228 were killed and more than 450 were injured. Most of the people, including kids, who are among dead are the people that went for the Easter Sunday mass.¹³⁸

Dalada Maligawa closed (by L.B. Senaratne and J.A.L.Jayasinghe) – The Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy was temporarily closed, and security in and around the Maligawa has been tightened following the bomb blasts yesterday, said Administrative Secretary of the Maligawa. Army Commandos and Special Task Force (STF) were deployed for the security of the Maligawa and the devotees visiting it. The police and army took steps, and even searched the trays of the offerings taken to the Maligawa by the devotees. However, the routine rituals of the Maligawa will be carried out by the service monks who reside within the Maligawa premises, he said.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ *Thinakaran*, April 21, p. 8.

¹³⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 22, p. A1, A2.

¹³⁷ *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 1, 6.

¹³⁸ *Divaina*, April 22, p. 1, 4.

¹³⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 22, p. A4.



Apex body of Muslim clerics condemns terrorist attacks on churches – All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU), the apex body of Muslim clerics, condemned yesterday's inhuman terrorist attack on churches and other places. Issuing a statement, the ACJU said, "This is a shameful and heinous act which no human being can tolerate for any reason. Though the attacks were carried out on a day holy to a particular religious community, it is a very sad day for all Sri Lankans. On behalf of all Sri Lankan Muslims, we, the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, extend our arms of solidarity, love, and affection towards our Christian brothers and sisters in this moment of grief. We urge the authorities to assure that all places of worship are adequately protected immediately, and to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice without delay."¹⁴⁰

Chandrika Kumaratunga urges people not to be provoked – Former President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who condemned the series of bomb attack in the country, said peace committees would be formed by the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) to engage in maintaining peace in the country. She said in her message, "I join all peace loving Sri Lankans to condemn unreservedly the dastardly acts of violence that occurred since this morning in several leading Christian churches all over the country and in hotels in Colombo. My heartfelt sympathies go out to the families of those who lost lives, even while they were peacefully at worship, on this holiest of days for Christians— Easter Sunday, as well as to all the others. I wish a speedy recovery to the injured". "It is clear that this was a well organised operation to create chaos in a country that is returning to normalcy and economic recovery. The perpetrators must be brought to justice and punished without any delay, irrespective of their status. I call upon all my brothers and sisters not to be provoked by these events, however difficult and painful it may prove, and to maintain the unity, brotherhood, and peace we have built for each other, irrespective of all differences, during the past few years. We must resolve to reject violence and extremism in all its forms and adopt the weapon of understanding, reconciliation and love."¹⁴¹

Police protection for churches intensified (by D. G. Sugathapala, Ranjith Rajapakse & Sugathapala Diyagahage) – Police have taken steps to provide security for churches all over the country. Police patrols have been intensified and police sniffer dogs have been used to check churches and their surroundings. Police in the central hills provided protection to all churches in the area to hold Easter Sunday services and police in other areas have taken similar measures.¹⁴²

Black Sunday (by Our News Desk) – A total of 207 people were killed and over 450 injured following a series of bomb attacks on Catholic churches and hotels in Colombo and elsewhere yesterday. The article goes on to provide a descriptive account of events.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 22, p. A4.

¹⁴¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 22, p. A4.

¹⁴² *Daily Mirror*, April 22, p. A5.

¹⁴³ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 1, 8.



Remain calm – Archbishop Cardinal Malcom Ranjith (by Dilshan Tharaka) Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith asked the masses to remain calm and not take the law into their own hands in his address to the nation. He called for an impartial inquiry.¹⁴⁴

President condemns dastardly attack, calls for restraint and patience – President Maithripala Sirisena has instructed law enforcement and defence services to maintain law and order and conduct speedy investigations. He appealed to the nation to act with "the utmost restraint and patience", without being misled by "baseless rumours and false stories". Further, he asked for "unstinted support and cooperation" to the government.¹⁴⁵

PM promises stern action against culprits (by Dharma Sri Abeyratne and Amali Mallawarachchi) – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said proper attention of security forces should have been drawn to the information received about a probable terror attack. The PM stated that a full-scale investigation would be conducted with the assistance of local and foreign experts. He declared, "All measure will be taken to eradicate all forms of terrorism from the country". After discussions with the president, a curfew was imposed.

Condolence messages: 'Vehemently condemn brutal attacks' – In this short statement from Prelate of the Asgiriya Chapter Ven. Warakagoda Gnanarathana Thera, he vehemently condemns the Easter Sunday attacks. "We are deeply saddened to hear of the brutal attacks on Catholic and Christian churches on their sacred day, while devotees were attending religious services. Easter Sunday is a day of great significance to Catholics and Christians in this country... We earnestly request the government to deal severely with those who are behind these inhuman acts of terror."¹⁴⁶

Condolence messages: "Perpetrators must be severely dealt with" – In this short statement from Ven. Yatamalagala Sumanasara Thera Religious Advisor Qing Liang Vihara, Singapore Chief Monk of Dhamma Voice International Buddhist Centre who offers condolences for the attack that occurred on a greatly significant day for the Christian community. He asks the 'government to deal with those responsible severely'.¹⁴⁷

Church of Ceylon condemns yesterday's attack – The Church of Ceylon's Colombo and Kurunegala bishops condemned the bombings yesterday in a statement. "The Church of Ceylon unreservedly condemns these cowardly and cruel acts of terrorism and we offer our deep condolences to the families and friends of the over one hundred persons who have lost their lives and those who have been hurt. We wish all those who have been injured full recovery. We pray for them and their families that God's comforting presence will continue to be with them through this tragic experience". "We call on the government to institute quick action to investigate thoroughly these incidents and to bring the

¹⁴⁴ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 1, 8.

¹⁴⁵ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 1, 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 4.



perpetrators to justice, to ensure the safety of places of religious worship and to prevent any individuals or group taking the law into their hands or provoking acts of intimidation or violence against any community or group". "We call on all Sri Lankans to be mindful at this time and to act with patience and understanding." "We ask for the continued support of all security and emergency services in ensuring public peace and in providing care for the affected the motives of those twisted and warped minds who planned and executed such appalling acts could very well be to destabilise the country and to cause damage to the unity and harmony of our nation." "We pray that these persons, whoever they may be, will be awakened to the awfulness of their crime. We pray we will be able to journey through this dark phase of our country."¹⁴⁸

Hopeless terror cannot halt united Lanka's progress – This editorial notes that following the Kochchikade attack, "residents of all faiths and ethnicities in that very multicultural neighbourhood in central Colombo had already rushed in en-masse to help the victims. Tamil, Sinhalese, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and Hindu citizens of that crowded, oldest part of the city were the 'first responders' even before the emergency services arrived". The sheer spontaneity of the people's immediate collective response symbolised Lanka's social unity and sheer grit in the face of extreme violence and tragedy. The piece asks; "Will the nation unify in this moment of adversity or are there political opportunists waiting in dark corners to exploit this tragedy and twist and distort public perceptions, discredit governmental efforts and sow doubts and suspicions in order to benefit politically?"¹⁴⁹

Vested interest trying to create disharmony – Mangala – In a public statement condemning the string of bombings in Colombo and elsewhere, the minister said this was an attempt to reverse the gains of the democratic journey the government started in 2015. He added that it is very clear that the motives of these attacks are to shatter the reconciliation between communities and to hamper the present development drive which is leading the country towards prosperity. "The attack on churches clearly indicates that elements with vested interests are trying to create disharmony among various ethnic and religious communities," he added.

Govt will thwart extremist groups – State Defence Minister – State Minister of Defence and Mass Media Ruwan Wijewardene said the government will take action to curtail extremist groups involved in yesterday's explosions. "The government will take action against whatever extremist group is behind this situation. We will not allow any chance for these extremist groups and will take any action and will not stop until these groups are wiped out from this country," State Minister Wijewardene said.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ *Daily News*, April 22, p. 8.



218 dead, 452 severely injured – Grief on Easter Sunday (by M.F.M Basheer) – The attacks are suspected to be suicide attacks. 452 persons who were injured are being treated in six hospitals island wide. The attacks were carried out in St. Anthony's church, Kochchikade, St. Sebastian's church, Katuwapitiya, Zion Church in Batticaloa, and three luxury hotels in Colombo.¹⁵¹

World Leaders condemn - Pledge to work with Sri Lanka - World leaders from several countries including United States, India, Britain, Turkey, and Pakistan have condemned the Easter Sunday attacks in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka. The countries have expressed solidarity and assured to work together with Sri Lanka.¹⁵²

Steps taken to investigate the background of attacks: President urges people to remain calm - President Maithripala Sirisena has urged the people to remain calm, and stated that steps to probe the background to the attacks has begun.¹⁵³

Pope expresses deep sorrow - The Pope has expressed his profound sadness over the Easter Sunday attacks in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka.¹⁵⁴

National Intelligence had warned of individuals who were trained by ISIS (by Leo Nirosh Dharshan) - State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardena stated at a meeting with the heads of media institutions that the National Intelligence had already informed the government of individuals who had obtained training from ISIS. He said that the security situation in the country has been brought under control.¹⁵⁵

50 dead in Kochchikade St. Anthony's Church (by R. Yasi) - More than 50 persons have been reported killed in the bomb attack targeting the St. Anthony's church in Kochchikade on the 21st of April. The bomb blast took place at 8.45am. Security was strengthened in the area soon after the incident with police and military personnel deployed.¹⁵⁶

A planned evil act – Minister Mano Ganesan condemns attacks - Leader of the Tamil Progressive Alliance Minister Mano Ganesan has condemned the bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels. He says it was a highly coordinated attack and not a mere random attack. The Minister who had arrived at Kochchikade St. Anthony's church soon after the incident made the above statement.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 1.

¹⁵² *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 1.

¹⁵³ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 2.



Bomb attacks could have been a joint act of terror – Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith (by M. Nesamani) - Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith says that he suspects the bomb attacks to be a joint act of terror groups. He urged the people not to use this situation to take the law into their own hands, but rather to let the law enforcement authorities to look into it. He made this statement following the bomb attacks on the 21st of April.¹⁵⁸

All steps will be taken to locate the criminals - decision at the special cabinet meeting (By Robert Antony) - The Cabinet has decided to take all steps to locate the criminals behind the Easter Sunday attacks. The decision was taken at the special cabinet meeting convened by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe at Temple Trees on the 21st of April.¹⁵⁹

Bring the masterminds behind the attacks before the law – TNA Leader Sampanthan urges Prime Minister (by M. Manochithra) Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), R.Sampanthan has urged Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to identify the masterminds behind the bomb attacks in the churches in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa, and the luxury hotels in Colombo, bring them before the law and impose maximum punishment against the perpetrators.¹⁶⁰

Emergency meeting chaired by Eastern Province Governor at the Batticaloa Secretariat - An emergency meeting convened by the Eastern Province Governor, M.L.A.M. Hizbullah was held at the Batticaloa Secretariat. The meeting was convened following the bomb attack on Batticaloa Zion church on the 21 April. The meeting saw the participation of State Ministers Ameer Ali, Ali Zahir Mowlana, Parliamentarians S. Viyalendran, S. Yogeswaran, Srinesan, Batticaloa District Secretary M. Uthayakumar, Mayor Saravanapavan, DIG Batticaloa Kapila Jayasekara, and Commander, Eastern Security Forces, Maj. Gen. Aruna Jayasekara. At the meeting, it was decided to strengthen the security following the attacks on the church, and to close all schools in the Eastern Province for the next two days (22 and 23 April).¹⁶¹

Violent attacks - The editorial while condemning the Easter attacks on churches and luxury hotels, discusses the sequence of events following the attacks. The editorial has also cited responses from key political figures. The editorial concludes with the call to ensure that such an incident does not repeat, and the importance of strengthening security.¹⁶²

The serial bomb blasts which have shaken the entire country (by Thirumalai Navam) The column discuss the bomb attacks on Easter Sunday. It discusses the possible motives behind the attacks, since it is written when there is no substantial evidence of who is behind the attacks. The column discusses the scenario in Sri Lanka where incidents of religious unrests had been reported in the recent past. However, it does not rule out the possibility of international involvement. The column also points out that terrorism has

¹⁵⁸ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ *Virakesari*, April 22, p.3.

¹⁶² *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 4.



not been completely eliminated in the country and it has taken a different form through the blasts. It urges the government to be on alert.¹⁶³

Weren't intelligence reports taken seriously? – Matter will be investigated (by M.F.M Basheer) - Police Spokesperson, S.S.P Ruwan Gunasekara has stated that the CID would investigate as to whether the police and the military were warned of the bomb attacks earlier, and whether these warnings were ignored. The police spokesperson made this comment when asked on the documents which had surfaced, that have reportedly warned the security officials of planned attacks by the Thowheed Jamaath movement.¹⁶⁴

All citizens should cooperate to ensure peace in the country – Sajith Premadasa requests (by N. Thinusha) - Minister of Housing, Construction, and Cultural Affairs, Sajith Premadasa has urged all citizens of the country to ensure protection of peace following the bomb attacks in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on 21 April.¹⁶⁵

Those involved in the planned bomb incidents will be arrested – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe - Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has stated that all those who were involved in the planned bomb attacks in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa will be arrested and action will be taken against them. He condemned the attacks, and stated that the law enforcement authorities have been instructed to ensure safety and security of the public.¹⁶⁶

Received warnings about bomb attacks? – Minister Harin Fernando - Minister Harin Fernando was questioned as to how his father, who was receiving treatment at a hospital, had received information of possible bomb attacks? He raised this question during a media briefing held on the 21 April. Fernando stated that his father, during a telephone conversation the previous night (20th April) had requested him to not to go to the Kochchikade St. Anthony's church due to possible bomb attacks.¹⁶⁷

We pray that the injured recover soon – UN condemns attacks - The United Nations (UN) condemned the Easter bombings on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka and expressed its condolences to the Sri Lankan government and to the people. The UN pointed out that such attacks were carried out to disrupt harmony and urged that law and order be established, and the rights of the people be protected.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ *Virakesari*, April 22, p.6.

¹⁶⁷ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ *Virakesari*, April 22, p .6.



Many dead at Negombo St. Sebastian church attack (by Rajadurai Rashan) - At least 100 persons have been reported killed in the bomb attack that was carried out on St. Sebastian's church in Negombo. It is suspected that this is a suicide attack. The injured have been admitted to the Negombo Teaching Hospital.¹⁶⁹

Bishop of the Mannar Diocese condemns attacks - The Bishop of the Mannar Diocese Emmanuel Fernando has condemned the bomb attacks on churches and hotels in several parts of the country which had killed hundreds of people.¹⁷⁰

Citizens should teach a lesson to acts of extremism – CWL Deputy Leader Senthil Thondaman - Deputy Leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, Senthil Thondaman while condemning the bomb attacks, stated that the attacks were carried out based on religion. He pointed out that the citizens of this country should teach a good lesson to such extremist acts.¹⁷¹

Asgiriya Maha Nayake condemns violent attacks - Maha Nayake of the Asgiriya Chapter, Ven. Warakagoda Gnanarathne Thera has condemned the bomb attacks on Negombo and its surrounding areas. Addressing the media in Kandy, the Maha Nayake urged the people to act calmly and wisely.¹⁷²

The gruesome attack which shook the country (by Robert Antony) - The commentary discusses the Easter bombings and the measures that need to be taken in order to bring back normalcy. The commentary also points out that the country had been through a 30 year war, reiterating that the people should not go through such problems again. The column also emphasizes the responsibility of the government, the police and security forces to strengthen security in the country and eradicate the fear that had been instilled in the minds of the people following the attacks.¹⁷³

Real terrorism (by P. Manikkavasagam) - The commentary discusses the Easter attacks. While it also mentions of the 30-year civil war faced by the people of the country, the commentary states that the recent acts of terrorism was much more serious and impactful than the incidents of terror faced by the country before. The commentary points out that these attacks are not limited to the security of Sri Lanka alone, but of the entire South Asian region.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 7.

¹⁷² *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 7.

¹⁷³ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 10.

¹⁷⁴ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 12.



Why didn't the security apparatus take action despite warning? – Severe punishment for masterminds – Prime Minister in a special statement (by R. Yasi) - Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in a special statement said that why the security apparatus did not act on the warnings received on the bomb attacks will be investigated. He also stated that he had discussed with Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapaksa, TNA Leader R. Sampanthan, and TNA MP M.A. Sumanthiran on the next step that could be taken. He also stated that he contacted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and explained the situation.¹⁷⁵

We were suspicious of a person with baggage - Injured victim in Batticaloa church blast informs - A person who was injured at the bomb attack on Church of Zion in Batticaloa stated that a person who did not belong to the congregation had arrived with a travel bag hung on his shoulders. He had a small bag in his hand. "We spoke to him since his activities were suspicious. He said that he came to the church. We invited him to come inside. He said that he would receive a phone call and that he would leave after that. I went in and started the service". The witness further stated that the Sunday school children came outside the church after classes. "The blast occurred at the entrance of the church".¹⁷⁶

28 dead; over 75 injured in blast at Batticaloa Zion church - At least 28 persons have been killed in over 75 injured in the bomb attack on Batticaloa Zion Church on the 21st of April. The article report that among the dead included women and children. The injured persons were taken to the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital.¹⁷⁷

Government will bear the cost for the burial of those who died in the blast – Batticaloa Government Agent Uthayakumar - Batticaloa Government Agent, M. Uthayakumar has stated that the government will bear the expenses for the burial of those who had died following the bomb blast at the Batticaloa Zion church on the 21st of April. He also stated that security had been strengthened in several places where the public gather.¹⁷⁸

Armed security forces deployed to provide security to all churches in Mullaithivu (by K. Kumanan) Security has been provided to all churches in Mullaithivu following the bomb attacks in the country on 21 April.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 13.

¹⁷⁷ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 19.

¹⁷⁹ *Virakesari*, April 22, p. 21.

Don't take political gains from the Easter Sunday attacks – Mangala Samaraweera – Minister of Finance and Media Mangala Samaraweera noted that the attacks that took place on Easter Sunday can be deemed as attacks that were intended at reversing the approach adopted by the present government in countering racism and religious antagonism. Especially referring to the fact that the Catholic Churches were subject to these horrific attacks, Samaraweera remarked that it is clear that there are groups in the country who endeavour to foment racism and religious antagonism. He has posited these views issuing a notification.¹⁸⁰

I strictly condemn these bomb explosions – Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith (by Jayasiri Munasinghe) – Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith stated that the bomb explosions that happened yesterday (21) is an insult to the entire human race. Noting that innocent devotees have lost their lives due to these explosions, the Archbishop urged the people to stay calm in this moment of national grief. Mentioning that there is no possibility to get engaged in further destructive acts to get rid of this calamity, the Archbishop urged the people to work in order to improve the bond between the different racial groups and religions. The Archbishop entertained these views at a special media briefing held at the Archbishop house in Colombo yesterday (21).¹⁸¹

All citizens should strive to safeguard the peace (by Upali Karunaratne) – Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that all citizens should strive to safeguard the peace given the status quo of the country. Wickremesinghe made these remarks after visiting a number of churches affected by the bomb explosions. Wickremesinghe had a special discussion with the Archbishop, the Catholic clergy in the Katuwapitiya church and political activists after visiting the Katuwapitiya church and it is reported that the number of casualties, property damage and the measures that should be taken in future were broadly dealt in this discussion.¹⁸²

Will completely renovate all places of religious worship destroyed – Sajith Premadasa (By Upali Karunaratne) – Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa noted that his ministry would take measures to completely renovate all churches destroyed by the bomb explosions. He made these remarks after visiting St. Anthony's shrine in Kochchikade, Kotahena after the Easter Sunday attacks. Expressing his condolence on the horrific attack, Premadasa also noted that the entire country should work united to face this new challenge without any racial, religious or political differences.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 5.

¹⁸¹ *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 6.

¹⁸² *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 7.

¹⁸³ *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 7.



Security beefed up in all places of religious worship in Anuradhapura (by B.M. Wijesuriya) – Police Superintendent in charge of the Anuradhapura division stated that security had been tightened in every religious places of worship in Anuradhapura. These measures were taken in the aftermath of the bomb explosions that were carried out in churches in Kotahena, Kochchikade and Batticaloa. The police superintendent also noted that special security had been assigned to all Buddhist places of worship, the St. Joseph’s Cathedral in Anuradhapura, the Jumma-Mosque in Anuradhapura and to the Kadiresan Kovil. The police officer also noted that instructions had been given to the police to subject every vehicle coming to visit the Sri Maha Bodhi and the Ruwanweliseya to a thorough security check. It was also revealed that the devotees who had come to Anuradhapura left the city swiftly after visiting the places of religious worship.¹⁸⁴

Police security to churches in Hambantota (by H.A.P. Samarawickreme) – The police stated that the police security had been provided to the Catholic churches in Hambantota due to the bomb explosions that occurred in the Catholic churches in several places in the island yesterday (21) morning. Devotees were there for the masses that were held in the morning today (22) in the Catholic church in Tangalle. It was also obvious that the Police, the Navy and the Special Task Force were conducting mobile patrolling around main cities in the District.¹⁸⁵

If Sirisena- Rajapaksa represents different camps, that would be detrimental to Sinhala Buddhists – Mahawillachchiye Wimala Thero - Mahawilachchiye Wimala Thero noted that there are numerous challenges to the Buddha Sasana and the Sinhala Buddhist masses. Thero stressed that as this moment is so critical and certainly needs the unity among Sinhala Buddhists, the duo Sirisena- Rajapaksa should establish a strong government by getting together. Thero noted that this is a request from the Sinhala- Buddhist masses and added that if the duo Sirisena and Rajapaksa cannot come to a common platform, that would be extremely detrimental to Sinhala-Buddhists. Noting that Mahavamsa states that the country was offered to the tooth relic thrice by King Kithsirimevan, Thero noted that therefore this country belongs to Sambudhdha Sasana. Thero mentioned that therefore a Buddhist state should exist in this country. Thero stressed that a leader who gives foremost place to Buddhism by action and not by words should come into power.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 8.

¹⁸⁵ *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 8.

¹⁸⁶ *Divaina*, April 22, p. 2.



