



UNDERSTANDING PRESS COVERAGE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

#MINORMATTERS

PERIOD COVERED : OCTOBER 2020

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 more recently in Kurunegala/Minuwangoda (May 2019)⁵ demonstrate the extent and frequency of this type of violence.

This report is the 18th 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 Sinhala and Tamil to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights.

Press coverage is assessed by observing 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.

This 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) at http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=articledetails&code_title=167737 [Last accessed 11 December 2018].

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

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

⁴ Daily FT, *Digana turns divisive* (2018) at <http://www.ft.lk/top-story/Digana-turns-divisive-/26-650661> [Last accessed 11 December 2018].

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

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, religious freedom is understood as:

- ✦ The freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of one's choice;⁶
- ✦ The freedom to not be discriminated against or to suffer any disability on the grounds of religion;⁷
- ✦ The freedom to not 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 October 2020 were monitored. The following 10 daily and weekend newspapers in the 2 local languages (Sinhala and Tamil) were examined (see table below).

Sinhala Newspapers	Tamil Newspapers
<i>Lankadeepa/Sunday Lankadeepa</i>	<i>Virakesari/ Sunday Virakesari</i>
<i>Divaina/Sunday Divaina</i>	<i>Thinakaran/ Sunday Thinakaran</i>
<i>Dinamina/Silumina</i>	<i>Uthayan</i> ¹⁰
<i>Anidda</i>	

These 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 among the daily Sinhala and Tamil newspapers respectively. *Divaina* has the second highest readership among the daily Sinhala newspapers. Meanwhile, *Dinamina* and *Silumina* were selected on the basis of them being state-owned newspapers.

Despite the absence of readership data, the weekly publication *Anidda* was selected as its content generally differs from coverage in the mainstream press and can be considered to provide alternative insights into events.

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.

¹⁰ Due to COVID-19, *Uthayan*, the Jaffna based paper, was not accessible for the period focused on in the