Who is responsible for this fear of terror? (by Chathura Pamunuwa) – The security in Sri Lanka is shattered. It is obvious that terrorism has arrived in the country back again and not in the form of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Is there an involvement of the extremist Muslim clan of Sahran to this attack? The clan of Sahran is said to be operating from Batticaloa and it has been found that they have a direct nexus with the ISIS terrorists. Or else is the clan that were involved in vandalising the Buddha statues in Mawanella and later who were found to have a camp in Vanathawilluwa carry out these attacks? Was the special curricular with the letter head “Information of an alleged attack” sent by the Office of the Deputy IGP in charge of the special security division ignored? There was reference to the fact that the Leader of the National Thawheed Jamaath- Mohammed Sahran is planning to carry out suicidal attacks in Sri Lanka in it. But what did the police do until many precious lives were lost in the bomb explosions on Easter Sunday? Were the activities of the intelligence service terminated on behalf of reconciliation? Was it because that there was opinion that Muslim fraternity would collapse? The spreading of Wahhabism within the Muslim community in Sri Lanka is a serious issue. It was an obvious fact that Wahhabism was there behind the Sinhala- Muslim issue in Grandpass. If ordinary Muslims become the victims of this Wahhabism, it would be an issue for the entire country. When the Bodu-Bala Sena was divulging information on the risk of Muslim extremism many years ago, many panicked; accusations were levelled against Bodu Bala Sena due to that.¹⁸⁷

Special security to churches in Galle (by Sugathapala Diyagahage) – The heads of the Police service in Galle took measures to tighten the security of all Catholic churches and prayer centres in Galle after the Easter Sunday attacks. A large number of devotees attended the Easter masses held in churches yesterday. The devotees vacated the churches swiftly after the conclusion of the masses upon being informed by the police.¹⁸⁸

A security force of three hundred: Temple of the Tooth closed temporarily (by Samanthi Weerasekera)- Divayawadana Nilame Nilanga Dela Bandara informed that visiting and worshipping of the Temple of the Tooth was terminated temporarily. He further mentioned that more than 300 personnel of the army and the police have been deployed to provide security. It was also stated by him that despite the termination of the entry of devotees to the temple of the tooth, the rituals related to the tooth relic continue unabated and the upper floor of the temple of the tooth had been provided intense security.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ *Divaina*, April 22, p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ *Divaina*, April 22, p. 9.

¹⁸⁹ *Divaina*, April 22, p. 9.



Let's condemn the ruthless attacks (The editorial) – We express our sincere condolences on the bomb explosions that occurred in three Catholic churches and three luxurious hotels yesterday (21) -Easter Sunday which is an important day for Catholic adherents. It is reported that approximately 207 had died from the bomb attacks and more than 450 people had sustained injuries. Regardless of the racial group, the religion the victims of the bomb attacks belong to we have lost precious human lives. This brutal attack must be condemned regardless of who did it. The entire populace in the country is terrified due to this incident regardless of the fact whether they are Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslims or Burghers. The teaching of all religions is to depict compassion, love and kindness to all others. All notable people including the Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith, President Maithripala Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa have requested the masses to act peacefully and with tolerance. At this moment of grief, the masses should take care not to be misled by the opportunist fundamentalists and extra care should be exercised related to the baseless reports coming from the social media. What should be done is not adding fuel to the conflagration but the extinguishing of the existing fire and to eliminate reasons that trigger the conflagrations. It is true that the Buddhists are hurt when the temples are attacked. When churches, kovils and mosques are attacked, the respective religious groups are hurt. Attacking each other is not a human quality but is a brutal quality; it is an attack against your own religion. Whoever did this have dealt the deadliest blow on their own religion; to be precise, these types of attacks are an affront to the humanity taught by their own religion. Thus, what we expect is a beautiful country with no racial and religious issues, should be the expectation of the entire populace.¹⁹⁰

Let's give priority to the general peace in the society and let's commit ourselves for that – Agalakada Sirisumana Thero (by Bingun M. Gamage) – All citizens were overjoyed with the end of the war in 2009. People got freedom to roam freely in the country without any fear or suspicion. Yet again, people are in a suspense as to whether there would be any more bomb explosions. Specially referring to the fact that the unethical religious conversions were extensively carried out, Agalakada Sirisumana Thero noted that only a handful of extremists carried out such activities. It was further mentioned by Thero that it was not the traditional Buddhist, Catholic, Islamic and Hindu communities who were involved in this conduct. Noting that Thero with several other people intervened to carry out a programme for religious cooperation and reconciliation against the rising extremism, Thero further noted that their attempt was not taken to a conclusive end. Thero appreciated the intervention and the sacrifice of the Archbishop as a laudable endeavour. It was also pointed out that the Governor to the Northern Province Suren Raghavan made a good deed – the conducting discussions with all the Buddhist clergy in the Northern province.

¹⁹⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 22, p. 4.



Thero also noted that it is imperative to meet the religious leaders and to have discussions on the current issues. Noting that there are no such discussions in the long term, Thero noted that though there were such discussions after the Kandy racial disturbances such discussions did not last long. Thero also stressed that Buddhists have a prime duty to commit themselves for the general peace in the society while guaranteeing the existence of the other religious adherents.¹⁹¹

I strictly condemn the cowardly attack – Maithri Gunaratne (by Indrani Thoradeniya) – The Governor of the Central Province Maithri Gunaratne said that he strictly condemn the brutal attacks that were launched targeting Catholic churches and luxurious hotels. Gunaratne also noted that the extremists who perpetuated these terrorist attacks should be destroyed regardless of their religion, race and social status. He stressed that the objective of the perpetrators of the Easter Sunday attacks was to tarnish the image of the country by disrupting the ethnic and religious reconciliation that were in existence hitherto; he also noted that the perpetrators of the attack aspired the emergence of ethnic and religious conflicts in the country. Therefore, if the ordinary people carry out any violent reactions to these attacks targeting a particular community, it would be akin to an extension of support given inadvertently to the vicious agendas of the ruthless terrorists who carried out Easter Sunday attacks. Thus, Gunaratne urged the ordinary people to act patiently and intelligently without succumbing to emotions. He made these remarks at a media briefing held at the Office of the Governor of Central Province yesterday (22).¹⁹²

Suicide bomber previously arrested for vandalism - Kabir (by Yohan Perera) – One of the suicide bombers who blew himself up in an attack last Sunday was a suspect who was arrested a few months ago in connection to an incident in Mawanella during which Buddha statues were damaged, Highways Minister Kabir Hashim said at a press conference held today. “One of my security officers was attacked during the incident. A few suspects were arrested and some of them were released later. It was found that one of them was the suicide bomber of an attack that took place last Sunday. I am in the process of receiving more information on this,” he said.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ *Lankadeepa*, April 22, p. 4.

¹⁹² *Dinamina*, April 22, p. 11.

¹⁹³ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A1, A2.



What happened is extremely worrying, but do not make it an opportunity to harass anyone – Archbishop (by Sithara Senani) – The Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith requested the Catholics and Christians not to harass anyone based on the unfortunate incident that took place. It is true, that what happened is a traumatic experience; but such calamity should not be made a reason to harass someone. Referring to the fact that Jesus forgave even the people who crucified him, the Archbishop wanted the people to take an example of it and stay calm. The Archbishop made these remarks at a media briefing held at the Archbishop's house in Colombo yesterday (22) with the involvement of the religious leaders of all faiths.¹⁹⁴

Buddhist Bhikkhus should take the lead in donating blood to those who got injured due to the bomb attacks – Kotapitiye Rahul Thero -The Secretary of the Kotte Kalyani Sangha Sect under the Siyam Bhikkhu Chapter Professor Kotapitiye Rahul Thero stated that he is extremely worried about the Easter Sunday attacks. Thero further noted that the Buddhist bhikkhus should act exemplary to render support in donation of blood to those who got injured during the attack and also to support in every other necessity. Thero has also instructed the masses not to make this an impediment for racial and religious harmony prevailing in the country and has stressed that every Sri Lankan should be determined to fulfil his/her duty at this moment. Thero also stated that every Sri Lankan whatever his racial group or religion is must act in cooperation and harmony. Thero also emphasised that the people should not take the law into their own hands and also not to make inaccurate statements.¹⁹⁵

Will completely renovate all places of religious worship destroyed – Sajith Premadasa – Minister of Housing, Construction and Cultural Affairs Sajith Premadasa noted that his ministry would take measures to completely renovate all churches destroyed by the bomb explosions. He made these remarks after visiting St. Anthony's shrine in Kochchikade, St. Sebastian church in Negombo that were affected by the bomb explosions that took place yesterday (21).¹⁹⁶

Security forces should be given the opportunity to eliminate this insane terrorism by imposing emergency law – Patali Champika Ranawaka -Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that security forces should be allowed to eliminate this insane religious terrorism by imposing emergency law. Noting that the aim of these extremist clans was to take the world to a primitive brutal age even before the middle age, Ranawaka noted that countries like Syria and Iraq that had a proud heritage were destroyed due to this religious extremism. He also referred to the fact that it was examined there is a network behind the people who were involved in vandalising of the Buddha statues in Mawanella. Noting that the government should eliminate this religious epiphyte, Ranawaka opined that the ordinary people should work united without being led by rumours. Ranawaka stated these ideas at a media briefing held at the party headquarters of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) yesterday (22).

¹⁹⁴ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 1, 6.

¹⁹⁵ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 5.

¹⁹⁶ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 5.

Omalpe Sobhitha Thero who attended the media briefing stated that this terrorist attack came in the name of Islamic faith and that this attack was launched by a group of Muslims. Noting that therefore the Muslim community should be vigilant to avert such brutal attacks, thero noted that Muslim leaders and Muslim intellectual organisations should not allow the flourishing of the religious extremism within the Muslim society.¹⁹⁷

Condolences from the Communist party– D.E.W Gunasekera – Former Minister and the Secretary of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka D.E.W Gunasekera noted that the Communist party expresses its condolence on all who died and got injured due to the Easter Sunday attacks. The objective of the perpetrators of the attack was to create fear and suspicion among various racial groups and religious communities. He noted that all religious leaders should directly take the lead in pursuit of the national harmony and religious reconciliation. He also stressed that the room should not be allowed for the emergence of any kind of extremist trend or condition. This has been stated in a notification issued by the Communist party of Sri Lanka.¹⁹⁸

“Let’s assist by prayers to find humane and reasonable solutions” – Sri Lanka Catholic Bishop’s Conference – The Catholic Bishop’s Conference has issued a statement expressing their deepest condolences and vehemently condemns these attacks. Urging the people to remain calm and at peace at this moment of grief, the Bishops have also mentioned that they are genuinely praying for a transformation of the lives of the perpetrators who are involved in this vicious, brutal conduct.¹⁹⁹

Take legal measures swiftly against individuals who are connected to the bomb explosions – Archbishop (by Sithara Senani) – Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith requested the government to take legal actions swiftly against individuals who are connected to the bomb explosions that took place on Easter Sunday. The Archbishop also requested the government to not allow the recurrence of such brutal attacks. The Archbishop made these remarks at a media briefing held at the Archbishop’s house in Colombo yesterday (22) with the involvement of the religious leaders of all faiths. Archbishop also expressed his gratitude to all religious dignitaries who arrived in the Archbishop’s house to get involved in the discussions and also to express their condolences. Referring to the fact that there were reports that a particular community is being targeted in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks, the Archbishop urged specially from the Catholic and Christian people to refrain from carrying out violence against anyone. It is true, he noted, that what happened is a traumatic experience; but, he remarked, that such calamity should not be made a reason to harass someone. Referring to the fact that Jesus forgave even the people who crucified him, the Archbishop wanted the people to take an example of it and stay calm. Kotapitiye Rahul thero who attended the media briefing noted that Sri Lanka is a country with friendly people. Therefore, he requested, all the religious leaders in the

¹⁹⁷ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 8.

¹⁹⁸ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 8.

¹⁹⁹ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 15.



country to work towards the unity of all Sri Lankans, while safeguarding the harmonious background that existed hitherto. Maoulawi Sheik-Ek-Akram who attended the media briefing stated that they are of the opinion that the Easter Sunday attack is an inhumane act regardless of the people who did it. Referring to the fact that there are voices against the Muslim community on social media based on this incident, he appreciated the support extended by the Buddhist clergy and the Archbishop in this moment.²⁰⁰

Brutal attacks should be outrightly condemned – Sri Lanka Catholic Bishop’s Conference – The Catholic Bishop’s Conference has issued a statement expressing their deepest condolences on the Easter Sunday attacks. They have also stated that these attacks that took place when the Catholic devotees were attending the masses in Churches on Easter Sunday should be vehemently condemned. Urging the people to remain calm and at peace at this moment of grief, the Board of Bishops has also mentioned that they are genuinely praying for a transformation of the lives of the perpetrators who are involved in this vicious, brutal conduct.²⁰¹

UNP is using these bomb attacks for its benefit – Vasudeva Nanayakkara (by Nimala Kodituwakku) - MP Vasudeva Nanayakkara noted that the bomb attacks are an extension of various riotous incidents that happened throughout the country. Noting that the Digana racial disturbances too are part of this incident, There is a wide international conspiracy behind the recent attacks he said. Noting that the perpetrators of the attack aspired a large scale anti-Muslim racial disturbance, thereby the perpetrators wanted a large scale joining of the most belligerent of the Muslims into the extremist elements. Nanayakkara said these at a media briefing held at the N.M. Perera centre at the Borella.²⁰²

Leaders should unite to eliminate terrorism without taking political gains – Patali Champika Ranawaka – (by Diana Udayangani) Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka stated that security forces should be allowed to eliminate this insane religious terrorism by imposing emergency law. Noting that the aim of these extremist clans is to take the world to a primitive brutal age even before the middle age, Ranawaka noted that countries like Syria and Iraq that had a proud heritage were destroyed due to this religious extremism. He also referred to the fact that it was examined there is a network behind the people who were involved with the vandalism of the Buddha statues in Mawanella. Noting that the government should eliminate this religious epiphyte, Ranawaka opined that the ordinary people should work united without being led by rumours. Ranawaka stated these ideas at a media briefing held at the party headquarters of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) yesterday (22).²⁰³

²⁰⁰ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 15.

²⁰¹ *Divaina*, April 23, p. 13.

²⁰² *Lankadeepa*, April 23, p. 5.

²⁰³ *Lankadeepa*, April 23, p. 8.



Guarantee the security of the people by holding quick impartial investigations— Sri Lanka Catholic Bishop’s Conference – The Catholic Bishop’s Conference has issued a statement expressing their deepest condolences and vehemently condemns these attacks. Urging the people to remain calm and at peace at this moment of grief, the Board of Bishops has also mentioned that they are genuinely praying for a transformation of the lives of the perpetrators who are involved in this vicious, brutal conduct.²⁰⁴

11, who were detained at Ududhumbara on the charge of damaging statues, transferred to another cell (by Shrinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) – 11 persons, who were detained at Ududhumbara, over charges of instigating religious disharmony by damaging Buddhist, Hindu and Christian religious statues, were transferred to another cell which is isolated from other inmates. Officials stated that this step was taken after taking the bomb blasts into consideration.²⁰⁵

Defeating the extremism – This editorial state that the Prophet had once said that, “You practice your religion freely; and let others practice their religion freely as well”. No other religion or philosophy in the world is considered inferior and no religious leader has disparaged any other religion or a philosophy. This is an important lesson. If we are to develop as a country, we need religious coexistence and national unity. The Easter Sunday incident series shouldn’t disturb the religious coexistence. The conclusion now is that the attack was carried out by an extremist fraction. We should find out how those extremist organizations born and who are behind those.²⁰⁶

A deadly blow to religious harmony in the country (by Jayasiri Peduruarachchi) – Deputy Chief Prelate of the Amarapura Sect Ven. Dewinuware Sri Sunanda Thera said that these bomb attacks targeting religious centers in the country is a deadly blow to destroy the religious harmony that we have. However, we should proceed with understanding and should condemn such actions.²⁰⁷

Attacks which caused the death of 290 is the work of Thowheed Jamaath (by Hemanath Randunu) – They are connected to ISIS. All seven individuals, who ended their lives, are high up in the organisation. They also are the responsible for destroying the Mawanella Buddhist statues. Zahran Hashim is the leader. The investigations reveal that the suicide bomb attacks were carried out by Thowheed Jamaath, which is an extremist Islam organisation.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ *Lankadeepa*, April 23, p. 11.

²⁰⁵ *Lankadeepa*, April 23, p. 14.

²⁰⁶ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 4.

²⁰⁷ *Dinamina*, April 23, p. 10.

²⁰⁸ *Divaina*, April 23, p. 1, 4.



CMC pledges RS. 25 million to rebuild Kochchikade church (by Lahiru Pothmulla) – Colombo Mayor Rosy Senanayake has pledged Rs. 25 million from the municipality to bring the church to its former glory. She said the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) had engineers with great skill and that they are ready to offer any assistance if needed. "Our country has been a country that has been very hospitable, and its people lived in harmony, since we are a multi-national multi-religious country. It was evident on Sunday when the members of the clergy from all religions, including the Buddhist Mahanayake Theras and Muslims religious leaders met with the Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith. We are always together, and we live like one family, but there are these extremist mindsets that we need to eradicate from its root. Those extremist mindsets that want to destroy humanity with no absolute empathy towards humanity should be dealt with," she said.²⁰⁹

Inadequate police personal to produce Gnanasara Thera – Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) General Secretary Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera was not produced before the Homagama Magistrate today, due to lack of police personnel. The police were unable to provide security, owing to a large contingent of police officers deployed on emergency duties due to the prevailing emergency situation in the country, said Senior Superintendent of Welikada Prison T. I. Uduwara.²¹⁰

Sri Dalada Maligawa opens to public (L.B. Senaratne) – The Sri Dalada Maligawa opened to the public. All devotees will be checked and were advised to bring the "minimum requirements that would be needed within the Sri Dalada Maligawa."²¹¹

Easter Sunday bombings instigated by Muslim fundamentalists: Champika (by Sandun A. Jayasekera) – The Easter Sunday suicide bombings were no doubt a work of the same Muslim fundamentalist outfit that desecrated Buddha statues in Mawanella on Christmas Day last year, Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka said.²¹²

Catholic private schools to be closed till April 29 (by Sheain Fernandopulle) – All Catholic private schools in the Western Province will be closed until 29 April considering the prevailing situation in following the series of bomb attacks across the country.²¹³

Catholic Bishops' Conference issues statement – Attacking churches while the people were at worship on the most sacred feast of Easter is indeed a cruel act, the Catholic Bishops' Conference said yesterday. They expressed their condolences, urged all to remain calm, and called on the government to have an adequate response.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A4.

²¹⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A6.

²¹¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A6.

²¹² *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A6.

²¹³ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A6.

²¹⁴ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A6.



Eradicate extremism in all communities – In this editorial, the recent attacks are condemned. The piece "suggests that a Muslim group is behind the unpardonable crime". The piece continues; "Yet, one should not be hasty to blame an entire community for the crime, however much it is barbaric or however much its impact on the society at large would be. There is no historical evidence to suggest that the Muslims as a community had resorted to violence, despite there being isolated mobs and isolated incidents. Yet, it is the responsibility of the Muslim community and especially their leaders to understand the gravity of the situation, as the heinous crime committed on Sunday, apparently by the members of their community, has already tarnished their faith immensely, and those crimes are viewed not in isolation but along with the similar barbaric crimes committed by various extremist groups in various parts of the world, especially in the Middle East. It would not be so easy for them to clear their faith of allegation of violence, unless they take pains not only to explain what the real Islam is to other communities but to weed out the extremist elements from the community, on their own and with the help of the law enforcement authorities. A group of Muslim religious and political leaders had met Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith on Sunday and discussed maintaining communal harmony. Though it was commendable to take efforts to share the pain and frustration felt by the Catholics in particular and Christians in general, at this juncture, they must also vigorously come forward for an open struggle against the extremism within the community that is now clearly perceptible."²¹⁵

‘Easter Sunday’ debacle - NCCSL condemns cruel and inhuman attacks – The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL), along with its constituencies, views the bomb attacks that began in the morning hours on ‘Easter Sunday’ (21 April) with shock, disgust and horror. In addition, the "NCCSL is seriously concerned about the recent attack at the Prayer Centre of the Methodist Church in Anuradhapura". They affirmed the importance of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.²¹⁶

Carnage on Easter Sunday and a country in a state of denial (by Ranga Jayasuriya) – This opinion piece began by providing a lengthy descriptive account of the events of 21 April. It goes on to frame the events as the "coming of age of Islamic extremism in Sri Lanka". The author stated he previously warned about the "radicalisation of Muslims in the country". He highlighted as problematic, the "Arabisation" of local Muslims, as well as doctrinaire preaching in unregulated madrasas threatening the "social fabric of the country. He stated that women in burkas, and Muslims as a community, are "self- alienating" themselves from the wider society, leading to parallel Muslim societies. He concluded arguing that Sri Lanka cannot allowed itself to continue living in denial.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A8.

²¹⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A10.

²¹⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 23, p. A11.



Colombo Archbishop calls for strengthening intelligence apparatus – Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith expressed his deep displeasure and concern over not acting immediately on the reports of possible terror attacks. Addressing a press conference at the archbishop’s house in Borella yesterday, he urged the government to strengthen the country’s intelligence apparatus and security forces. He also made a special request from all followers of Christianity to act with restraint and not harm any person of any other religious faith. President of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka Bishop Rev. Asiri Perera said that this type of large-scale attacks could have been avoided if the government was more serious in implementing the law on small incidents. Recalling his unpleasant experience of the Palm Sunday attack on the Anuradhapura Methodist Centre, Rev. Perera complained that no culprit was apprehended by police until the matter was brought up with the Inspector General of Police (IGP) by the prime minister. “We request the government and opposition to ensure the security of the people and take all measures to prevent this type of incidents in the future. I also received calls from several Muslim persons complaining that they live in fear due to social media messages spreading lately. I request all Sri Lankans not to harass any Muslim person,” said President of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka Bishop Rev. Asiri Perera. “We do not have major racial clashes in this country. We need to build a Sri Lankan identity integrating all communities. All ethnic and religious communities, while retaining their tenets, must adopt a Sri Lankan culture,” said Ven. Kotapitiye Rahula Thera.²¹⁸

Anuradhapura calm (by Nimal Wijesinghe) – The situation in the Anuradhapura District remained normal, said Anuradhapura Government Agent R.M. Wanninayake. He said he discussed precautionary measures to be taken for the safety and protection of important religious places, institutes, and tourist hotels, as well as electricity and water supply, public transport systems, and development project sites in the district, with religious leaders and district security chiefs. Referring to the bomb blast which killed nearly 300 civilians and injured 500 persons on 21 April, Anuradhapura Ruwanweli Chathiyaramadhipathi Ven. Pallegama Hemarathana Nayaka Thera told the Daily News that together with the Maha Sangha, he condemned the barbaric and inhuman acts of terror that were carried out on Easter Sunday. Every human being shall have the freedom in practising his or her own religion, which is a fundamental right. No religion or country would endorse such bloodthirsty acts that were aimed at Christian worshippers who were celebrating one of their sacred feasts, the Thera said. Under these circumstances, the whole country, irrespective of differences, politics, or personal agenda shall stand together to do away with all forms of terrorism, the Thera said.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ *Daily News*, April 23, p. 1.

²¹⁹ *Daily News*, April 23, p. 2.



Terrorists had foreign links – Minister (by Disna Mudalige) – Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka said the extremist group behind the terrorist attacks on Sunday had foreign links. “This lunatic religious extremist group has certain foreign connections. These people must be exposed and defeated. This is a part of international terrorism. The persons who give accommodation to them and who support them must also be revealed. We should get together, leaving aside party and religious differences to defeat them. We should give strength to the security forces to carry forward the investigations,” he said.

ISIS fanatics ‘celebrate’ SL terror attacks – Islamic State (ISIS) supporters are celebrating the Sri Lanka suicide bombings that killed 290 people on Easter Sunday and left around another 500 injured, the Daily Mail Online said. The SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks extremist activity online, said ISIS fanatics were praising the terror attacks as revenge for the Christchurch Mosque shooting. Rita Katz, director of respected terror monitoring SITE Intelligence Group, said ISIS supporters have applauded the attacks on social media, “celebrating casualties”. Katz said ISIS media channels were “posting rampantly” about the blasts and praying “may Allah accept” the suicide bombers.²²⁰

Army Commander calls on Archbishop of Colombo – A meeting was held on 22 April between Archbishop of Colombo His Eminence Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith and Army Commander Lt. Gen. Mahesh Senanayake. The army commander said that there is no point in playing the blame game now and measures should be taken to enforce security and bring the situation under control. He told the archbishop that unfortunately, the army has become a reactive force as they do not have the legal authority to act proactively. “We urged the cardinal to take measures regarding his own safety. We should take measures to not let it escalate into a religious clash as this situation is far beyond that. Hence, the cardinal and other religious institutions should be provided security. We have advised the cardinal to refrain from travelling, as he needs to take precautions under the present situation,” the commander said.²²¹

Nation should stand united during time of tragedy: ACJU – The All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) yesterday condemned Sunday’s terrorist attacks on churches and other places. “On behalf of all Sri Lankan Muslims, we, the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, extend our arms of solidarity, love, and affection towards our Christian brothers and sisters at this moment of grief. We urge the authorities to assure that all places of worship are adequately protected immediately, and to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice without delay,” the ACJU added. “We appeal to all religious and civil leaders to join hands in rightly guiding the people of their respective areas to prevent communal conflicts, and also to the public to refrain from spreading rumours through different forms of media,” the ACJU added. “At this moment of great tragedy, let us all join together in solidarity and face the challenges with mutual love and respect to move forward as Sri Lankans.

²²⁰ *Daily News*, April 23, p. 3.

²²¹ *Daily News*, April 23, p. 5.



We pray to Almighty Allah that He eases the pain of all who were affected and grant his mercy to them. Let us all be together in this and help and support each other in this time of grief and pray that we overcome this tragedy as Sri Lankans,' the ACJU said.²²²

Easter Sunday bombings denounced by NCCSL – The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) condemned the bomb attacks carried out on Easter morning. "Finally, in the ensuing time of confusion and disaster—and as we stand in solidarity with the afflicted—we also call upon the nation to be calm to act with restraint, while offering all support and assistance towards the investigations that are being carried out with necessary action thereto," they said.²²³

55 Arrested over bomb attacks - Seven attacks confirmed as suicide attacks (by M.F.M Basheer) - The Government Analyst report has revealed that seven out of the eight bomb attacks carried out on three churches and three star hotels were suicide attacks. In addition, 55 persons have been arrested in connection to the bomb attacks.²²⁴

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith questions as to why no steps were taken despite prior information (by S. Thenmozhi) - Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith has questioned as to why no steps were taken by authorities to prevent the bomb attacks despite prior information. **We need to self-analyse us – Rauff Hakeem concerned** (by N. Thanuja) - Minister of City Planning, Water Supply and Higher Education, Rauff Hakeem, referring to the Easter Sunday attacks stated that there is no room for such violence in Islam). He stated that it has now come to a situation where the Muslim community and Muslim leaders have to examine what is happening within their own community. As a member of the Muslim community, he vehemently condemned the attacks carried out on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka.²²⁵

Motive of attackers was to disrupt reconciliation – National Shoora Council - The National Shoora Council stated that the motive of the attackers was to disrupt reconciliation and ruin the economy. The Council in a statement called on authorities to track down the perpetrators and bring them before the law.²²⁶

Attacks on worship places is distressing – Hindu Priests Association condemns - The Hindu priests have condemned the attacks on Christian places of worship, stating that places of worship are common places for all people. The Hindu Priests Association stated that the attacks brought them profound sadness especially since they were carried out on Easter Sunday, an important day for Christians.²²⁷

²²² *Daily News*, April 23, p. <http://www.dailynews.lk/2019/04/23/local/183567/nation-should-stand-united-during-time-tragedy-acju>.

²²³ *Daily News*, April 23, p. 9.

²²⁴ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 1.

²²⁵ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 2.

²²⁶ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 11.

²²⁷ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 11.

Killing people on a holy day is a brutal act – Batticaloa Diocese Bishop Dr. Joseph Ponniah - Bishop of the Batticaloa Diocese, Dr. Joseph Ponniah stated that the attacks carried out on three churches in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa were brutal acts, especially since it was carried out on a holy day for Christians. The attacks were carried out on Easter Sunday when devotees had attended Easter services, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.²²⁸

Incidents in churches gives sadness – Chief Priest of Senaiyur Sri Nagammal temple, Sivasri Arasaratnam - Chief Priest of Senaiyur Sri Nagammal temple, Sivasri Arasaratnam while condemning the bomb attacks on three churches in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa, stated that such incidents have brought profound sadness.²²⁹

Ensure security for people and places of worship and establish peace – Mavai Senathirajah MP (by T. Sobithan) - Tamil National Alliance Parliamentarian, Mavai Senathirajah has urged the government to ensure security for people and establish peace following the bomb attacks in the country. He stated that the Easter Sunday was an important day for Christians and condemned the attacks.²³⁰

Police, military protection for worship places in Vavuniya - Police and military protection has been provided to churches and mosques in Vavuniya following the bomb attacks on the 21 April.²³¹

Batticaloa church attack was against humanity - Tamil National Alliance Parliamentarian G. Srinesan stated that the bomb attack carried out on the Batticaloa Zion Church was an act against humanity. While condemning the attack, he stated that the authorities needed to track down the perpetrators and mete out the punishment they deserved for their actions.²³²

Jamiyyathul Ulama meets Bishop Noel Emanuel - Members of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) met with the Bishop of Trincomalee Christian Noel Emanuel at the Bishop's residence in Trincomalee. The members of the Jamiyyathul Ulama expressed their condolences for the victims of the bomb attacks. In addition, the ACJU members informed that they would preach on national reconciliation and communal harmony in all the Mosques during the Jumma sermons on Friday.²³³

²²⁸ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 16.

²²⁹ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 16.

²³⁰ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 17.

²³¹ *Virakesari*, April 23, p. 17.

²³² *Thinakaran*, April 23, p. 2.

²³³ *Thinakaran*, April 23, p. 2.



There will be no room for brutal acts in the country - President Maithripala Sirisena has stated that there will be no room for brutality in the country in the future. He made this statement when he met Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith. He made this assurance when the two met following the bomb attacks on churches and hotels in Colombo on Easter Sunday.²³⁴

Police, military protection for worship places in Vavuniya - Police and military protection has been provided to churches and mosques in Vavuniya following the bomb attacks on the 21 April.²³⁵

This will not happen hereafter - President Maithripala Sirisena has stated that there will be no room for brutality in the country in the future. He made this statement when he met Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith. He made this assurance when the two met following the Easter Sunday attacks on churches and hotels in Colombo.²³⁶

A proposal to ban the Burqa (by Kamani Alwis) – United National Party (UNP) MP Ashu Marasinghe stated that he would submit a Private Member Bill to the Secretary of the Parliament demanding a ban on the burqa that covers the face. Marasinghe also pointed out that burqa is not a traditional Muslim garb. Marasinghe said this in the media briefing held at the party headquarters of the UNP yesterday (23). MP Mujibur Rahuman who attended the media briefing held that the donning of the burqa is not a religious need of the Islamic faith and he mentioned that he would extend his support to the steps taken in pursuance of the removal of the burqa. He also pointed out that the Islamic faith does not acknowledge the covering of the entire face and mentioned that there would be discussions in this regard with the Islamic religious leaders.²³⁷

I pray to not let blood be shed on this land – Archbishop (by Kochchikade Special) – Archbishop Malcom Ranjith stated that he is requesting all perpetrators of the Easter Sunday attacks to refrain from perpetuating in this brutal conduct. He also made the request not to shed blood on this land again. Querying as to what the perpetrators would gain by indulging in a brutal conduct like this, Archbishop stressed that it is wrong to engage in launching brutal attacks like these regardless of the intention behind it. Archbishop made these remarks at the funeral service of the people who died in the Easter Sunday attacks in Katuwapitiya church.²³⁸

²³⁴ *Thinakaran*, April 23, p. 8.

²³⁵ *Thinakaran*, April 23, p. 10.

²³⁶ *Uthayan*, April 23, p. 2.

²³⁷ *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 1, 6.

²³⁸ *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 3.



Will take all steps necessary to create a future without fear – Sirisena -President Maithripala Sirisena noted that special mention should be made on the peaceful and calm conduct adopted by the Sri Lankan Catholics at this moment of extreme grief. Delving further, Sirisena noted that the conduct of the Catholic people in the country including the Archbishop Malcolm Ranjith and the Catholic clergy in not allowing the emergence of any conflicts in the country is laudable. Sirisena also urged the Sinhala and Tamil communities not to deem every Muslim as terrorist, since only a miniscule segment of the Muslim community took part in this terrorist attack. President Sirisena stated that it is crucial to foster the harmony between different communities in the country. President Sirisena entertained these views making a special statement addressing the nation yesterday (23).²³⁹

Put a white flag in all places of religious worship to express condolences to people who died due to the bomb attack– Gamini Jayawickreme Perera (by Udula Peiris) - Minister of Budhdha Sasana and Wayamba Development Gamini Jayawickreme Perera asked the masses to put a white flag in every place of religious worship in remembrance of the people who died due to bomb attacks on Easter Sunday. He also requested to hold Bodhi-pooja ceremonies in all temples to invoke merit to the people who died due to the attacks and also to invoke blessings for the people who had been injured due to the Easter Sunday attacks. Perera made these remarks at a media briefing held at the Ministry of Buddhist religious affairs. Welamitiyawe Kusaladhamma Thero who attended the media briefing casted aspersions whether these attacks were attempts to create a war in the country by fomenting religious antagonism. Thero also requested to put a white flag in all temples in remembrance of the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks.²⁴⁰

“Let’s find solutions as a nation without blaming each other” – Dayasiri Jayasekara (by Sithara Senani) - The General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Dayasiri Jayasekara noted that this is a moment where the country has been threatened due to a religious extremism that goes even beyond the separatism that existed in the country. Noting that the Muslim community peaceful community. Jayasekara said that the SLFP is not going to blame the entire Muslim community for these attacks. However, he noted, a fraction of the Muslim community has been absorbed into these extremists ideologies and groups. Jayasekara also noted that the intelligence service had unearthed information on the Thawheed Jamaath clan as far as from 2014. But, he stressed, due to the democratic and reconciliation mechanisms carried out by the present government, there were issues in terms of the implementation of the law; he added that this was due to the fact that the sentiment that such legal measures if taken would be detrimental to communities. Jayasekara made these remarks at a media briefing held at the party- headquarters of the SLFP yesterday (23).²⁴¹

²³⁹ *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 5.

²⁴⁰ *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 12.

²⁴¹ *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 13.



Two suspicious people have also come to the Nikawahera Catholic church (by P.G. Gunathilake) – It is reported that two unidentified individuals have come to gather information, when the church mass was going on at the Catholic church in Nikawahera, Galewela on Easter Sunday. It is also reported that the police security has been tightened in Catholic churches in Galewela area after the Easter Sunday attacks.²⁴²

UNP-backbenchers would meet the President for a discussion on the security of the country – Mujibur Rahuman (by Upali Karunaratne) – United National Party (UNP) MP Hector Appuhamy noted that he is the UNP organiser for the Puttalam electoral seat. He also noted that there is a sizeable population of Muslims in his electoral seat; it was further mentioned that some opined during the last parliamentary election that if he becomes an MP from Puttalam, the Catholic faith would be extensively propagated in the Puttalam district. He also paid his gratitude to the Archbishop, the Catholic clergy and the Catholic masses for their conduct during the situation of crisis. Appuhamy posited these views at a media briefing held at the party headquarters of the UNP recently (22).²⁴³

Terrorists cannot take the power of any country by these attacks – Archbishop (by Ananda Nissanka and Wimal Keerthi) – Archbishop Malcom Ranjith stated that the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks were a group who went to church having faith in God. Noting that they are not aware of the people who brought this tragedy, Archbishop urged the people not to have feelings of revenge towards those people. He also urged the people not to harass the innocent people. Archbishop stressed that it is the genuine Catholic faith. Noting that even though it is possible to point fingers at various individuals as the perpetrators of these attacks, Archbishop noted that as Catholics we would assign that task to God. Archbishop made these remarks at the funeral service of the people who died in the Easter Sunday attacks in Katuwapitiya church.²⁴⁴

Prime Minister must resign after extending apologies to the entire nation – Athuraliye Rathna Thero (by Ajith Alahakoon and Kushan Subasinghe)- Athuraliye Rathna Thero said that the country has faced a serious calamity. The current government cuddled extremism as it feared that it would lose the Muslim votes if actions are taken against extremism. Noting that there are even Wahab universities at present, Thero said that there is no need of Muslim extremist schools to the country. Thero also opined that the Muslim women must not wear black sacks covering the faces. Noting that it is an extremism of the Wahab type, such extremism should be defeated. Rathna Thero made these remarks at a media briefing held at the Parliament yesterday (23).²⁴⁵

²⁴² *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 14.

²⁴³ *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 16.

²⁴⁴ *Divaina*, April 24, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ *Divaina*, April 24, p. 10.



Burqa should be banned before the next bomb explosion – Madhumadawa Aravinda (by Erik Gamini Jinapriya) – The Deputy Leader of the Pivithuru Hela Urumaya (PHU) Madhumadawa Aravinda said that the burqa should be banned as there is a possibility to bring the next bomb while concealing it in a burqa. He also said that PHU is a party that do not engage in politics while engaged in condemnation of the faiths of the people. There is religious freedom in the country, there are Muslims who do not wear the burqa. Aravinda made these remarks at a media briefing held at the party headquarters of the PHU yesterday (23).²⁴⁶

Kataragama sacred site is peaceful: the main devala is not closed – Chief Sanghanayaka of the Ruhuna Magam Paththuwa – The Chief Sanghanayaka of the Ruhuna-Magam Paththuwa Kapugama Sri Saranatisa Thero noted that the area around the sacred place of Kataragama is highly peaceful and that the rituals related to the Grand Devala of the Kataragama continued unabated. Thero made this notification owing to the spreading of a rumour that the Grand Devala of the Kataragama had been closed. Thero also urged the devotees to visit the Kataragama sacred place without any fear or suspicion.²⁴⁷

Why were the information given taken lightly? (Bingun M. Gamage quoting the retired Deputy IGP Nimal Lewke) - The Easter Sunday attacks took place on the 21st of April 2019; but the deputy IGP in charge of the special security division Priyalal Dasanayake has notified about a possible suicidal attack under the leadership Mohammed Sahran, leader of the National Thowheed Jamaath, on 11 April 2019 to the sectors under him. Given such a context and given the fact that the terrorists successfully carried out their suicidal missions despite advance intelligence warnings explains the fact that the intelligence service and the police had taken things lightly. Though the LTTE had an aim for its terrorist activities-the dismemberment of the country, these new terrorists do not have such an objective. The majority who died from the attacks are Tamil Christians. That is why it is clear that this is a religious fanaticism. ²⁴⁸

When I divulged the character of the Thawheed Jamaat Organisation in the Parliament, I was branded as a racist – Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe (by Nimala Kodituwakku) - MP Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe noted that when he revealed in 2016 as the Minister of Justice about the Thawheed Jamaath, he was ridiculed and was branded as a racist by some politicians in the government. Delving further, he noted that he revealed on 18th November 2016 that there is a terrorist group called Thawheed Jamaat in the country and that members of four Muslim families who appear as the elite families in the country are involved in this terrorist propaganda. He also stated that he pointed out that people come from Pakistan and Afghanistan on tourist visas to preach extremism to mosques and Muslim colleges in the country. Rajapakshe noted these remarks at a media briefing held at his residence yesterday (23).²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ *Divaina*, April 24, p. 13.

²⁴⁷ *Lankadeepa*, April 24, p. 2.

²⁴⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 24, p. 4.

²⁴⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 24, p. 10.



Govt. considering ban on burqa and niqab – With interrogation of suspects and other evidence that surfaced pointing to the involvement of a large number of women in the Easter Sunday attacks, the government initiated moves in view of a possible ban on the burqa and niqab in Sri Lanka yesterday, a highly placed government source said. He said the government was planning to implement the ban in consultation with mosque authorities, while several ministers had discussed this matter with President Maithripala Sirisena. It was pointed out that the burqa and the niqab were never a part of the traditional attire of Muslim women in Sri Lanka until the gulf war in the early 1990s, which saw extremist elements introducing this garb to Muslim women. Defence sources revealed that several female accomplices involved in the incidents in Dematagoda escaped wearing burqas.²⁵⁰

“Ban the burqa which Muslim women wear” – request MP Ashu Marasinghe (by Vineeth M. Gamage) – United National Party (UNP) MP Ashu Marasinghe requested the government to take steps to ban the burqa, which is a non- traditional wear covering the entire face, worn by Sri Lankan Muslim women. Marasinghe noted that this attire had been by men for terrorist attacks in international terrorism. Further, he said that it’s not a traditional Muslim women’s attire and even the Muslim political leaders have acknowledged it.²⁵¹

“Thowheed Jamaath is behind the terror attacks” – Arrested suspects reveal (by Wijeyani Edirisinghe) – The suspects currently being questioned said that the suicide bomb attacks, which took place in nine locations, including churches and hotels in Colombo, Negombo and Batticaloa, were the responsibility of the Thowheed Jamaath with the aid of an international organisation. The organisation is formed by a small percentage of Muslims in Sri Lanka as the intelligence revealed. The Muslim percentage of Sri Lanka against the total population is 9.7 percent. Intelligence reported that they were acting as extremists by even changing the religion they deem fit and because of that other Muslims had clashes with this organisation repeatedly.²⁵²

“The attack was a work of ISIS” – says international media (by Buddhi Karunaratne) – Quoting Al – Amaq, the official news service of ISIS, Reuters said that the responsibility of the recent bomb attack which killed 320 and injured more than 500 was claimed by ISIS terrorists.²⁵³

For attention – According to the government, the attacks were carried out by the Thowheed Jamaath, an extremist Muslim organisation. Organisations such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and others were speaking of this since 2014. In Sri Lanka there are many Muslims in main cities and public places, but no Sinhalese harm them. Although Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country, Sinhalese never disturb the rituals and religious acts of Muslims.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A1.

²⁵¹ *Lankadeepa*, April 24, p. 2.

²⁵² *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 6.

²⁵³ *Dinamina*, April 24, p. 13.

²⁵⁴ *Divaina*, April 24, p. 8.



“The whole country is experiencing the repercussions of nurturing Muslim extremists” – BBS National Organiser Ven. Witharandeniye Nanda Thera (by Sirimantha Rathnasekara) – National Organiser of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) Ven. Witharandeniye Nanda Thera said that the whole country is affected with the repercussions of nurturing Muslim extremists freely after putting Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera in jail.²⁵⁵

Ban Thoweed Jama’at (by Yohan Perera and Ajith Siriwardana) – All extremist organisations including the Thowheed Jamath should be banned immediately and its members arrested, their properties confiscated and their assets frozen, said State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene yesterday. In a statement made in parliament, he said the Easter Sunday carnage was carried out by the Islamic terrorist group known as the Thowheed Jamath. The state minister said one should not look at all Muslims suspiciously just because one particular terror group was engaged in a barbaric act. “Most Muslims are supporting and cooperating with the security forces, especially when it comes to investigations,” he said.²⁵⁶

Ashu presents motion to ban burqa – United National Party (UNP) MP Ashu Marasinghe yesterday presented a private member’s motion to parliament calling for the ban on the wearing of the burqa in Sri Lanka. He highlighted the fact that the burqa was not a traditional attire of Muslim women and pointed out that it was being used by males when carrying out global terror activities. The MP said even Muslim political leaders admitted that the burqa was not a traditional attire of Muslims. “I propose that a ban be imposed on the wearing of the burqa based on the national security requirement of the country,” he said. There are notices in some public places asking the wearers to remove the burqa prior to entering them.²⁵⁷

IS claims responsibility for SL bombings – ISIS claimed responsibility for the coordinated bombings in Sri Lanka which killed 321 people and injured some 500. This Reuters report quoted ISIS’s AMAQ news agency. The group claimed to be targeting ‘nationals of the crusader alliance and Christians in Sri Lanka’.

Church services stopped this week (by Yohan Perera) – Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith advised all parish priests in the archdiocese not to hold any church service during the whole week, a spokesman from the bishop’s house said yesterday.²⁵⁸

No law in Islam for women to wear Burka: Mujibur (by Yohan Perera) – There is no law in Islam that makes it compulsory for the women to wear the burka, said UNP MP Mujibur Rahuman yesterday. Rahuman said that some Muslims wear the burka without knowing the teachings of Islam. He said the Muslim organisations will officially tell the Muslim people that they need not wear the face cover. He further said he is for the banning of all extremist groups.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ *Divaina*, April 24, p. 13.

²⁵⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A1.

²⁵⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A1.

²⁵⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A6.

²⁵⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A6.



Killing in the name of Islam...? Baffling! (Prof. A. H. Sherifdeen) – In this letter to the editor, the author says that he had been speaking to his fellow Muslims, who unanimously condemn the 'cowardly' Easter Sunday attacks. He did not understand why such devastation was inflicted, supposedly in the name of Islam, and calls on all Muslims to assist the authorities in the inquiries.²⁶⁰

Engulfed by the shadows of terrorism (Ravi Nagahawatte) – This article discusses the recent attacks and notes the recent trouble between the Sinhalese and Muslim communities that have been "simmering for the past five or more years". "We remember the Digana and Kandy incidents which marked the height of another communal riot. There was also a firebrand monk who led the way to adding fuel to the fire. The monk initiated mob attacks against the Muslims, and these attacks could be the response of a section of the Muslim community to their frustration and the acts initiated to intimidate them". The author states that terrorists, and not Muslims, must be blamed for the recent attacks. The piece goes on to discuss tourism and the economy.²⁶¹

Terrorism: Nothing Islamic about it at all! (by Asiff Hussein) – In this opinion piece, the author stated that the Easter Sunday attacks came as a "rude shock to the Muslim community". "They could not believe that such a crime would be perpetrated in the name of a faith that has stood for peace for over a thousand years." The perpetrators of the attacks are the 'antithesis' of Islam and are "worse than animals". The author provided a detailed and comprehensive account of the Islamic faith, stating unequivocally that extremism and the "killing of innocents" are forbidden within Islam. He goes on to discuss the importance of religious tolerance in Islam, and historical examples of said tolerance.²⁶²

Several Muslim associations condemn attacks – Muslim Civil Society movements and associations yesterday expressed their condolences and condemned the massive killings, destruction, and attack on innocent lives on Sunday. They state that the attacks are against "all human and Islamic norms" and that the perpetrators do not "represent Islam or reflect Muslim beliefs and practice". Instead, these groups have "misused and abused Islam". The statement was attributed to; All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, National Shoorah Council, Muslim Council of Sri Lanka, Memon Association of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum, Sri Lanka Jama'at al-Islami, Lanka Minaret, Quadriyathun Nabaviyyah Thareeqah, Nabaviyyah Islamic Youth Organisation, Sri Lanka Muslim Women's Conference, Muslim Ladies Study Circle, Colombo Young Muslim Women's League and All Ceylon Union of Muslim Youth League Front.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A8.

²⁶¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A9.

²⁶² *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A10.

²⁶³ *Daily Mirror*, April 24, p. A14.



ISIS claims responsibility for Sunday attacks – ISIS, through its AMAQ propaganda agency, claimed responsibility for the Easter Sunday attacks. ISIS stated they sought to target Christians, and the citizens of the countries involved in the coalition against them. Sri Lankan authorities had attributed the attacks to National Thowheed Jamath, previously known for vandalising Buddhist statues. The group's leader, Mohammad Zahran or Zahran Hashim became known three years ago for online speeches calling for non-Muslims to be eliminated.²⁶⁴

Ban 'niqab, burqa' – Prof. Ashu (by Irangika Range) – UNP MP Prof. Ashu Marasinghe proposed to the government to consider imposing a ban on wearing the burqa or niqab, for the sake of national security. He stated he will present a private member's motion proposing a ban of the burqa and niqab to parliament today or tomorrow. He argued that present laws are a risk as they allow for 'faceless persons' to walk the streets. UNP MP Mujibur Rahuman said the burqa and niqab were never part of the traditional attire of Muslim women in Sri Lanka and feared that the "attire can be used for different personal agendas which would be a great risk to national security".²⁶⁵

Ban NTJ – Dayasiri (by Dharma Sri Abeyratne) – Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) General Secretary MP Dayasiri Jayasekara said the organisation called National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) and other similar extremist organisations said to be behind the recent bomb attacks should be banned in the country. "The security forces and police can take action against these organisations, only if they are banned. So, it is very important to uproot these organisations to ensure the safety of the public". "There is an international link to the attacks. But the majority of Muslims in the country are peace-loving and maintain cordial rapport with other ethnic communities, in a brotherly manner. Only a few of these Muslims have been brainwashed by religious terrorism," he added.²⁶⁶

CMC to fund rebuilding of St. Anthony's Church (by Disna Mudalige) – Mayor of Colombo Rosy Senanayake said on Monday that the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) will provide Rs. 25 million for the reconstruction of St. Anthony's Church in Kochchikade, Colombo. The mayor was speaking to the media at archbishop's house in Borella after a meeting with Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith. She also expressed her condolences to the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks. She said the CMC has decided to give the necessary financial support for the reconstruction of the Kochchikade Church that was destroyed in the Easter Sunday terror attacks.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 1, 8.

²⁶⁵ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 1, 8.

²⁶⁶ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 2.

²⁶⁷ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 2.



Nation mourns Sunday attacks (by Disna Mudalige) – Three minutes silence were observed islandwide at 8.30am yesterday, as the country marked a day of mourning for the lives lost in the heinous terrorist attacks on Easter Sunday. People from all walks of life, belonging to all ethnicities and religions, expressed their solidarity with the victims of Sunday's bomb blasts by hoisting white or black flags in front of their houses, places of work, and shops.²⁶⁸

Cardinal urges Catholic clergy not to organise masses at churches and Cathedrals – Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith yesterday requested the Catholic clergy not to organise masses at churches and cathedrals until further notice. He requested the Catholic clergy not to inconvenience the devotees by organizing masses, as the security situation in the country had not improved. "As security authorities are still conducting investigations, the masses should not be organised at churches until further notice," he said.²⁶⁹

Church of Ceylon unreservedly condemns barbaric acts of terrorism – Bishop of Colombo – The Bishop of Colombo issued a statement expressing his sympathy and condemning the perpetrators of the recent "cowardly and cruel" Easter Sunday attacks. He called on the government to act quickly and decisively.²⁷⁰

A time for reflection – This editorial, noting the devastation of the Easter Sunday attacks, argued that; Extremist ideology of any form is bad, but those who distort religious teachings to incite hatred and instigate violence should have no place in any civilised society. The nation paid a very heavy price on Sunday due to the actions of a few extremists... Religious leaders themselves have to play a major role in the endeavour. The Moulavis and Imams must ensure that no young men and women from their faithful fall prey to radicalisation. Likewise, the leaders of other religions too must curb the rise of any extremist individuals in their ranks. Schoolchildren already have to learn all three languages – it should now be made essential for students to learn about the four major religions practiced by Sri Lankans...Education is the key to stopping ethnic and religious extremism dead in their tracks²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 5.

²⁶⁹ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 5.

²⁷⁰ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 5.

²⁷¹ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 6.



Reacting to terrorism in a democracy (by Ravi Ratnasabapathy) – In this opinion piece, the author argued for restraint, because; Lashing out at the communities or groups from which the attackers were drawn will only ignite a cycle of violence. The US reacted to the bombing of the twin towers by launching a 'war on terror' invading Afghanistan and Iraq. A long chain of events eventually ended in train bombs in Madrid (2004) and London (2005), a plethora of attacks elsewhere, and the creation of ISIS which may have sponsored the attacks last Sunday. The author further described tension and discrimination that still exist in Sri Lanka; The war has ended but the relationship between communities is still tainted by suspicion, fear, and a lack of trust. The recent attacks have fuelled suspicion and mistrust of Muslims. Half the population, women, face routine discrimination, harassment and violence. Most people are comfortable interacting with people, behaviours, and ideas that they are familiar with, but react with fear and apprehension when faced with the unfamiliar. Misunderstanding causes us to respond aggressively to perceived threats to the status quo or stability, even where none exist. The recent hostility to Muslims is founded on ignorance, misunderstanding, and fear. Sri Lanka has been independent for 70 years, but spent over 30 of those years in conflict. If the post-conflict era is to lead to lasting social peace, we must transform the unfamiliar into the familiar. The author advocates a strong civic and political education to inculcate proper values within the populace, capable of protecting democracy and ensuring tolerance flourishes and coexistence is protected. Instead of a 'us' versus 'them' mentality, people should view others as fellow members of humanity.²⁷²

Muslims do not condone Easter Sunday terror attacks – PM –Muslim people do not condone terror attacks, stated PM Ranil Wickremesinghe in parliament on 23 April. Ranil said, "Muslim people are against these heinous crimes". The PM expressed his determination to tackle terrorism.²⁷³

Private Members proposal to ban burka – UNP MP Ashu Marasinghe brought a private members proposal to ban the burka worn by Muslim women. The proposal states that the burka is "not a traditional Muslim dress" and that some "extremist Islamic male terrorists are using the 'burka' for terror attacks in other countries".²⁷⁴

Eastern province governor meets Bishop of Batticaloa and Ampara - Eastern Province Governor, M.L.A.M. Hizbullah met with the Bishop of Batticaloa and Ampara, Rt. Rev. Joseph Ponniah. The Governor while expressing his condolences on the attack on Zion Church in Batticaloa also urged the Bishop to continue with the church activities that were planned, and ensured to provide protection. Both discussed ways in which the situation could be addressed without creating problems between communities.²⁷⁵

²⁷² *Daily News*, April 24, p. 7.

²⁷³ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 10.

²⁷⁴ *Daily News*, April 24, p. 10.

²⁷⁵ *Thinakaran*, April 24, p. 2.



We vehemently condemn attacks targeting places of worship - The Batticaloa Church of the American Ceylon Mission in a statement has vehemently condemned the bomb attacks on churches on Easter Sunday (21st April). It stated that the attacks had caused fear among communities and added that the attacks cannot be condoned on the basis of any religion. The statement urged people not to indulge in violence based on race, religion, and caste.²⁷⁶

Attacks on churches are brutal acts - Leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Minister Rauff Hakeem has stated that the attacks on churches are an act of brutality and said that everyone had the duty to condemn the attacks. He pointed out that Islam too accepted Jesus Christ as a prophet, and that Muslims believe that He will return once again. He pointed out that the attackers wanted to create divisions among the people who lived with mutual understanding and urged people not to fall for such.²⁷⁷

Do not conduct church masses until further notice – Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith says security cannot be guaranteed (by M. Manochithra) - Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith has requested churches not to conduct masses until further notice as security cannot be guaranteed.²⁷⁸

National Thowheed Jamath should be banned – SLFP says President alone should not take responsibility (by M. Manochithra) - General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), Dayasiri Jayasekera has stated that the National Thowheed Jamaath should be declared as a banned organization similar to the LTTE. He pointed out that there is extremism between Buddhists and Muslims in several parts of the country, adding that the attackers had used this for their purpose. He stated that not only President Maithripala Sirisena, but the Inspector General of Police and the Defence Secretary both should take responsibility for the attacks that took place.²⁷⁹

All three communities mourn at the Hali Ella Veerasithi Vinayagar Temple - Citizens of all three communities mourned the death of victims of the Easter bomb blasts at the Veerasithi Vinayagar temple in Hali Ella. The event was organized by Hindu Administrative Association and Hindu Youth Association, and saw the participation of chief priests of the Hali Ella Buddhist temple, and of the Hali Ella Mosque.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ *Thinakaran*, April 24, p. 8.

²⁷⁷ *Thinakaran*, April 24, p. 11.

²⁷⁸ *Virakesari*, April 24, p. 2.

²⁷⁹ *Virakesari*, April 24, p. 2.

²⁸⁰ *Virakesari* April 24, p. 6.



Religious observances of all faiths in Weligama in remembrance of the people who died from the attacks (by Gandara Special) - A special religious observance was held in Weligama in remembrance of all who died from the Easter Sunday attacks. The religious observances were held according to Buddhist, Catholic and Islamic religions.²⁸¹

“Having malicious intentions against the perpetrators of the attacks is not in line with the Catholic faith” – Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith (by Sujeewa Thathsara) – Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith stated that notwithstanding the fact that extremists used youth for their agendas after brainwashing the particular youth, the depiction of a malicious responses to them is not in conformity with the Catholic faith. Instead, he noted, such youth should be taken to the correct path by being compassionate. It was further requested by the Archbishop from the masses to appreciate the religious harmony. The Archbishop has posited these views at a meeting with the ambassadors of several countries yesterday (24).²⁸²

Do not accuse the entire Muslim community for the brutal act done by the extremists – Muslim intellectuals (by Buddhi Karunaratne)- The spokesperson of the Muslim Intellectuals Organisation Dr. Roshan Hazeem requested not to accuse the entire Muslim community for the brutal act carried out by a minuscule group of extremist Muslims. Noting that if something contrary to the basic Muslim tenet is conducted in the country it is an issue, he noted that ordinary Muslims should not engage in such conduct. He also noted that Islam is not a religion that was spread by waging wars and said that there is no other country as Sri Lanka where Muslims can practice their faith. He made these remarks at a media briefing held at the Foundation Institute yesterday (24).²⁸³

Religious rituals in kovils in North-East due to the bomb explosions (by Dinasena Rathugamage) – A number of Tamil organisations in North-East held religious rituals in remembrance of the people who lost their lives in the EasterSunday attack. A large number of people attended religious observances held in kovils throughout the two provinces. The religious observances were held in parallel to the day of national mourning declared by the government.²⁸⁴

Three suspicious people arrested in the Nallur Kovil (by Dinasena Rathugamage) – Jaffna police has arrested three people who acted suspiciously within the Nallur Kovil premises. One person who had been arrested is a Muslim youth. A special police unit has been established within the Nallur Kovil premises in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ *Dinamina*, April 25, p. 5.

²⁸² *Dinamina*, April 25, p. 13.

²⁸³ *Dinamina*, April 25, p. 13.

²⁸⁴ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 3.

²⁸⁵ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 3.

Hold the festivals in churches without much fanfare: seek the security of the police (by Norman Palihawadene) – The Archbishop house in Colombo has instructed the Catholic churches to hold the festivals in the Catholic churches without much fanfare. It has also been instructed to seek the security of the police to conduct those festivals. Moreover, the Archbishop house has requested the heads of the security forces to provide special protection to Catholic places of religious worship in Madu, Thalawila, Ragama- Thewatta. It has been further requested to hold the funerals of the victims with less participation of people.²⁸⁶

Do not act divided in this moment – Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith (by Sujeewa Thathsara) – Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith has requested all masses to be united in this moment of turmoil. Reverend Archbishop has further requested the masses to respect all religions and to appreciate the religious harmony. Archbishop has further requested the masses to ensure that the Muslim community is not subject to any harassment at this moment. The Archbishop has also instructed not to hold any church masses or pageants in Catholic churches until further notice. The Archbishop has posited these views at a meeting with the ambassadors of several countries yesterday (24).²⁸⁷

There should be investigations as to why the President and the Prime Minister was not informed of the terrorist threats – Lakshman Kiriella (by Ajith Alahakoon and Kushan Subasinghe) - MP Athuraliye Rathna Thero stated that everyone is scared to speak of Islamic terrorism. Thero also noted that terrorism where the heads of the Buddha statues are broken has emerged. Thero also stated that he is urging the genuine Muslim adherents to get rid of the black coats and coverings while acknowledging the culture of the country. In the absence of such conduct the country would become a bloodbath again, the Thero stressed that it is the responsibility of the Muslim community to get rid of this religious antagonism. Thero also noted that though there are Muslims in Bangladesh and Indonesia, there is no habit of covering the head in those countries. Minister Rauff Hakeem stated that he is grateful to the Catholic clergy and the Catholic community for acting peacefully and calmly in the manner taught by Jesus. The Muslim community acted in harmony with the Christians and other religious groups, Hakeem mentioned that steps should be taken to eliminate these brutal group of terrorists. United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) MP Wimal Weerawansa queried as to whether the government is afraid to proscribe organisations that nurture religious antagonism. He also stated that the suicidal mentality is germinated within the children who study in Arabic schools called Madrasas. These remarks were made during the debate on the Emergency Law held at the Parliament yesterday (24).²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 6.

²⁸⁷ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 7.

²⁸⁸ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 9.



The condolences of the Ceylon Church for all those who died from the Easter Sunday attacks – Dhilloraj Canagasabey (by Norman Palihawadene) – Bishop of Colombo in the Church of Ceylon Dhilloraj Canagasabey has expressed his deepest condolences to everyone who died due to the Easter Sunday attacks. He stated that that he wishes a speedy recovery of the injured people. He has also urged the government to safeguard the places of religious worship and also to take legal actions against any individual who incite any violence against any community. Entertaining the view that the aim of these attacks was to make the country unstable by disrupting the communal and religious harmony prevailing in the country, he urged the people to act with patience and calmness. He has expressed these remarks issuing a notification.²⁸⁹

Buddhist Clergy and the Church of Ceylon expresses condolences - The head of the Buddhist clergy in Japan Banagala Upatissa thero noted that the entire world condemns the attacks that were targeted at the Catholic churches on Easter Sunday. Noting that he has a close relationship with the Catholic board, he said that he shares the sadness with the adherents of Catholic faith. The Media-Spokesperson of the Church of Ceylon Father Sagara Perera stated that Christian people are traumatised due to the Easter Sunday catastrophe. He also mentioned that the adherents of the Church of Ceylon pray for the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks.²⁹⁰

ISIS assassin that entered the country through the door of separatism kept open by the government - (by Saman Gamage) - Our newspaper vividly depicted as to how the shadows of the ISIS terrorism that has spread throughout the world is endeavouring to enter the country and as to how the Islamic religious extremism has treaded into the country. Islamic extremism began to raise its head with substantial vigour in the aftermath of the war victory in 2009. The writer of the article states that he divulged the reality of this in 2014 through a series of newspaper articles, after a visit in the Eastern province. The first incident through which Islamic extremism attempted to raise its head in the country was the “Grease-Devil fiasco” after the termination of the war; but that endeavour was nipped in the bud due to the proactive conduct of the intelligence service in the country. It has been reported that there was adequate intelligence information on the possible attacks by Islamic terrorists and the news was conveyed to the Secretary of Defence and the Head of the intelligence service in advance. Then, the question that lingers is as to how the Islamic State terrorists were able to carry out their attacks? The writer questions whether it isn’t the fact that the leaders in our country maintained a passive behaviour due to the minority vote base.²⁹¹

Buddhist and Islamic religious observances in Weeraketiya for the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks (by P.S. Hettiarachchi) - Buddhist and Islamic religious observances were held in Weeraketiya yesterday (23) in remembrance of the people who were killed in the Easter Sunday attacks. The Buddhist religious observances were conducted by the heads of the

²⁸⁹ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 13.

²⁹⁰ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 14.

²⁹¹ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 15.



temples in the area and the Islamic religious rituals were conducted by the Islamic clergy.²⁹²

Will the people be notified as to what happened to the Vanathavilluwa investigations at least now? (The editorial) – Media reports indicate that the security forces have disclosed that the Thawheed Jamaath group is behind the attacks targeted at Colombo and suburbs and the Zion church in Batticaloa. It is said that Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe who was a minister at that time divulged in the Parliament on 18th November 2016 that members of four elite Muslim Families have come to Sri Lanka after obtaining military training abroad. There was series of incidents of vandalism of Buddha statues in Mawanella area in the recent past. Suspects were arrested and it was possible to find a training camp of the terrorists in Vanathawilluwa relying on the tip-off of the suspects arrested. The question that lingers is as to why an ideal opportunity to nip a deadly terrorist organisation in its bud was abandoned and as to whose need it was done? Minister Kabir Hashim stated recently that a prime suspect of the Mawanella incident had been released on the instructions of a politician of a higher rank. Media reports also indicate that a Muslim politician in the Western province had promised to handover the main suspects of the Mawanella vandalism incident to the police. It is also reported that had not happened still.²⁹³

Cannot allow to undermine the national security in the guise of the name of yahapalana–Dayasiri Jayasekara (by Wineetha M. Gamage) - The General Secretary of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Dayasiri Jayasekara noted that the information discovered by the National Intelligence Service is accurate and also that many issues had emerged due to the detainment and the interrogation of the intelligence officers. He stressed that national security should be the primary concern above all other things. He also posited the view that the current government has not taken actions against the extremist groups reckoning that it would be detrimental to the communities. Jayasekara made these remarks at a media briefing held at the party-headquarters of the SLFP recently (23).²⁹⁴

Intelligence services are not weak: actually the weak group is the group that did not acknowledge the reports given by the intelligence sector – Mujibur Rahuman (by Anjula M. Weeraratne and Nimala Kodituwakku) – MP Mujibur Rahuman said that all extremist Muslim organisations should be banned and that all religious leaders who sabotage the national reconciliation should be imprisoned. Rahuman noted these at the media briefing held at the party headquarters of the United National Party (UNP) recently (23). MP Ashu Marasinghe who attended the media briefing noted that he would submit a private member bill to the parliament demanding the ban on the burqa. Noting that there are discussions with the Muslim leaders, he noted that burqa is not a traditional Muslim wear. He also opined that there is the question whether the burqa arrived with the support of international terrorist groups.²⁹⁵

²⁹² Divaina, April 25, p. 17.

²⁹³ Lankadeepa, April 25, p. 4.

²⁹⁴ Lankadeepa, April 25, p. 5.

²⁹⁵ Lankadeepa, April 25, p. 8.



Ban all extremist religious organisations in Sri Lanka – Muslim Intellectuals Organisation (by Muditha Dayananda)- The spokesperson of the Muslim Intellectuals Organisation Dr. Roshan Hazeem stated that all miniscule extremist religious organisations operating in Sri Lanka should be banned. He also noted that ordinary Muslim civilians have no necessity to dismember a part of the country as that of their own. He made these remarks at a media briefing held at the Foundation Institute yesterday (24).²⁹⁶

The curse that originated due to procrastination until the issues become critical (by Udaya Prabath Gammanpila) – News on a bomb explosion in Sri Lanka is reported exactly after a lapse of a period of a decade. It was reported in this very same paper column in 2014 that the Muslim extremism that is gradually growing in the world is coming to Sri Lanka and that the duty of nipping it in the bud lies with the Muslim leaders. That was during the Halal discussion that was prevalent at that time. But what happened instead was the fact that I was subject to the vehement criticisms of the Muslim leaders who kept on saying that I am trying to create an issue that does not exist; they made these allegations without them being responsive to the facts presented by me. When MPs Wimal Weerawansa and Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe pointed out about Muslim extremism in the parliament, Muslim leaders hurled verbal attacks against those two MPs saying that they are attempting to disrupt the national harmony. There were incidents of vandalism of Buddha statues and also getting engaged in racial conflicts with the Sinhalese groups. Moreover, Muslim youth have been arrested with the weapons. But the investigations into these incidents collapsed midway and the suspects arrested due to the political influence. Had Muslim leaders resorted to a conduct of weakening the extremists as opposed to that of protecting them, an attack of this gravity could have been averted. There is a silver lining among the dark clouds. That is Presidents Counsel Ali Sabry and he was farsighted to observe that the Muslim society is being isolated from the Sri Lankan social fabric; moreover, he examined in advance that an extremism is raising its head and that it can lead the Muslim society into the destruction.²⁹⁷

Ban Muslim groups with immediate effect – Hassim (by Menaka Indrakumar) – The government should ban all Muslim groups with immediate effect and bring them under the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, says Intellectual Muslim Association Spokesperson Roshan Hassim. He urged the government to investigate these groups and their practices, and what they have been preaching. He added that the innocent Muslim community is suffering because of these terrorist groups. He also said that due to the incompetency of certain ministers, the Muslim community has to face insults and repercussions. When asked about the Sri Lanka Thowheed Jamath group, Hassim said the group shouldn't be given any media coverage. Even though the group claimed that they had no association with the terrorist group, it originated from them. He also agreed with the banning of certain attire as it concerned security of the country. He also mentioned that the Muslim community is fearing possible attacks against them.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 25, p. 12.

²⁹⁷ *Lankadeepa*, April 25, p. 6.

²⁹⁸ *Daily News*, April 25, p. 2.

13 were arrested for attempting to provoking Anuradhapura (by Upali Ananda) – 13 suspects were arrested and remanded for riding motorbikes across Anuradhapura town, violating traffic laws, expressing statements publicly that can hurt people in other religious beliefs and waving black flags.²⁹⁹

Pakistani refugees from Negombo come to Pasyala for protection (by Pushpakumara Mallawarachchi and Hubert Fernando) – A group of refugees who lived in Negombo made a complaint to the police that their lives are in jeopardy. Police reported that this group of 700 refugees, including 100 kids, were sent to Pasyala Ahamadia community center with the connection of UN. They had to leave Pakistan as groups who opposed the religious views of these people have killed at least one family member of the families of those people.³⁰⁰

Mawlawi in Vavuniya who justified the attack is sought for arrest (by Dinasena Rathugamage) – Law enforcements authorities are looking to arrest the Vavuniya Mawlawi who had released a video to the internet claiming the Easter Sunday bomb attack is needed to achieve Islamic aspirations. He released this video after the ISIS claimed responsibility of the attack.³⁰¹

South displays interfaith unity – Galle Bishop (by Mahinda P. Liyanage) – People of the Southern Province displayed their longstanding tradition of peaceful inter-religious coexistence, understanding, and interfaith brotherhood by remaining calm and serene amidst extreme pain and grief, Bishop of Galle Diocese and President of the National Commission on Sri Lanka Bishop's Media Rt. Dr. Raymond Wickramasinghe said. He urged the people of all communities to be determined to uphold our moral values, tolerance, and patience among all these brutalities. We should not judge this terror act from racial, religious or political angles, he added.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 25, p. 9.

³⁰⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 25, p. 12.

³⁰¹ *Divaina*, April 25, p. 1, 4.

³⁰² *Daily News*, April 25, p. 5.



His Eminence's call for calm – The cardinal's appeal to the public to remain calm in the face of tragedy is significant in more ways than one. Forgiveness is a core teaching of Jesus Christ and this is the first time in which the Catholic community has been targeted by terrorist attacks and it will be a test of their will on how they will respond to this extremely grave provocation. There is also the fact that the attacks were carried out in locations with hugely contiguous Catholic populations where the community is closely knit because of their faith. Steps should also be taken by the authorities to ensure this tragedy is not used for political gain. The editor pointed out that former President Mahinda Rajapaksa contradicted himself by blaming the government saying that the government fully ignored the warnings of the intelligence services that gave adequate warning, while on the other hand alleging that the intelligence network was paralysed, because intelligence officers were thrown behind bars. Admittedly, due attention was not given to the prior warnings, but as the former Defence Secretary stated, they did not expect attacks of such magnitude. The editor also pointed out that it is highly unlikely that the Catholic Church would cancel all its Easter Sunday services under such circumstances. All measures should be taken to ensure the surviving members of the families of the dead and wounded are adequately looked after.³⁰³

Facing fanatical terrorist extremism (by Fr. Augustine Fernando) – It is a problem to fathom how extreme religious fanaticism could cause such a mass murder "in the name of Allah". No one could justify such gross evil in the name of religion. Carrying out such evil in the name of religion and rejoicing in the success of shedding blood and inflicting gruesome tragedy on any community, is a sign of criminal thought process emanating from inhuman attitudes. It is natural for people, including Christians, to be overwhelmed with emotions and anger and call upon the authorities to impose maximum punishment on the perpetrators of the crime. The writer reminded the people that to act in such way would not be according to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, who asked for forgiveness for his own executioners. Buddhists too are called to adhere to a similar attitude because Buddha has said "Hatred does not cease through hatred, only through love. This is the eternal rule". The truth that "evil cannot be eradicated by evil" should be applied to the concrete situation in the present context. This is the response of the humble people who follow the path of their religious leaders who direct them to pursue peace.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ *Daily News*, April 25, p. 7.

³⁰⁴ *Daily News*, April 25, p. 7.



Curbing extremism in SL: Asgiriya Mahanayakes want amnesty for intelligence officers – The Mahanayake Theras of the Asgiriya Chapter requested the government to grant amnesty to intelligence officers in order to curb extremism. The Karaka Maha Sanga Sabha of the Asgiriya Chapter said in a statement that it was a known fact that religious extremism intensified only as a result of our intelligence service being weakened after several officials were imprisoned. The statement said it was learnt that politicians had acted to release religious fanatics who vandalised Buddhist statues in Mawanella without even an investigation being conducted. It said that if the head of state wants to continue to be influenced by foreign powers, disregarding the aspirations of the people and not realizing the true nature of the religious crisis that struck this country, such a leadership would be rejected by the people and the Maha Sangha would stand with the people in such an eventuality.³⁰⁵

Pakistani refugees in Negombo transported to Pasyala (by Pushpakumara Mallawarachchi) - A group of 700 Pakistani refugees who were sheltered in Negombo under the purview of the United Nations were transported in eight buses to the Ahmadiyya Community Centre in Pasyala under police protection. This was done after they lodged a complaint claiming there was a threat to their lives following the Easter Sunday terror attack in Katana. It was revealed that the refugees, including hundreds of children, had arrived in the country after at least one of their family members had been killed by those who rejected their religious teachings in Pakistan. They are being given protection by the police and army.³⁰⁶

Demonstrators arrested in A'pura (by Atula Bandara and Dayaratne Embogama) – A group of 13 individuals who staged a demonstration in the Anuradhapura town attempting to arouse communal feelings in view of the prevailing crisis in the country were arrested by Anuradhapura police. They were between the ages of 18 and 40 and were residents of Wijeyapura, Hidogama and Nelunwewa areas. The demonstrators carried black flags, shouted slogans and paraded the streets on motorcycles. Five motorcycles, a double cab, a stock of black flags and a ladder were seized by the police. Two motorcars and several motorcycles had sped away and evaded arrest.³⁰⁷

Rising above the carnage of Easter Sunday (by Shirly Candappa)- In this feature piece the author recounts the bloody attacks on churches and hotels. The author notes that in the 'more recent past' the 'Muslim community faced a series of attacks from nationalist sections among the Sri Lankan community. Muslim places of worship were attacked and most perpetrators, though identified, remain at large.' The author viewed this as a potential cause of radicalisation. The author notes that political leaders, perhaps learning the lessons of the civil war, have united to condemn the attacks perpetrated by 'terrorists' rather than 'blame a particular community'. In spite of this, the author views Sri Lanka as a society where justice remains a 'distant dream' to many.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A1, A2.

³⁰⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A7.

³⁰⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A7.

³⁰⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A8.

Batticaloa seeks peace and healing amidst grief and suspicious (by Gihan de Chickera) - This feature piece sees a reporter in Batticaloa talk about how the community is recovering in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks. Bishop Rt. Rev. Joseph Ponniah said the 'Christian response to such situations was to reject hatred and suspicion.' Residents said the Muslim traders who hail mainly from Kathankudi were staying away from the town due to fear of reprisals. Despite the heavy security presence a few incidents have occurred signalling a possible re-emergence of years of latent Muslim-Tamil tensions in the area. In one incident two boats belonging to Muslim fisherman from Kathankudi were burnt near the Kallady Bridge. This was followed by some unrest being reported between Tamil and Muslim fishing communities near the Navathkuda-Kathankudi border. Police sources said that security has been tightened at this border to prevent a possible escalation of hostilities. The article proceeds to provide a narrative account of the blasts, the work of first responders and the stories of survivors.³⁰⁹

Security first: ban burqa, niqab - This anonymous letter to the editor asks for the burqa and niqab to be proscribed to avert a 'very dangerous threat to society'.³¹⁰

Bombings place our democracy under duress, and strain our commitment to rights (by S. Ratnajeewan H. Hoole) - Violence is designed to challenge our democratic values which were formed and endorsed in saner times. When bombs are set off they bring out some of our natural instincts for safety and in the process weaken our connections to our values and erode our freedoms. When we allow that to happen we become like the bombers who then win. The author notes that everyone should have freedom of religion. He analyses bans on religious symbols in public places in other countries. The author strongly opposes banning religious dress. He argues this is incompatible with notions of democracy.³¹¹

Attacks on innocent people are brutal and acts of terrorism - The Northern Muslim Civil Society has condemned the attacks on churches and hotels in the country on Easter Sunday, labeling it as brutal acts of terrorism. The society stated that 325 individuals including 45 children had been killed in these attacks. The society urged that the perpetrators be given the maximum punishment possible, making it a lesson for those who indulge in such acts of low esteem.³¹²

Islamic terrorism is formed in Madarasas R. Yasi and M.R.M. Waseem - Opposition MP Wimal Weerawansa in Parliament has alleged that Islamic terrorism is formed in Madarasas. He urged that fundamentalist groups be banned. He also stated that the government was referring to the attacks as international terrorism and not Islamic terrorism.³¹³

³⁰⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A8, A9.

³¹⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A10.

³¹¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 25, p. A12.

³¹² *Virakesari*, April 25, p. 3.

³¹³ *Virakesari*, April 25, p. 8.



Hospital refuses to treat woman in a hijab - The doctors and employees of the Ratnapura Teaching Hospital have refused to treat a woman who had arrived there wearing a hijab. They have stated that they cannot treat her owing to security reasons. The incident had taken place on the 23rd of April. The said woman had removed the hijab in order to get herself treated.³¹⁴

Racial and religious goodwill should be strengthened; Multi religious group petitions to District Secretary - The multi religious group has handed over a petition to the District Secretary of Vavuniya, I.M. Hanifa, in order to strengthen goodwill between ethnic and religious communities. This petition was handed over at a meeting held between the two parties at the Vavuniya District Secretariat on the 24 April. Religious heads belonging to Hinduism, Christianity and Islam took part at the meeting.³¹⁵

“If the country needs to be rescued from Muslim extremism, ban terrorist groups, burqa and niqab immediately” – Ranawaka (by Diana Udayangani) – Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka said that if there is a need to rescue the country from Muslim extremism, steps must take to ban the National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ), any associated organisations, the members of these organisations should be taken into custody and the burqa and niqab should be banned immediately. He also said that Sharia universities and Madrasa schools should be taken under regulation that is on par with government principles and people who spread lunatic Islamic ideologies should be eliminated immediately.³¹⁶

A plan to attack Auliya Muslim mosque (by Sujith Hewajulige) – Inspector General of Police (IGP) Pujith Jayasundara had informed the heads of three police divisions that according to intel the terrorist group which carried out several bombings around Colombo has plans to attack the Auliya Muslim mosques. The report sent by the IGP states that according to the informant, the extremists recognise ‘Kuppu’ mosques or Auliya mosques as the mosques in which they believe in the tombs of deceased Islam leaders.³¹⁷

Christian community in Sri Lanka do not pester the Muslim community – Archbishop (by Harshana Thushara Silva) – Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith assured that there will be no harm to the Muslim community in any way from the Christian community in Sri Lanka. The cardinal further mentioned that the people who committed terrorist attacks or inflicted violence in the name of a religion do not belong to any religion. The cardinal further said that these acts are done by people to mislead human weaknesses. The Archbishop expressed this in a meeting with ambassadors, high commissioners from the organisation of Islamic cooperation and Former Minister Imthiyas Bakir Makar, who is the chairman of Imthiyas Bakir fund.³¹⁸

³¹⁴ *Thinakaran*, April 25, p. 3.

³¹⁵ *Uthayan*, April 25, p. 15.

³¹⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 26, p. 5.

³¹⁷ *Lankadeepa*, April 26, p. 8.

³¹⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 26, p. 10.



“Do not cover the face in public places” – Ulama organisation requests Muslim women (by Nimala Kodithuwakku) – Taking the current situation of the country into consideration, All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) request all Muslim women not to cover their faces in public places. Secretary of Youth Affairs Akram Nuramith Mawlawi claimed that there is no law in Islam regarding the burqa and any woman can choose to wear or not to wear the burqa. He further said that their statement regarding the burqa is that it's their culture and it's a personal right for everybody. He added that, however, in order to ensure the safety of citizens and to support the law enforcements, they request for the face not to be covered.³¹⁹

“No Jumma mass in Muslim mosques” – Haleem request – Taking the current safety situation in the country into consideration, Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs Abdul Haleem requested not to exercise the Jumma mass in Muslim mosques.³²⁰

With camaraderie to the Muslim society (by Tharaka Warapitiya) – Many people including kids were killed by the recent Easter terror attack and the country was crippled in minutes. When we consider the present religious and ethnic context within Sri Lanka, the lowest tension has always been between Muslims and Christians. The Jihadists attacked the Christians. There were Tamil -Muslim frictions in Sri Lanka but never a Muslim - Christian tension in a religious context. Right now, the Muslims in the country have to live with fear and anxiety. We would like to point out that the extremists are a very small fraction within the Muslim community and the Muslim community wasn't able to avert that trend.³²¹

Stop constructions of Sharia University in Batticaloa; An internet petition (by Rasee Weerasinghe) – There is an internet petition forcing the government to stop constructions of the Sharia University in Batticaloa. This would have been the largest Islamic university in Asia, built to spread Islamic religious ideologies. There are 28,000 signatures in the petition by yesterday (25th) and it will be handed with of 35,000 signatures. The chief security officer of Saudi Arabia came to an agreement with the government regarding the university and Rs. 15,000 million were allocated for this from Hira Foundation in Saudi Arabia. The petitioners claim that the higher education ministry does not have any power to start a university which grants Sharia law degrees when Sharia law is not a religious law in Sri Lanka.³²²

³¹⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 26, p. 10.

³²⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 26, p. 14.

³²¹ *Dinamina*, April 26, p. 9.

³²² *Divaina*, April 26, p. 1, 4.



Pakistani refugees from Negombo comes to Pasyala for the security of their lives (by Chandraweera Wickramaratne) – A group of refugees who lived in Negombo made a complaint to the police that their lives are in jeopardy. Police said that this group of 700 refugees, including 100 kids, were sent to Pasyala Ahamadia community center with the connection of UN. They had to leave Pakistan as groups who opposed their religious views have killed at least one family member of the families of those people.³²³

Protests in Nittambuwa asking to remove Pakistani refugees (by Jagath Kanaharaarachchi) – People of Nittambuwa, including Buddhist monks, were protesting against giving shelter to more than 700 Pakistani refugees in Ahamadia community center. They were showing boards that read, “Expel Pakistani refugees from the country”.³²⁴

Islamic fanatics threaten Sufi Mosques - The Police Department has circulated a warning letter on the internet and social media websites which states that some Islamic fundamentalists led by Mohammed Zahran are planning yet another spate of bombings targeting the traditional Sufi mosques known as ‘Kuppu Palli’ or Auliya Mosques.³²⁵

Considering emergency situation, remove face veil whenever necessary: ACJU (by Chathuranga Samarawiskrama) - The All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) organisation requested all Muslim females to cooperate for purposes of identification and to remove their face veil whenever necessary in light of the emergency situation in the country. ACJU also requested Muslims not to create any situation where others would feel threatened and to carry their identity cards. The Muslim community has also come forward to support the Catholic and Christian churches if they do not feel safe to worship there.³²⁶

³²³ *Divaina*, April 26, p. 6.

³²⁴ *Divaina*, April 26, p. 15.

³²⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 26, p. 1, 2.

³²⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 26, p. A1, A2.



Champika's 10-point action plan to counter fundamentalist terrorism: 1) The Thawheed Jamaath organisation and all its affiliated and related organisations responsible for the attack should be banned. 2) The Niqab and Burqa worn by Muslim women should be banned. 3) If there are foreign Islamic teachers who are in the country to teach at Madrasas and to promote the Arabic language they should be immediately deported from the country. 4) A proper mechanism should be put in place to monitor and regulate Islamic organisations and voluntary organisations that operate in a suspicious manner. 5) The Batticaloa University or the Kathankudi Sharia University and the Islamic study centres in Beruwala, Maharagama, Trincomalee and Addalaichchenai should be brought under the control and supervision of the University Grants Commission and the Education Ministry. 6) All foreigners including those from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Afghanistan without a valid visa should be immediately deported from the country. 7) The security forces should be allowed to investigate the teaching process and related matters of Mosques. 8) A special visa procedure should be put in place for those who seek visas to Sri Lanka from countries with terrorist activities (especially countries where there is Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism). 9) All government intelligence agencies should be strengthened and governed by one operations centre. 10) The President, the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader should be directly involved in the work of the National Security Council.³²⁷

ACJU decries terror, no Muslim burial for terrorists (by Chathuranga Samarawickrama) - The All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) organisation claimed that the individuals who committed this barbaric attack on innocent lives do not belong to them and they would not accept their bodies. ACJU said that there is no place in Islam for extremism and that the Muslims of Sri Lanka strongly condemn all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism. The ACJU and the Muslim organisations had issued a joint declaration against the ISIS on July 22, 2015. Since the declaration was made, the ACJU and other Muslim organisations had continuously informed the defence authorities and requested them to take necessary actions against the individuals who promote extremist ideologies.³²⁸

³²⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 26, p. A1, A2.

³²⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 26, p. A5.



The Easter massacre victims: they are part of me (by Ameen Izzadeen) - In this editorial the writer makes a clear distinction between the terrorist and himself as a follower of Islam. He says, "For us, the 'us' is the 259 people whose lives along with their dreams were ended by inhuman brutes. For us, the 'us' is the 500 plus people who were wounded, the thousands who survived the horror and the millions who identify with the victims". He sees himself as a victim of the Easter Sunday attacks. The writer also calls the ISIS leader Abu Bakr-al-Baghdadi and the founder of the National Thawheed Jamaath Zahran Hasheem his enemies. "Muslims pray five times a day. We end our prayers by turning our heads to the right and then to the left, while saying Assalamu Alaikum Warahmathullah, peace and God's mercy be upon 'all of you'. Thus they greet the whole of humanity. So, I do not know how the terrorists give a violent interpretation to a message of peace. It pains me to know that they have hijacked my religion to carry out acts of terrorism in its name and call it Jihad, whereas Jihad refers to the struggle one undergoes to reach high spiritual status." The writer portrays his religion as one of peace, love and forgiveness whose connection with the Christian community goes back 1400 years. The writer views these terrorist attacks carried out in the name of god as a blow to the spiritual bond the Muslims share with the Christians. While drawing attention to some of the differences in the belief system of Muslims and Christians, he says that "our differences should not be an impediment to our friendship built on many theological and spiritual concepts we share."³²⁹

Cardinal appeals for restraint - Colombo Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said he will ensure that no harm would be done to the Muslim community in Sri Lanka by the Catholic community. Cardinal Ranjith addressed Ambassadors and High Commissioners representing Islamic countries who were accompanied by members of the Bakeer Markar Centre for National Unity led by its President, former Minister Imthiaz Bakeer Markar, who had called on him on Tuesday. Friendly relations have existed between Islam and Christianity. The bonds and relationships between the adherents of the two religions was a strong one. Cardinal Ranjith said that we had lived in unity all these years. This country is a peace-loving one and no harm would be done to the Muslim community by the Christian community. Furthermore, the Cardinal stated that the attacks were 'not based on any religion' and that the 'group responsible had no religion or any understanding of religion'. Islam is a 'peaceful religion' whose adherents are 'duty-bound to desist from violence'. The Archbishop requested the Christian community 'not to even raise a hand against their Islamic brethren'.³³⁰

³²⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 26, p. A8.

³³⁰ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 2.



‘Disunity is a danger at this time’ - The Baha’i community in Sri-Lanka in a letter to Colombo Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said it is profoundly saddened and is in a deep state of shock at the unprecedented scale and ferocity of the attacks that took place on Easter Sunday. The letter read that “the Baha’i community stands in solidarity with the Christian community, the Buddhist community, the Muslim community and the Hindu community and condemns any acts of violence declared on humanity.” The letter proceeded to state that, “In the past, in the wake of collective grief and disbelief, we have seen the horrific severity that resulted from such catastrophic acts; acts that are seared on the consciousness of every succeeding generation. We understand that disunity is a danger that the people of our country can no longer endure; the consequences are too terrible to contemplate. Therefore, together, we must ensure that this dark cloud is lifted by penetrating rays of light: companionship, fellowship, kindness and love; moving humanity towards an age of peace – peace that holds a collective state of being, manifesting unity... It is our ardent hope that as a nation we continue to construct a unified relationship with utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship; one so powerful that the light of unity can illuminate throughout Sri Lanka. Let us accelerate the processes of unification collectively, setting aside the barriers of race and religion, and regard one another as friends, not strangers. Let us promote tolerance and mutual understanding amongst the diverse segments of our society.”³³¹

Polonnaruwa maulavis for banning mosques under NTJ (by W. A. Piyathilake) - Maulavis of 29 mosques in Polonnaruwa handed over a petition to Polonnaruwa SSP A.P. Dhammika Weerasekara requesting him to ban all mosques within the country that belong to the National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ), the group alleged to be responsible for the Easter Sunday bombings. They said three mosques in Polonnaruwa are operated by the NTJ. The Chairperson of the Polonnaruwa District Mosques Confederation, S.A.A. Samag stated that, “Muslim, Sinhala and Tamil people have lived in Polonnaruwa without a problem for decades. If there has been a problem, it is only after the NTJ started. It has still not been registered in the country. We live in harmony. In the aftermath of the recent bomb attacks, all Muslims are heavily inconvenienced.”³³²

³³¹ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 2.

³³² *Daily News*, April 26, p. <http://www.dailynews.lk/2019/04/26/local/183879/polonnaruwa-maulavis-banning-mosques-under-ntj>.



SL needs a multi-faith dialogue - Amarapura Nikaya Mahanayake - Amarapura Nikaya Mahanayake Most Venerable Kotugoda Dhammawasa Maha Nayaka Thero issued a statement condemning the recent violence. He stated that Sri Lanka enjoyed ‘more than a decade without horrors of war and with a perfect bond of friendship and religious harmony in this little island’ and fully condemned the attack. It is the first ‘heinous attack’ since we ‘emerged victorious against the three decades of bloodshed and devastation’. It was a ‘peaceful era where all Sri Lankans lived in a spirit of peace, unity and religious harmony without any form of discrimination’. He further stated that it is ‘now incumbent on all responsible to create conditions for sustaining our efforts for multi-religious unity and coexistence’. In light of the spread of falsehoods on social media, he made an earnest ‘appeal to every citizen to exercise calm and extreme tolerance ... to make sure that the return of normalcy is restored fully in the country. In the face of this situation, we feel the immediate need of holding a strong multi-faith and multi-racial dialogue in the country in order to make sure that Sri Lanka is a safe country for all’. He emphasized the need for ‘extreme tolerance and calmness with multi-faith brotherhood’.³³³

Easter Sunday nightmare (by Zulkifli Nazim) - In this opinion piece, the author condemns the Easter Sunday attacks, noting that Easter Sunday is the most important day of the year for Christians. The author calls the perpetrators ‘filthy’ and ‘savage scum’, who deserve ‘no mercy’ and ‘extremely severe punishments... so horrifying that it would serve as a deterrent to other scum of the earth’. The author argues that the ‘whole country is clamouring’ for Sarath Fonseka to be appointed as Minister of Law and Order. He has relevant expertise, while the President has ‘none’. Furthermore, the members of terrorist cells must be ‘eradicated and annihilated’ and face coverings should be banned because they are ‘totally un-Islamic’ and will be used by terrorists to impersonate women to ‘gain access to places’.³³⁴

Attack that underscores a regional problem (by Harsh V. Pant) - In this opinion piece, the author notes that the Easter Sunday attacks brought back stark memories of Sri Lanka’s gruesome past. He notes that the minority Christian community, less than 10% of the population, were the main target of the attacks. While religious tensions had existed on the island between Buddhists and the Muslim minority, Christians had not been targeted by violence. But, now ‘global narratives’ of violence are influencing Sri Lanka. The President has appointed a three-member panel to carry out investigations and has given additional powers to the security forces to ‘detain and interrogate people’. A temporary social media block was implemented and the National Thawheeth Jamaath (NTJ) was ‘pinged’ by the government – previously known for vandalising Buddhist statues last year. The group had received support from a ‘global terror network’. There were serious intelligence failings as the security services failed to follow up on warnings that a radical Islamist group was planning to orchestrate suicide attacks. This tactical failure was compounded by a larger strategic failure in keeping track of the evolution of NTJ from a fringe group into a larger threat.

³³³ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 5.

³³⁴ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 7.



The author also notes the tension and power struggle between President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, before stating that India will have to work closely with its neighbours to arrest this 'disturbing trend'.³³⁵

'Nation must unite in the face of tragedy' - Pingalpoththa Raja Maha Viharaya Chief Incumbent Ven. Dunukedeniye Kusaladhamma Thero said that Sri Lanka is one of the rarest countries in the world that is blessed with multi-cultural and multi-religious communities. "Having four different religions in our island is like having four types of flowers in a bouquet. Each flower gives different fragrances, yet when all are combined, it creates an even greater aromatic setting," he said. He added that certain elements, as well as extremists, are trying to sabotage this co-existence and hence, we must all be vigilant of their inhuman activities at all times.³³⁶

'Vesak funds should be used to aid victims' (by S. M. Wijayaratne) - All the funds that are to be used for the upcoming Vesak festival should be utilised to help the families who fell victim to the attacks that took place on Easter Sunday. Ihala Dolospattuwa Chief Prelate and Kurunegala District Sasnarakshaka Balamandala Secretary-General Venerable Atamune Ananda Nayaka Thero said that all the citizens of the country must unite to assist their fellow brothers and sisters in the face of this tragedy. He added that these donations would be a tribute to the Buddha, and it would strengthen the ties between communities.³³⁷

JHU calls on banning NTJ, burqa (by Upali Karunaratne and Irangika Range) - The Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) put forward a set of proposals to the government including an immediate ban on the National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) and the burqa in order to prevent communalism, and violent ethnic and religious extremism in the country. The JHU General Secretary and Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka expressed the need to convene the National Security Council frequently and to have the President, Prime Minister and Opposition Leader communicate there in spite of partisan differences. Ranawaka discussed how over 50 young Sri Lankan men travelled to fight for ISIS. According to him the group has between 150-200 members 'who are suffering from mental illness'. The Minister also said that Madrasas should open their doors to the security forces and allow inspections from the Education Ministry.³³⁸

³³⁵ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 7.

³³⁶ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 9.

³³⁷ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 9.

³³⁸ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 10

Muslims requested not to gather for prayers today - Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs M.H.A Haleem appealed to the Muslims to refrain from gathering for congregational prayers today (Friday). He said the Muslims should instead pray in their homes for peace and security of the country as a sign of solidarity with the Catholic Community and a show of protest against the barbaric act of the ruthless terrorists. In a statement Haleem prayed that the Almighty Allah destroys the activities of these inhuman terrorists. He also expressed that the Muslim community stands with their Christian brothers and sisters during their time of grief.³³⁹

Police looks for Maulavi (by Lahiru Fernando) - Vavuniya Police are carrying out investigations to arrest a Maulavi (Muslim priest) who had released an eight-minute video clip on social media justifying the terrorist attack on Easter Sunday. Maulavi F. Nawooman serves at a mosque in Settikulam, Vavuniya. The video mentions that the Muslim Community did not fight demanding a part of the country and now their rights must be won through a struggle. The suspect had fled the area.³⁴⁰

It is wrong to link all Muslims - Tamil National Alliance Leader, R. Sampanthan in an interview has stated that it was wrong to link all Muslims to terrorism following the attacks. He pointed out that the attacks were carried out by a section of Muslims and not the entire community.³⁴¹

Burka should be banned (by N. Thanuja) - Minister of Megapolis and Western Province Development, Patali Champika Ranawaka has called for the ban on National Thowheed Jamaath. In addition, he has also called for the ban on burka (face cover) at a time when the emergency regulations are in place in the country. He also urged that Muslim educational institutions and universities be brought under the purview of the University Grants Commission.³⁴²

We pray that this does not continue - The Ampara District Priests Union has stated that they forgive those who carried out attacks on Easter Sunday, and pleaded that they do not continue in this manner. They stated that the attackers were their brothers too, adding that they may have been misguided.³⁴³

Pakistani Catholics seek refuge in Negombo police station - Pakistani Catholics who have been temporarily sheltered in Negombo have sought refuge at the Negombo Police Station stating that they are being threatened following the bomb attacks in country on Easter Sunday. More than 100 individuals including women and children have sought refuge at the police station. This comes two days after Pakistani Ahmadi Muslims sought refuge at the police station and were relocated to a safe premise.³⁴⁴

³³⁹ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 10.

³⁴⁰ *Daily News*, April 26, p. 10.

³⁴¹ *Thinakaran*, April 26, p. 6.

³⁴² *Virakesari*, April 26, p. 1.

³⁴³ *Virakesari*, April 26, p. 5.

³⁴⁴ *Virakesari*, April 26, p. 5.



Hindu temples should also be given protection - Hindu temple administrations and political leaders have urged the Coordinating Secretary of State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene to provide security for Hindu temples in the same manner that security is provided for churches and mosques. The request was made when the Hindu temple representatives met with the Coordinating Secretary of the State Minister.³⁴⁵

Bomb attacks have put the entire Islam community to shame - The Kandy District Multi Religious Organisation has stated the bomb attacks have put the entire Islam community to shame. Member of the organisation, Assheik Anaz Mohommed stated that the Muslims had maintained silence and peace whenever atrocious acts were carried out against them in the past. He cited incidents where Muslims were evicted from the North, mosques were attacked. He pointed out Muslims were respected since they remained silent and ensured that there was no tension. He even pointed out the recent incidents in Digana, Ampara, Beruwala and Dharga Town, where Muslims did not retaliate but maintained silence.³⁴⁶

Minister Bathiudeen's brother was arrested and later released (by Indika Ramanayake) – The army said that the Minister of Industry and Commerce, Resettlement of Protracted Displaced Persons, Co-operative Development and Vocational Training and Skills Development Rishad Bathiudeen's brother was arrested with a VIP cab belonging to the ministry under suspicions. He was later released since it was revealed that the brother works as the private secretary of the minister and he used the cab for official purposes.³⁴⁷

Ban the Burqa: Kurunegala Municipal Council motion passed with one voice (by Pushpakumara Jayarathne) – With the current situation of the country, as a step for the safety of people, a motion was passed to ban wearing the Burqa in any place under the control of the municipality. Further, the motion to condemn the attack which was proposed by UNP councilor Mohamad Risvi also passed with one voice.³⁴⁸

“Will ban Thowheed Jamaath” – says President (by Ajantha Kumara Agalakada) – In a meeting with press editors and media heads, President Maithripala Sirisena said that the National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ), which is connected to Easter Sunday attacks will be banned. Sirisena added that since the existing laws are insufficient for that, a new act will be presented to the parliament. The president further claimed that until then the organisation will be banned under Emergency Law.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ *Virakesari*, 2 April 26, p. 9.

³⁴⁶ *Virakesari*, April 26, p. 16.

³⁴⁷ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 1, 2.

³⁴⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 1, 6.

³⁴⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 6.



Search for a Mawlawi who released a video favoring the terrorist attack (by Sithum Chathuranga) – Vavuniya Police claim that they have started investigations looking for a Mawlawi from a mosque in Vavuniya and Settikumal region who released a video justifying the terrorist bomb attacks on Easter Sunday targeting churches and several other places. The police further claim that the Mawlawi said in the video that Islamic people didn't fight asking parts of the country, but as the limit of their patience has now crossed, they should struggle to win Islamic rights.³⁵⁰

The future world of Sunni terrorists (by Lusitha Jayamanne) – This article refers to the terrorist attacks which targeted Christian churches and five-star hotels on Easter Sunday and the information revealed in the aftermath. It further connects ISIS, with it claiming responsibility for the attack. The article probes into the ISIS's idea of Islamic State and their world map and the history of ISIS. The article further delves into the terrorism and violence inflicted by ISIS around the world.³⁵¹

Mother and wife of the main suspect of destroying Mawanella Buddha statues incident were arrested (by Rohan Kumara Dissanayake) – Mawanella Police said that they had been able to arrest the mother and wife of the main suspect of destroying the Mawanella Buddha statues. There were several suspects arrested regarding the incident, but the two of chief suspects got away. Hence the police arrested the mother and wife of one suspect as per intel gathered from a previously arrested suspect. Police said that the wife of the suspect is in possession of two identity cards and one is with a Sinhalese name.³⁵²

“Dehiwala bomber Jameel studied in Britain and Australia. He became an extremist in Australia” – Sister (Daily Mail) – Australian Prime Minister confirms that the Easter Sunday suicide bomber who blasted a bomb in a Dehiwala lodge, Abdul Lathif Jameel received his education in Britain and in Australia. Abdul Lathif Jameel's sister said that he became inclined towards extremist ideas and became a completely different person in Australia. The Australian Government expressed that they will support the Sri Lankan government on the investigations regarding Jameel.³⁵³

Muslim mosques are deserted, devotees are in homes (by Harshana Thushara Silva) – Addressing the Dawatagaha Mosque during Jumma Mass in Colombo yesterday (26th), Ikbāl Mawlawi said that attacking another religion, attacking another community is against Islam. The Mawlawi further said that because of the Easter Sunday attack, which targeted our Christian brethren, the whole Sri Lankan Muslim community is aggrieved, and Muslims are in fear. He called for this situation to be changed. He said that it must be told to their brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka that they are not terrorists. The Mawlawi said that they are the one that should do that.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 7.

³⁵¹ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 10.

³⁵² *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 11.

³⁵³ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 11.

³⁵⁴ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 11.



“Ban Thowheed Jamaath mosques, including the three in Polonnaruwa immediately” – Mawlawis’, secretaries and presidents of 29 Muslim mosques in Polonnaruwa handover a letter to ASP (W. A. Piyatilake) – Mawlawis’, secretaries and presidents of 29 Muslim mosques in Polonnaruwa handed over a letter to the Senior Superintendent of Police in Polonnaruwa asking to ban all the mosques belong to Thowheed Jamaath around Sri Lanka, including three in Polonnaruwa. Chairperson of the Polonnaruwa District Muslim Mosques Association said that they had been there for 80 years and the Muslims, Tamils, Sinhalese lived in Polonnaruwa without any issue. The chairperson further said that if there were issues, those had been initiated by the Thowheed Jamaath. He added that the Thowheed Jamaath was not even registered in Sri Lanka.³⁵⁵

“Ban every extremist organisation” – ACJU requests the government (by Nimala Kodithuwakku) – Secretary of Youth Affairs in the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) Mawlawi Akram Nuramith said that they are requesting the government to ban all the extremist and terrorist organisations and use the law against those. In a press conference, Nuramith further stated that they have informed the authorities repeatedly about these terrorist groups since 2013 and even before the attacks.³⁵⁶

One suspect who damaged the Mawanella Buddhist statues and another person were arrested in Dambulla (by Sarath Eraminigammana) – They have removed all the data in their mobile phones before the arrest. They came to go to Kattankudy from Colombo but stayed in Dambulla due to the islandwide curfew. The preliminary investigations revealed that one person is wanted for damaging Buddhist statues in Mawanalla.³⁵⁷

Weapons recovered from Mosque at Slave Island (by Indika Ramanayake and Tharindu Jayawardane) - A suspect was arrested while 40 swords, Kris knives and several uniforms similar to those worn by the Army and a jacket (without explosives) were recovered from a mosque at Palliyaweediya in Slave Island. They were found under the bed of the Mosque’s Chief Cleric.³⁵⁸

Religious reconciliation must be given priority (by Yohan Perera) - Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa told a meeting of religious and political leaders in the Parliamentary complex that religious reconciliation was as important as communal reconciliation and assured that neither he nor his party would try to gain political mileage out of the present situation in the country.³⁵⁹

Gota says will run for president and tackle radical Islam - Former Secretary of Defence Gotabaya Rajapaksa stated that if he won the presidential election his immediate focus would be to tackle the threat of radical Islam and rebuild the security set-up.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 13.

³⁵⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 27, p. 14.

³⁵⁷ *Divaina*, April 27, p. 7.

³⁵⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. 1.

³⁵⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A1, A2.

³⁶⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A1, A2.



‘Diyawanna Declaration’ urges President, PM, Opp. Leader to work in harmony (by Yohan Perera) - The ‘Diyawanna Declaration’ adopted by the All Party – All Faith Conference called on the President, Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader to work in collaboration with each other regardless of narrow political, religious or party differences in order to ensure that all citizens are able to exist without fear or suspicion and to ensure the security of the country.³⁶¹

Ban Madrasa Islamic Schools – CBK (by Yohan Perera) - Former President Chandrika Kumaratunga called for the banning of Madrasa Islamic schools in Sri Lanka saying the children are taught extremism in those institutions. The former President is of the view that children of all religions should be allowed to go to government schools. She proposes that a quota should be introduced when it comes to the intake of non-Buddhist students. Maulavi Faris Farook said the name ‘Madrasa’ means ‘Daham Pasal’. Maulavi Farook added that Islamism has nothing to do with extremist groups. What the extremist groups teach is no Islam.³⁶²

Govt. should ban all extremist groups – Patali (by Sandun A. Jayasekara) - Minister of Megapolis and Western Development Patali Champika Ranawaka urged the government to ban the National Thawheed Jamaath and all other similar terrorist groups. In a series of measures, he wanted to annihilate religious fanatics. He also wanted to prohibit the wearing of the face veil - Burqa and Niqab - by Muslim women, to bring Madrasas and the Sharia University under government control, to closely monitor their curriculum and educational programmes and to exterminate all Muslim establishments and individuals who promote, teach and train Muslim fundamentalism. Minister Ranawaka expressed his satisfaction on the action taken by the peace-loving and god-fearing Muslim leaders who had alerted the government on an impending threat from Muslim extremists.³⁶³

It is up to Muslim leaders to help dispel fear psychosis: DEW (by Sandun A. Jayasekera) - The Communist Party of Sri Lanka said that the Muslim religious, social and political leaders must come forward to dispel the fear psychosis prevailing among other communities in the country.³⁶⁴

Religious leaders need to play a bigger role - In the aftermath of the Easter Sunday slaughter, peaceful and responsible citizens need to focus more on finding a solution than finding fault. Although most Sri Lankans are gripped with fear and uncertainty as to who will attack whom and where, all religious leaders have come forward to turn this calamity into a blessing. While party politics will remain divisive and self-centred for personal gain or glory, the religious leaders need to move actively and with dynamism come together in curbing terrorism, bring about poverty alleviation and take practical measures in the battle against global warming or climate change which threatened to destroy all of humanity and creation.³⁶⁵

³⁶¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A1, A2.

³⁶² *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A3.

³⁶³ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A3.

³⁶⁴ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A6.

³⁶⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 27, p. A8.



Cardinal commended by religious, political leaders (by Camelia Nathaniel) - The 'Diyawanna Declaration' was launched at a special all faith and all-party conference convened at Parliament by the Select Committee of Parliament for National and Religious Harmony. They called on the President, Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader to work together regardless of narrow political, religious or party differences. The Speaker Karu Jayasuriya rendered his gratitude towards the Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith for addressing the Catholic community convincingly to prevent any retaliation or further bloodshed. The Speaker also called on the media to report in a responsible manner. Opposition Leader Mahinda Rakapaksa commended the Cardinal's wisdom and actions at this time. President of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, Mufti M.I.M Rizwie thanked all religious leaders, especially the Cardinal who played a very special role in calming the situation. Former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga suggested that reconciliation should commence with children and said a programme has already been launched targeting school children.³⁶⁶

Ceylon Bible Society prays for peace, harmony - The Ceylon Bible Society (CBS), while conveying its sadness and shock over the series of bomb attacks that took place, said that it will help rebuild churches and the minds of those traumatised by the tragic event. The CBS prays for those who had lost their lives, local and foreign, and those who are injured. It also prays for "those in Christian love, who unleash violence on the innocent in whatever name that their sins will be forgiven..."³⁶⁷

Swords found from Slave Island mosque - Police recovered 47 swords from a mosque in Slave Island. According to police sources these swords were found under the bed of the mosque's chief clergy. A suicide jacket without explosives was also found at the mosque. The clergy and the swords were brought to Slave Island Police station. Meanwhile, a military camouflage uniform was also found at a mosque in Kollupitiya. Meanwhile the Galle Police arrested two individuals who are suspected to have links with terrorist organisations. Police stated that one of these suspects is employed at a private institution in Colombo.³⁶⁸

It should be ensured that brutal attacks such as this should not recur – Asgiriya and Malwatte Chapters tell Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith (by M. Manochithra) - The Anunayakes of the Asgiriya and Malwatte Chapters have conveyed to Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith that the attacks on the churches are unacceptable and such incidents should not happen again. The Anunayakes further stated that such brutal attacks cannot be accepted on people regardless of the religion they practice. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith stated that killing lives in the name of religion is something we need to be sad and concerned about, adding that the government needed to track down those behind these incidents.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ *Daily News*, April 27, p. 1, 8.

³⁶⁷ *Daily News*, April 27, p. 3.

³⁶⁸ *Daily News*, April 27, p. 8.

³⁶⁹ *Virakesari*, April 27, p. 2.



Islamist fundamental groups must be banned (by Rajadurai Harshan) - Opposition Parliamentarian, Vasudeva Nanayakkara has called for an immediate ban on Islamist fundamentalist groups in Sri Lanka following the Easter Sunday attacks. He pointed out that these groups had been openly active and have maintained links with international terrorist groups as well. He added that such acts would create affect reconciliation and create divisions among the people. He added that in the recent past, no actions were taken against those who had links with international terrorist groups, adding that those who were arrested in connection with the recovery of bombs in Wanathawilluwa, Puttalam had also been released.³⁷⁰

Program to ensure co-existence among religions: Steps taken to submit proposals to Parliament (by MRM Waseem) - A special meeting was held with the participation of multi religious leaders, politicians, civil society representatives in order to submit proposals to parliament on strengthening general and religious coexistence. The meeting was chaired by the Speaker Karu Jayasuriya.³⁷¹

Governor meets Archbishop - Northern Province Governor, Dr. Suren Ragavan met with the Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith and expressed his condolences on behalf of the Northern people over the suicide attacks on churches on Easter Sunday.³⁷²

“Can’t ban Thowheed Jamaath” – President (by Udesa Sanjeewa Gamage) – Addressing media heads, editors and electronic media directors, President Maithripala Sirisena said that there was no possibility to ban the Thowheed Jamaath within the existing law.³⁷³

“Thowheed Jamaath should be banned” – Former President Rajapaksa (by Normal Palihawadane) – Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa emphasised that the present government has not yet taken action to ban the Thowheed Jamaath, which facilitated many killings. Rajapaksa further claimed that all the assets, accounts of this deadly organisation should be banned as well.³⁷⁴

The Sri Lankan Muslim extremism which commenced in 2010 in the East by Zahran and destroyed Easter Sunday (by Hemantha Randunu) – Not only Sri Lanka but the whole world got to know about Thowheed Jamaath, the extremists, deadly and terrorist organisation after the barbaric Easter Sunday attack. They first came into light with attacks on Buddhist temples around the Mawanella area. The entire Buddhist population was anxious and scared after they attacked and distorting Buddha statues. The investigations uncovered that the organisation is led by Zahran Hashim and Mohamad Saharan and Mohamad Shahid. The operation to destroy the Buddha statues was to provoke Buddhists.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁰ *Virakesari*, April 27, p. 2.

³⁷¹ *Virakesari*, April 27, p. 11.

³⁷² *Uthayan*, April 27, p. 17.

³⁷³ *Divaina*, April 28, p. 1.

³⁷⁴ *Divaina*, April 28, p. 1, 18.

³⁷⁵ *Divaina*, April 28, p. 5.



The truth revealed by Ven. Gnanasara who was remanded (by Sirimantha Rathnasekara) – Even before the intelligence reports, one organisation saw the grave threat from Islam fundamentalists to the country. They raised their voice against it, but the leaders nor some of the citizens, listened to them. They even labelled this organisation as a nationalist faction or even a non-government organisation. However, to the misfortune of the country everything they said become a reality. That organisation is called the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and is led by Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera. They were misunderstood even by the Muslims in Sri Lanka. BBS always said that the brothers of the traditional Sri Lankan Muslim society will be beaten up by these Islam extremists as well.³⁷⁶

An attack to the Methodist church before the Black Easter (by Tharindu Uduwaragedara) – One week before the Easter Sunday attacks, an attack took place targeting the Anuradhapura Kumbichchikulam Methodist Church. On March 31, Nalin Siriwardena, a Pradeshiya Sabha member from Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) came and threatened the Sunday service of the church, saying this should be the last Sunday mass of this church. However, they didn't hold the Sunday mass on April 7, and the archbishop of the Sri Lanka Methodist order informed the police high chairs with regard to the situation. A religious ceremony was to be held on April 14, which is a Sunday, and the Archbishop also went to the church. When the archbishop reached the church, there was a mob of people and they threatened the Archbishop. However, the Archbishop commenced the mass, the mob started to stone the church and light firecrackers. They closed the gates of the church and issued death threats to the people inside.³⁷⁷

Information on 139 members of the terrorist group revealed (by Dayasili Liyanage) – Law enforcement authorities have uncovered personal information, including names and addresses, of 139 members connected to the Islamic terrorist group. This religious group National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) have 45 mosques around the country and women are allowed to enter those mosques.³⁷⁸

“There are 10,000 refugees in Sri Lanka from Burma and Pakistan” – Secretary General of the Ravana Balaya Ven. Ittakande Saddhathissa Thera (by Dayasili Liyanage) – Secretary General of the Ravana Balaya Ven. Ittakande Saddhathissa Thera said that there could be terrorists among the Muslim refugees coming to Sri Lanka.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ *Divaina*, April 28, p. 10.

³⁷⁷ *Anidda*, April 28, p. 7.

³⁷⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 28, p. 1, 19.

³⁷⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 28, p.1, 19



Why the authorities didn't care about the revelation of the extremist group? (by Srinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) – The Easter Sunday massacre marked the culmination of the process which started with destroying Buddhist, Catholic and Hindu religious statues in Mawanella, Peradeniya, Gampola, Welamboda, Polgahawela and Pothuhara Police Divisions by some connected to an extremist Muslim organisation. Their target was damaging the religious coexistence by destroying Buddhist, Catholic and Hindu religious statues. According to the belief of National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ), worshipping statues is wrong. They say that there is only one God and everybody should worship that god.³⁸⁰

Govt. must take responsibility for Easter Sunday attacks – President - This article reproduces a speech made by President Maithripala Sirisena to print and electronic media heads, selectively quoted: "I request you not to treat the entire Muslim community as terrorists. I convened religious leaders of all faiths yesterday and during that meeting Muslim religious leaders expressed their sincere condolences. One Muslim religious leader from Galle said his child attends a Sinhala school in the area and due to the prevailing situation he is unable to send his child for his education. Even during the 30- year war Muslims were not subjected to any security checks. However, the situation had taken a U-turn with the recent incidents. He said every Muslim in this country has been affected. ...Hence, I categorically remind people of this country that it is our duty to protect the Muslim community of this country. We should not look at them as our enemies but to make utmost effort to preserve the hard-earned reconciliation. We vehemently condemn and reject this barbaric act carried out by a small fraction of the Muslim community. We treat this as an act against humanity. ...When carefully analysing the activities of ISIS, it is clear.... that its objective is to destabilize Western countries by carrying out sudden attacks. They are against the political thinking and the religious ideologies in the West. Leaders of ISIS have once said their true victory would be the day that they hoist the ISIS flag in the Vatican. I think this is the reason they target Catholic places of worship". The President goes on to provide a narrative account of events, explaining the warning received and why he does not bear causal responsibility.³⁸¹

Negombo citizens call for unity (by Vimukthi Fernando) - An organisation known as Unity of Negombo Citizens (UNC) pledged at a media briefing that it would not let further harm befall any community in its efforts to combat terrorism and extremism and to protect the lives of all communities. UNC's aim is to erase the label 'inhuman behaviour' tagged onto Sri Lanka recently and to maintain peace and harmony in the country for future generations. The organisation represents the multi-ethnic and multi-religious backgrounds of the citizens of Negombo. The bomb blasts were attacks on democracy. Prasanga Fernando said that some political factions fish in murky waters and had sent 'Ninja Warriors' to attack shops in Negombo. He said this was happening although the media had failed to report that there had

³⁸⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 28, p. 6.

³⁸¹ *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 2.



been violence and fear mongering with Muslim shopkeepers being served letters to keep their establishments closed for a week. He said that there had been some attacks on shops and houses as well.³⁸²

Bonds of humanity unite communities (by Aanya Wilpulasena) - This feature article provides a descriptive account of the Easter Sunday attacks. It ends with the following: On Thursday (25) Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs M.H.A. Haleem issued a statement urging Muslims to avoid gathering for congregational prayers on Friday as a sign of solidarity with the Catholic Community. The Collective of Sri Lankan Muslims even published full page advertisements in local newspapers showing their ‘disgust, revulsion and sorrow’ over the bombings that took the lives of fellow-citizens as well as tourists. “We are aghast and saddened by the fact that a misguided group of Sri Lankan Muslims have engaged in carrying out these barbaric acts,” the advertisement stated. On Thursday, the popular Muslim association -All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama - in a communique stating they are obliged to be responsible citizens and protect Sri Lanka, asked all Muslims to cooperate with security forces and law enforcement agencies. They went as far as to request the Muslim women, not to hinder the work of the security forces by wearing the face cover (Niqab). The Muslim community also asked the Catholics to hold their holy mass ceremony in the mosque. They held banners that read “Our respect and gratitude to Rev. Cardinal Malcom Ranjith this mosque is open for your mass. We stand against extremism and terrorism.” Meanwhile, following an alert that mosques were the next targets a few churches requested mosques to hold their Friday Jummah prayers and offered to provide worshippers with protection. Several non-Muslim citizens were even seen standing guard at mosques on Friday.³⁸³

“Thowheed Jamaath, Jamathe Millathu organisations are banned” – President used Emergency Law (by Harshana Thushara Silva) – National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ), Jamathe Millathu organisations were banned by President Maithripala Sirisena using the Emergency Law. According to this, the assets and operations of those organisations have also been ceased. Sirisena said that there are approximately 140 ISIS people in Sri Lanka and the operations to search for them have commenced. He added that there will be more laws and acts implemented in the future to take measures against those terrorist organisations as the existing laws are not sufficient.³⁸⁴

³⁸² *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 4.

³⁸³ *Sunday Observer*, April 28, p. 7.

³⁸⁴ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 1, 6.



“All the roots of Jihad terrorism will be destroyed” – PM (by Anjula Mahika Weeraratne) – Issuing a special statement, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that in order to stop the country from falling back into a 30-year war, all roots of Jihadist terrorism will be completely destroyed. He said that he had already given the orders to recognise all the suspects connected to these Jihadist attacks and bring them in front of the law. Wickremesinghe said that he, along with the president, cabinet and the whole government, gave that order. He further said that the people who attacked were a well organised small group who misled individuals with extremist ideas. He said that, however, they are not the common Muslim people. Wickremesinghe said that they have started these crimes by killing two police officers in Batticaloa, damaging Buddha statues in Mawanella and shooting the secretary of Minister Kabir Hashim. Wickremesinghe said that it must be clearly informed that they are a group of extremist and they do not belong to any religion.³⁸⁵

Face covers are banned from today (by Ariyaratna Ranabahu) – All types of face covers, which make identifying a person problematic, will be banned from today, President Maithripala Sirisena took these measures under the Emergency Law. This step was as face covers could be a threat to the national and public safety and not to embarrass any community group.³⁸⁶

Henchmen of the Thowheed leader who destroyed buddha statues arrested in Gampola (by Nimanthi Ranasinghe, Suranga Rajanayake, Sisira Lalith Kumara, Saman Wijeya Bandara, Shrinath Prasanna Jayasuriya) – This article covers the mission to arrest the main two henchmen of Mohamad Kasim Mohamad Sahran, the alleged mastermind of the suicide bomb attacks and the leader of National Thowheed Jama'ath organization. The feature article connect them to damaging Buddha statues incident in Mawanalla as well. They were planning to attack Gampola town as well, revealed from the questioning.³⁸⁷

Muslim leaders should come to the front to get the extremist sects back to the road – Easter Sunday attack shook the whole world. But all peace loving people came together with unity in this situation. This attack is an act of an extremist Muslim group, no argument there. Because of that, the sensible people wouldn't think that all the Muslim community should be responsible for that. It was just a very few of uncivilized extremists among the majority of civilized Muslims. Then the Muslim religious leadership come forward at this moment. Buddhist religious leadership came forward to work against the Buddhist extremism at one point. Others should follow that example as well.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 1, 10.

³⁸⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 1, 8.

³⁸⁷ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 1, 14.

³⁸⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 4.



If work as one heated, can come out from the crisis - statement from minister Hakim – If work as one hearted without pointing fingers, we can come out of the crisis situation which we have right now, says Rauf Hakim in his statement. "These groups try to plant extremist concept within the Muslim community but surely the majority wouldn't attract to those" he says furthermore.³⁸⁹

Ceylon Jamaath Digana leader and three others arrested (by J. A. L. Jayasinghe) – Ceylon Jama'ath regional leader for Digana area and two members were arrested in a mission with Police special task force and the army. They have found an office used by the suspects to continue the operations. Also there were computer equipment, CDs containing Islam lectures and documents were taken into custody from the office.³⁹⁰

The story that the PM is against the Burka ban is not true - says the PM office - The PM office has issued a statement, maintaining that the story which says the PM was against for the proposal that brought forward by some ministers to ban Burka is not true at all.³⁹¹

The story we didn't hear about the blood thirsty ISIS lunatics said by our Muslim community (by Janaka Liyanarachchi) – Kantankudi people have raised white flags. They have told two years ago that not only in Kantankudi but in whole country we'll have to raise white flags. In 2017 there was a clash between two Muslim factions in Kantankudi. Traditional Muslims were beaten by the extremist Muslims.³⁹²

More than 100 Thowheed Jamaath members who orchestrated the attacks are in custody (by Wijeyani Edirisinghe, Gayan Kumara Weerasinghe, Rakshana Shriyantha) – More than 100 members from the Thowheed Jamaath have been apprehended. The organisation was behind the terror attacks that targeted religious places and hotels, killing innocent people. ³⁹³

Muslim hearts that trembled (by Manjula Wijeyaratne) – One might think whether the recent bomb attack strained the relationship between communities in Sri Lanka, especially between Muslims and Sinhalese. But that narrow thinking shouldn't be the reality. The messages that came from many Muslim leaders across the world indicates that they would never accept this attack. Of 9.7 per cent Muslim population in Sri Lanka, a majority are ordinary Muslims and they too condemned this attack.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 8.

³⁹⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 10.

³⁹¹ *Lankadeepa*, April 29, p. 12.

³⁹² *Dinamina*, April 29, p. 25.

³⁹³ *Dinamina*, April 29, p. 1.

³⁹⁴ *Dinamina*, April 29p. 4.



“Every Muslim is not an extremist” – Police Superintendent Saman Sigera (by T. D. Sirisena) – Police Superintendent Saman Sigera said that every Muslim is not an extremist. He said that they have apprehended most of the members of the extremist organisation that is responsible for the attack.³⁹⁵

Sri Lanka back on the brink (by Tisaranee Gunasekara) - This opinion piece notes that, ‘Lankan Muslims have not resorted to politically motivated violence, not even when they were attacked. And they have been attacked repeatedly, by Sinhala-Buddhist mobs and by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The last such incident was the anti-Muslim riot of Digana, Kandy, in March 2018’. On 14 April, Aadara Sevena (Shelter of love), a community centre run by the Methodist church in Anuradhapura was attacked by a mob. The local police, instead of protecting the victims, refused to intervene to stop the attack, and only provided them a safe escort out of the church when ordered to do so by senior officials in Colombo. Post-war, a new danger emerged – ethnic over-determination being replaced by religious over-determination. The danger emerged not spontaneously, but as a result of a concerted effort by the government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa to demonise Lankan Muslims. The meteoric rise of the ultra-nationalist Sinhala-Buddhist Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) happened within this context. The incendiary politics of the BBS and other hard-line Sinhala-Buddhist organisations led to a series of attacks on Muslim targets, the largest of which was the anti-Muslim violence in Aluthgama, in southern Sri Lanka in 2014. The Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government came into office promising to remedy this situation. Though the government did not work proactively to exacerbate religious tensions (as its predecessor did), it did nothing much to promote reconciliation or to create a climate of moderation. Instead of protecting and promoting moderates and progressives of all religions, the government adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude towards religious extremism. By refusing to take a stand, it provided tacit encouragement to extremism. It looked the other way as extremists encroached on religious spaces, claiming more and more ground for their intolerant brand of faith, and took little action when extremists targeted communities on the basis of religion. The government abandoned Muslim moderates just as it let down Buddhist moderates. Today the entire country is being forced to pay the price of that cowardice. The author notes that forty attacks on churches were reported in 2019 alone. The author asks, ‘Had the security establishment received intelligence about suicide killers planning to target Buddhist temples or government installations, would they have been equally unconcerned? Did the police in general and the National Intelligence Agency in particular, respond inadequately and with such criminal lethargy, to repeated warnings because the targets were churches?’ The author views outbreaks of retaliatory violence against Muslims as a distinct possibility, indicating that the government must work to prevent this from occurring. He argues that attacks on ‘ordinary Muslims’ inspire extremism, as such ‘containing Sinhala-Buddhist extremism is more important than ever today’.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ *Dinamina*, April 29, p. 6.

³⁹⁶ *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 11.



Bombing mastermind preached slaughter: Many dismissed him (Hannah Beech) - Zahran Hashim, a radical Muslim preacher accused of masterminding the Easter Sunday attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka, never hid his hatred. He railed against a local performance in which Muslim girls dared to dance. When a Muslim politician held a 50th birthday party he raged about how 'Western infidel traditions' were poisoning his hometown of Kathankudi. In one of his sermons, Zahran said there were three types of people: Muslims, those who had reached an accord with Muslims, and "people who need to be killed." Idolaters, he added, "need to be slaughtered wherever you see them." Zahran has been described by Sri Lankan officials as having founded an obscure group with inchoate aims: a defacement of a Buddha statue, a diatribe against Sufi mystics. Muslims in Kathankudi said they had repeatedly contacted the police to warn them that Zahran was dangerous, but the authorities played down the threat. By 2017, Zahran and his followers were targeting a Sufi sect in Kathankudi, accusing its members of being infidels, even though Sufis are fellow Muslims who practice a mystical form of the faith. After the Sufis in Kathankudi handed out packets of rice to the poor, an action that Zahran regarded as trying to buy hungry converts, he grabbed a sword and charged the crowd. The police said they tried to arrest Zahran and one of his brothers, but they had escaped. On Thursday, Sufis in Kathankudi received a warning from the Sri Lankan criminal investigation department that their holy places might be targeted on Friday by militants associated with Zahran who are still on the run. "We warned them that this man was vehemently spreading Wahhabism and that he was calling for jihad," Ameer said. "It was out in the open, clear as day. Nothing was done."³⁹⁷

New counter terrorism laws to be enacted (by Ishara Mudugamuwa) - Prime Minister (PM) Ranil Wickremesinghe has pledged to enact new counter terrorism laws to combat terrorism. The PM said there were no laws in the country to prosecute those joining foreign terrorist organisations. The PM said that attacks were carried out by a 'little known group of extremists who can't be described as Muslims'. He also stated that he appreciated the assistance extended by the Muslim community and requested the public not to harass them.³⁹⁸

All should unite to protect peace and harmony – Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith (by Lahiru Fernando) - The Archbishop of Colombo, His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith yesterday emphasised the importance of all Sri Lankans joining together irrespective of differences to protect peace and harmony in the wake of the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks. The Cardinal stated that we all should get together to ensure that these incidents do not in any way damage the harmony and peace that exists between the Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. He further expressed that what happened was not something political or religious, but the result of actions by some misguided people. Venerable Kirinde Assaji Thero of the Hunupitiya Gangaramaya Temple, addressing the ceremony, highlighted that all religious leaders have a responsibility at this critical moment to maintain harmony and peace in the country. He said

³⁹⁷ *Sunday Observer*, April 29, p. 14.

³⁹⁸ *Daily News*, April 29, p. 1.



that the government alone cannot achieve this task and that the religious leaders have a role to play.³⁹⁹

Easter Sunday Massacres (by Jeevan Thiagarajah) - This editorial conspiratorially questions whether the Easter Sunday attacks were allowed to go ahead in order to strike back against the Muslim community. Flagging up previous instances of violence against Muslims and their success in businesses, the author views this as reminiscent of the treatment of the Tamil community in the late 70's and early 80's. The author stresses the importance of not holding the Muslim community 'hostage' and alienating them through knee jerk responses, before going on to discuss anti-extremist programmes.⁴⁰⁰

PM's 'burqa' story totally false – PM's office - The Prime Minister's office yesterday said that a story being circulated that the Prime Minister (PM) Ranil Wickremesinghe objected to a proposal made by a group of ministers to ban the 'burqa', a garment covering the whole body used by Muslim women, was false. The PM believes that the Minister of Justice and the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama should draft the necessary legislation.⁴⁰¹

Ban on all face covering that obscures identity - President Maithripala Sirisena ordered a ban of all face covering that obscures the identity of the wearer from today (29 April). These measures were taken under the newly enacted Emergency Regulations, the President's Media Division (PMD) said in a media release. It is necessary to keep the face uncovered in order to identify a person. The PMD explained that this had been done purely to maintain national security and not to inconvenience any community. The decision was taken by the President to ensure peace and harmony in society.⁴⁰²

NTJ, JMI to be banned in SL - President Maithripala Sirisena, in terms of the powers vested in him under Emergency Regulations, has taken steps to ban the organisations National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) and Jamaathe Millathu Ibraheem (JMI) in Sri Lanka. The President's Media Division stated that all activities of these organisations as well as their properties will be seized by the government. Moreover, steps are also being taken to ban other extremist organisations operating in Sri Lanka under Emergency Regulations.⁴⁰³

³⁹⁹ *Daily News*, April 29, p. 1, 8.

⁴⁰⁰ *Daily News*, April 29, p. 6.

⁴⁰¹ *Daily News*, April 29, p. 8.

⁴⁰² *Daily News*, April 29, p. 8.

⁴⁰³ *Daily News*, April 29, p. 9.



139 NTJ members presently in SL (by Dayaseeli Liyange) - A recent survey by the security forces intelligence wing has revealed that there are 45 National Thawheed Jamaath mosques throughout the country and about 139 members of this organisation presently have memorised the Holy Quran.⁴⁰⁴

President orders face veil ban from today - President Maithripala Sirisena took steps to ban the wearing of the face veil in a manner that conceals one's identity. This ban will be effective from 29 April. According to the statement from the President's Media Division (PMD), the President took this decision under Emergency Regulations that are in place at present. The regulations stipulate that one should reveal his or her face as a fundamental requirement in establishing identity. The PMD statement said the decision would be implemented in a manner that would not inconvenience any ethnic group.⁴⁰⁵

Refugees in SL should be monitored – Ravana Balakaya (by Dayaseeli Liyange) - The Secretary of the Ravana Balakaya Ven. Itthepane Saddhathissa Thero has stressed the need for a process of collecting information about Muslims who have come to the country as refugees from Myanmar and Pakistan. At present such a process is not in operation to observe their activities while staying in the country. He warned that because these refugees had undergone terrible hardships in their countries they were most vulnerable to be brainwashed by extremists. There is a possibility of some of them having experience in various terrorist activities. Besides it should also be considered important to see how the country can help refugees while most of the people in our country are living in dire poverty.⁴⁰⁶

Stock of CDs belonging to Muslim fundamentalists seized (by D. G. Sugathapala) - A stock of 797 CDs and stickers suspected to have been used to propagate the ideology of Muslim fundamentalists were seized during a raid on a mosque at Moragoda, Dangedara in Galle. The president and the treasurer of the mosque were arrested. Police had searched the office of the treasurer and the house of the president to find the stock of CDs and the stickers. A senior police official said the mosque was affiliated to the National Thawheed Jamaath and had been propagating the Muslim fundamentalist ideology. It had severely criticized the traditional Islamic faiths, Buddhism and Christianity and that the contents in the CDs would affect the religious and communal harmony in the country.⁴⁰⁷

Sunday Church services not held yesterday (Nadeeka Daya Bandara) - The usual Sunday services in most churches were not held due to the prevailing security situation.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A1.

⁴⁰⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A3.

⁴⁰⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A4.

⁴⁰⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A4.

⁴⁰⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A4.



Govt. intelligence obtains information on possible attack on Buddhist temples (by *Vasantha Chanadrapala*)- The government intelligence service has received information on an attack targeting Buddhist temples by the National Thawheeth Jamaath (NTJ) using female bombers. The officers of the government intelligence service found white pairs of skirts and blouses from the house which was raided after the explosion in Sainthamaradu area. On March 29, 2019 Muslim women had spent Rs. 29,000 to purchase nine sets of such clothes from a textile shop in Giriulla. So far, five sets of white clothes had been found from this house and intelligence services are continuing their efforts to find the remaining clothes. The CCTV footage of the shop shows the visuals of these women who purchased clothes from the shop. Meanwhile, the intelligence services raised doubts that this type of clothes had been purchased by them to direct an attack on a temple by female bombers posing as Buddhist devotees.⁴⁰⁹

Three suspects arrested in Welipenn (by Bandu Thambavita and Sunil Thantriarachchi) - A 45-year-old welfare officer and graduate in political science and psychology, Mohamed Shafeer Ziyad, had been running two Madrasas funded by a foreign organisation to teach Islam. Two others were also arrested.⁴¹⁰

Extremism – what can we do about it? - (by Asiff Hussein) - This opinion piece asks how to deal with the challenge of extremism; ‘the biggest challenge of our times’. The author uses ISIS in the Middle East, Shiv Sena in India or the Bodu Bala Sena in Sri Lanka as examples. Regarding Islamic extremism, he writes that extremism is incompatible with the Islamic faith, and many were the occasions when the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke against it. But there are Muslims who are certainly extremists. In order to counter this extremism, the author argues that we need to ‘eliminate’ and ‘muzzle’ hate preachers, supervise madrasas ‘strictly’, have families send their smarter children to madrasas and crush terrorism ‘ruthlessly’.⁴¹¹

“One form of extremism breeds other forms of extremism”: HRC - This piece features civil society groups and others condemning the recent violence and calling for the maintenance of amity. These groups include the Human Rights Commission, Friday Forum, Women’s Action Network, Women and Media Collective, Women’s Resource Centre, National Peace Council, Kandy Forum, Centre for Policy Alternatives, Christians in Jaffna and the Sri Lankan Muslims against Extremism and Terrorism in the name of Islam.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A4.

⁴¹⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A7.

⁴¹¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. A9.

⁴¹² *Daily Mirror*, April 29, p. <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/%E2%80%9COne-form-of-extremism-breeds-other-forms-of-extremism%E2%80%9D--HRC/131-166097>.



Several suspects held in weekend anti-terror raids (by Lankinda Nanayakkara Imaduwa and Lahiru Fernando) - Police arrested two suspects and seized 797 CDs containing Islamic religious sermons at a mosque in Moragoda, Galle. The mosque is said to be one of the main places of worship belonging to the extremist National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) and police are conducting investigations to ascertain whether the CDs contain extremist teachings. The suspects have been identified as the owner and principal of a private Arabic school in Milidduwa, and the Chairperson and Treasurer of Ceylon Thawheed Jamaath.⁴¹³

Killing a community in the name of God is unethical – Cardinal Malcolm during special mass (by M. Manochithra) - Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith stated that killing a community in the name of god cannot be accepted, putting forward such views is wrong. He reiterated his condemnation of the bomb attacks, labelling it as an act of betrayal and injustice to the entire humanity.⁴¹⁴

Severe steps against those who incite racial, religious extremism – Defence Ministry (by M. Manochithra) - The Defence Ministry has warned that severe steps would be taken against those who incite racial and religious extremism in the country. Military Spokesperson, Brigadier Sumith Atapattu stated that those who are identified indulging in such activities would be arrested under the Emergency Regulations. He said that those conducting campaigns, holding press conferences, circulating pictures and other media spreading false information and inciting racial and religious extremism would be arrested under emergency regulations.⁴¹⁵

Killing a community in the name of God is unethical – Cardinal Malcolm during special mass Lawrence Selvanayagam - Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith stated that killing a community in the name of god cannot be accepted, putting forward such views is wrong. He reiterated his condemnation of the bomb attacks, labelling it as an act of betrayal and injustice on entirety of humanity.⁴¹⁶

Batticaloa suicide attack: Rampage in the presence of the Lord - The commentary describes the bomb attack incident on Zion Church in Batticaloa on Easter Sunday..⁴¹⁷

Muslims take part in the grief of Christian brothers - Akkaraippattu Head of the Jamiyyathul Ulama, ALM Ashroff stated that the Muslims and Christians were never at conflict and said the Muslims would share the grief of the Christians who were affected by the bomb attacks on Easter Sunday. This solidarity was expressed by the Muslims at a reconciliation meeting at the Cultural hall of the Jummah Mosque of Akkarappattu. He pointed out that the bomb attacks can never be connected to Islam.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹³ *Daily News*, April 29, p. <http://dailynews.lk/2019/04/29/local/184054/several-suspects-held-weekend-anti-terror-raids>.

⁴¹⁴ *Virakesari*, April 29, p. 1.

⁴¹⁵ *Virakesari*, April 29, p. 3.

⁴¹⁶ *Thinakaran*, April 29, p. 1.

⁴¹⁷ *Thinakaran*, April 29, p. 5.

⁴¹⁸ *Thinakaran*, April 29, p. 9.



Masses held in the North amidst security - Sunday masses were held in several churches in the North amidst security. Several churches did not conduct masses due to the security situation.⁴¹⁹

Police, military protection for worship places in Vavuniya - Police and military protection has been provided to churches and mosques in Vavuniya following the Easter Sunday attacks.⁴²⁰

Avoid violence due to religious differences - The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka has stated that it was important to avoid violence that could arise due to religious differences, and to ensure goodwill among the communities in the aftermath of the bomb attacks in Sri Lanka. The Commission had made this request in a statement following the Easter Sunday attacks.⁴²¹

Being humble and leaving the space for the truth – Operations against religious terrorism and extremism are a success and the burqa is banned just like the full-face helmet. Further, extremist organisations are banned. Intelligence suggests that there were plans to attack temples and kovils and there could be plans to use women to carry out attacks. Further, the burqa could be used to transport weapons. Several Muslim organisations requested for a ban on the burqa too.⁴²²

“Plans of suicide attacks at 50 Buddhist temples – Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera (by Sirimantha Rathnasekara) – General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera said that there is a plan to attack 50 Buddhist temples. The Thera further asked not to organise any event to celebrate Vesak or Poson until the situation returns to normal. The Thera said that if someone wants to know more about the said attacks, he requested them to visit him in jail.⁴²³

“There should be laws to regulate Islam Madrasas” – Haleem – Issuing a statement, Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs M. H. A. Haleem said that several parties were attempting to spread extremist ideas using Madrasa schools. He further said that there should be new laws to regulate such Islamic religious schools.⁴²⁴

⁴¹⁹ *Thinakaran*, April 29, p. 14.

⁴²⁰ *Uthayan*, April 29, p. 11.

⁴²¹ *Uthayan*, April 29, p. 17.

⁴²² *Dinamina*, April 30, p. 4.

⁴²³ *Divaina*, April 30, p. 1, 4.

⁴²⁴ *Divaina*, April 30, p. 9.



“The minister of Muslim affairs has permitted for 400 extremist mosques” – Jayasekara (by Aruna Bogahawatte) – Secretary General of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Dayasiri Jayasekara said that from 2015 up until today, there are 400 mosques belonging to the Thowheed Jamaath organisation and they had received permission from the minister Muslim affairs. He further said that steps will be taken to ban those mosques with the help of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU).⁴²⁵

Permission given to detain and question Colombo leader of the NTJ (by Nimanthi Ranasinghe) – Colombo Chief Magistrate gave permission to the Kehelwatta Police to detain and question the Colombo District leader of National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) organisation for 72 hours. He was arrested for an incident of alleged conspiring to commit a crime. The suspect was videoing and capturing photographs of the deceased and injured in bomb blasts around Colombo, prior to the arrival of the police. The police said that further questioning was required to uncover how he did that. He is allegedly an air conditioner repairman by profession. However, investigations revealed that he has a keen knowledge in bomb making.⁴²⁶

Catholic churches masses to be held from next Sunday (by Nimala Kodithuwakku) – Archbishop Cardinal Malcom Ranjith said that Catholic Church masses will be held from next Sunday. Further, the archbishop said that a program will be implemented with the support of law enforcement and security committees of the churches for public to attend the masses.⁴²⁷

22 identity cards of Muslim women in the possession of a Kalpitiya resident (by Padma Kumari Kankanamge) – During a house search, the Kalpitiya Police arrested a 50- year old Muslim individual who was in the possession of 22 identity cards of Muslim women from various regions in the country. Police said that he had come to the area with his family four months ago and was unable to explain the reason for coming to the neighborhood. Further, he had been unable to answer questions concerning his profession or the reason of having identity cards of females.⁴²⁸

Ven. Galagoda Aththe Thera pays the court mandated Rs. 50,000 compensation to Sandya Eknaligoda; Rs. 3,000 fine to the court (by Jayasena Hathwella) – General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera, who found guilty for threatening and intimidating Sandya Eknaligoda in front of the Homagama Magistrate court, has paid the Rs. 50,000 compensation and Rs. 3,000 fine to the court as per the court order. Ven. Gnanasara Thera is currently in jail for insulting the court.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁵ *Divaina*, April 30, p. 10.

⁴²⁶ *Lankadeepa*, April 30, p. 1, 6.

⁴²⁷ *Lankadeepa*, April 30, p. 1, 6.

⁴²⁸ *Lankadeepa*, April 30, p. 6.

⁴²⁹ *Lankadeepa*, April 30, p. 9.



The minister of Muslim religious affairs gave permission for 400 Thowheed mosques, 50 for Kandy; Jayasekara requests to ban them (by Diana Udayangani) – Secretary General of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Dayasiri Jayasekara said that Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs Abdul Haleem had given permission for 400 Thowheed Jamaath mosques to be built since 2015. Jayasekara said that the mosques should be banned immediately and steps should be taken according to the All Ceylon Jaimiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) after that. He also said that such issues arose when there are independent ministers for each religion. Jayasekara further said that there should be one religious affairs minister for all religions.⁴³⁰

“Do not instigate issues between religions and ethnicities when the public is heartbroken – Archbishop (by Nimala Kodithuwakku) – This article focuses on the ideas of Archbishop Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith and Chief Prelate of the Kotte Sri Kalyani Samagri Dharma Maha Sangha Sabha Ven. Ittapane Dhammalankara Thera. They urged for a common principle on security and to have a broad discussion on the situation of the country without any blame games or political divisions. The Archbishop noted that it is sad that political leaders are still divided, while the religious leaders are united with the whole country to raise their voice against terrorism.⁴³¹

Plans to attack 50 Buddhist temples (by M. Manochithra) - General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena Organisation, Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera says he had received information of plans to attack 50 Buddhist temples, and urged not to conduct Vesak and Poson ceremonies this year.⁴³²

The responsibility of religious leaders - The editorial emphasizes the responsibility of religious leaders at a time when the entire country is in a state of uncertainty. The editorial points out that in the current scenario there are divisions and gaps among the communities. Therefore, the religious leaders have the responsibility to ensure that all communities are united, since all religions preach love and peace. The editorial says it is the responsibility of the religious leaders to provide the necessary leadership to spearhead this process.⁴³³

Plans to attack 50 Buddhist temples - General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena Organisation, Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera says he had received information of plans to attack 50 Buddhist temples, and urged not to conduct Vesak and Poson ceremonies this year.⁴³⁴

⁴³⁰ *Lankadeepa*, April 30, p. 10.

⁴³¹ *Lankadeepa*, April 30, p. 11.

⁴³² *Virakesari*, April 30, p. 1.

⁴³³ *Virakesari*, April 30, p. 4.

⁴³⁴ *Uthayan*, April 30, p. 7.



Laws to ban garments posing security threat - A Draft Bill to enact legislation banning garments that may pose a threat to security will be formulated and presented in Parliament after discussions with Muslim Organisations. Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms Thalatha Atukorala said that the Prime Minister or any member of the Cabinet has not objected to the banning of any garments covering the whole body by Muslim women. They sought to 'ensure that a repetition of recent unfortunate incidents would not occur in the country again'. Meanwhile, a statement from the Justice and Prison Reforms Ministry cited a statement issued on the 24th by the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama which clarified that the full exposure of the woman's face was not against Islamic culture.⁴³⁵

Salley asks Muslim schools to abide by *burqa* ban - Western Province Governor Azath Salley urged the heads of Muslim schools in his region to strictly abide by the ban on face cover imposed by President Maithripala Sirisena which came into effect from Monday under Emergency Regulations. The Governor said the President has imposed the ban due to the Easter Sunday bomb blasts. Stressing the importance of the rule, the Governor said that under this rule, even motorcycle riders cannot wear fully covered helmets on the roads. "It is a rule to enable law enforcement officers to identify people easily at a glance and to confirm the identity of individuals with their respective identity cards." In response to the Governor's speech, the principals said that there are students as well as teachers who cover their faces and they would cooperate in implementing the statutory rule.⁴³⁶

SLFP wants special court to try suspects (by Ishara Mudugamuwa) - Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) General Secretary MP Dayasiri Jayasekara yesterday proposed that the government set up a special court to quickly deal with those who are responsible for the Easter Sunday attacks in order to halt the spread of extremist ideology. Speaking at a media conference yesterday at the SLFP Headquarters, MP Jayasekara alleged that there are several other organisations which are working closely with the National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) and that these groups should also be banned in Sri Lanka since they are spreading extremist ideology in the country. By appreciating the support of the Muslim community towards the investigations conducted by the Security Forces, MP Jayasekara said the Muslim community as a whole opposes this extremism and only want to live peacefully with other nationalities. He also spoke of the importance of re- establishing multi-ethnic schools to promote peace and reconciliation. The MP said Arabic schools and Madrasas which teach extremism are mushrooming in this country and the Education Ministry has no programme to monitor them. He urged relevant authorities to prepare a programme to closely monitor these schools.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁵ *Daily News*, April 30, p. 1.

⁴³⁶ *Daily News*, April 30, p. 2.

⁴³⁷ *Daily News*, April 30, p. 2.



‘Minister Abdul Haleem gave green light for over 400 NTJ mosques’ (by Ishara Mudugamuwa) - Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) General Secretary MP Dayasiri Jayasekara yesterday alleged that Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs M.H.A. Haleem had granted permission for the establishment of more than 400 National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) mosques island wide. Speaking to the media at the SLFP headquarters, MP Jayasekara said the Muslim Affairs Minister had granted permission for 50 such mosques within the Central Province alone. According to him these mosques are not functioning as traditional Islamic mosques; they are functioning as offices to promote extremism.⁴³⁸

Muslims support rout of terrorism (by A. B. Abdul Gafoor) - State Minister for Local Government and Provincial Councils H.M.M. Harees said that the Muslims in the country, including politicians and other religious organisations, will provide their utmost support to eradicate terrorism. The minister also expressed that some politicians want to increase their votes using these brutal attacks and that they want to create a picture that all Muslims are behind this group. He strongly condemned such statements as well as the attacks on churches and hotels. According to him no one in the Muslim society of this country will support terrorism.⁴³⁹

‘Forces’ attention for extremist groups necessary (by Sudath Keerthi) - Gampaha Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Muslim Association President M. M. A. Ismail said that a person who follows Islam will never agree to terrorism and those who carried out the recent terrorist attacks cannot be recognised as Muslims who follow Islam as they have violated the teachings of the religion. He also said the Muslim community was in shock and grief over the attacks. Ismail, a well-known businessman and social worker, appealed to the Muslim community to provide any information they know about extremists to security authorities to help them in their efforts to end extremism and terrorism. He said Muslims and Muslim organisations in Sri Lanka would always extend their fullest support to the government to establish peace and reconciliation. He said Muslims always live in peace and harmony with all communities.⁴⁴⁰

Galle mosque officials questioned (by Mahina P. Liyanage) - Acting Galle Magistrate Premarathna Thiranagama ordered police to detain and question the president and the treasurer of a mosque in Moragoda, Galle, under their custody until May 24. The police took the two mosque officials into custody on April 27 during a special search operation conducted in the area. Police also seized a set of 797 Compact Disks (CDs) containing recorded religious sermons and scenes said to be having a negative impact on religious harmony. The seized discs had been stowed in both of the mosque official’s houses. The police had found that this mosque was used as a centre of the National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) organisation. It is revealed that the seized CDs contained preaching which criticise Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ *Daily News*, April 30, p. 3.

⁴³⁹ *Daily News*, April 30, p. 5.

⁴⁴⁰ *Daily News*, April 30, p. 5.

⁴⁴¹ *Daily News*, April 30, p. 5.



‘Islam has no room for extremism’ (by Jayasiri Peduruarachchi) - A member of the Jamiyyathul Ulama Association and an Arabic school teacher M. Nizam Al Fassi said that Islam has no room for extremism, suicide, or murder. Al Fassi also said that it is the Muslim community that has been most shocked by the Easter Sunday suicide bomb attacks. He added that Sinhala, Tamil, and Christian friends who were cordial to them earlier were now looking at them with suspicion. “We can’t even travel by bus, and this is all because of these extremists,” Al Fassi said. He added that if more swords and other weapons were to be found in mosques, all those responsible should be arrested and dealt with. “These extremists should be executed,” he added. “Sinhalese, Muslims and Hindus lived in peace and harmony for decades, but these extremists destroyed it. We have to build it up again,” Al Fassi said.⁴⁴²

Dayasiri alleges Haleem issued permits to set up NTJ dens (by Sandun A. Jayasekera) - Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) General Secretary Dayasiri Jayasekera alleged that Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs M.H.A. Haleem had issued permits to set up 40 National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) dens in the Kandy District and 400 others countrywide since 2015. He said the SLFP urged the government to set up special courts to hear cases against Muslim extremists as the entire country expected them to be dealt with the law as soon as possible.⁴⁴³

Muslim educators sans valid visas face deportation - Following information on foreign nationals engaged in Islamic religious teaching without a valid visa, the Home Affairs Ministry has instructed the immigration authorities to deport such individuals forthwith.⁴⁴⁴

Police seeks assistance to identify Muslim women who bought white clothing (by Pushpakumara Mallawaarachchi) - Police seeks the assistance of the public to identify the suspects who bought white skirts and blouses from a textile shop in Giriulla. This is because Government Intelligence Services have received information on possible attacks targeting Buddhist temples by the National Thawheeth Jamaath (NTJ) through female bombers.⁴⁴⁵

Limit number of masses in Colombo - Cardinal (by Yohan Perera) - Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said that there will be a limited number of masses in Catholic Churches in the archdiocese of Colombo.⁴⁴⁶

Ven. Gnanasara Thero understood dangers long before – Prelate - Venerable Ittapane Dhammalankara Maha Nayaka Thero said that Venerable Gnanasara Thero is a monk who fully understood the dangers the country was facing much before the tragedy struck. When questioned whether Buddhist places of worship are under threat he said such an eventuality could not be ruled out.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴² *Daily News*, April 30, p. 10.

⁴⁴³ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A1, A2. ⁴⁴⁴ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A1, A2.

⁴⁴⁵ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A1, A2.

⁴⁴⁶ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A6.

⁴⁴⁷ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A6.



New regulation to regulate clothing – Regulations to monitor “Madrasa” (by Yohan Perera) - Minister of Justice and Prison Reforms Thalatha Atukorala said that legislation would be introduced to prohibit clothing which could be a threat to national security. Meanwhile, Minister of Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs M.H.A Haleem said steps would be taken to regulate Madrasa or religious schools in the country.⁴⁴⁸

Need to act against Ghettoization of minds to stem terrorism (by P.K Balachandran) - An eminent Sri Lankan researcher on radicalization and terrorism, Dr. Rohan Gunaratna, urges the Sri Lankan government, the island’s political and religious leaders, and civil society, to ponder over the ill-effects of physical, social and psychological ghettoization which has been going on in Sri Lanka for quite some time. In his opinion, Dr. Gunaratne says that the motivation and targets chosen by ISIS had little to do with the inter-communal relations in Sri Lanka itself, but a fact that cannot be ignored is that those who carried out the attacks were Sri Lankan Muslims. Therefore, the April 21 carnage cannot be seen entirely out of the local Sri Lankan context and that context is a deep- rooted and progressive ghettoization of Sri Lankan society. Dr. Gunaratna points out that there are separate schools for different ethnicities and religions and students of a particular religion study only his or her religion. Students do not follow an inter-faith course to study and appreciate each other’s doctrines and practices. Due to this distinct separation based on ethnicity and religion, Kathankudi was made a breeding ground for ISIS activists and the headquarters of the National Thawheed Jamaath. Dr. Gunaratna pointed out that Sri Lankan Muslims have progressively isolated themselves from other religious groups. Ghettoization is represented by separate living enclaves, separate schools and separate subjects of study. It leads to exclusivism and isolation but also feelings of separateness, uniqueness, superiority or inferiority vis-à-vis the ‘other’. “Isolation breeds a distrust of the other. Distrust leads to avoidance and fears. Fears, in turn, result in violence and terrorism,” Dr. Gunaratna pointed out. Ghettoization of the mind (in all communities) leads to communities not being able to see things from each other’s point of view. The Sinhalese feel insecure when they see fully covered up Muslim women in the context of growing terrorism. “A ‘Harmony Act’ on the line of the 1992 Singapore Act is a dire necessity in Sri Lanka. It will criminalize hate speech and hate propaganda.” Dr. Gunaratna has called for a ban on segregation of all kinds and the prevention of ghettoization at the root. “Ethnically and religiously mixed schools, mixed residential localities and multi-ethnic provinces should replace the existing ethnic and religious segregation in these areas. The demand for mono-ethnic or mono-religious territorial units should be rejected,” he said.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A6.

⁴⁴⁹ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A9.



How Wahhabism was fostered until it's too late (by Ranga Jayasuriya) - The greatest strength in Sri Lanka's fight against Islamic extremism is the local Muslim community. Their cooperation is crucial anywhere, and especially in the East, where Muslim majority enclaves have already insulated from the rest of the country to a great deal. Just like in Sainthamaradu, the community is cooperating with law enforcement authorities to help nab suspects. However, the greatest long-term threat to Sri Lanka is also the radicalization of the same Muslim community. If the current level of radicalization persists that would erode the future prospects of cooperation. Similarly, mishandling the situation, leading to mass victimization of Muslims due to security measures may also result in a fall out of the Muslim community with the Sri Lankan state. Thawheed Jamaath as a whole is propagating an austere form of Wahhabism based on literal interpretations of Quran and Hadith. It is this ideology of a recreation of medieval Islamic caliphate and a perceived clash between Islam and the West that provides ideological inspiration for Al-Qaeda and Islamic State-led global Jihad. The only difference between other Thawheed Jaamaath factions and the National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) and Jamaathe Millathu Ibraheem (JMI) is their rationalization of the use of violence - more specifically, the use of violence within Sri Lanka against Sri Lankan targets - to achieve their religious ends. The purported fallout of NTJ from the rest is due to this fundamental difference. Baring that all groups advocates an austere and militant form of Islam with reintroduction of Sharia and suffocating Arabized social and cultural norms. They all have more in common with Al-Qaeda's ideological vision than moderate local Sufi Islam. The first mosque of Thawheed Jamaath in Beruwela was set up in 2002. It immediately triggered a major push back from local moderate Muslims.⁴⁵⁰

Letters to the editor: Face veil: Ban should be temporary (by Mohomed Zahran) - The ban on face veil will be endorsed by Muslims and non-Muslims under the prevailing situation in the country. However, the writer is of the view that it should only be temporary because of the divergent views of the Islamic theologians.⁴⁵¹

Professional approach needed to identify extremism - With almost the entire Muslim community in the country seemingly furious over what happened on Easter Sunday and even some of the parents of the suspects coming forward to help the law enforcement authorities, the days of the terrorist outfit seem to be numbered. Yet, the dedication coupled with the ruthlessness of the terrorists to blow themselves up while a number of their children were with them points to the degree of indoctrination they have undergone. This ideology with which they have been indoctrinated with drove them to kill hundreds of innocent people on April 21. So long as the ideology prevails, the danger will lurk. It is not clear how deep into the Muslim community that ideology has penetrated. Religion is a very sensitive issue and to make out the extremism from the religion would be a gigantic task for those not belonging to that particular faith. Peace-loving Muslim religious and political leaders must come forward to identify the extremism among them which would someday knock on their doors as well.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11.

⁴⁵¹ *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11.

⁴⁵² *Daily Mirror*, April 30, p. A11.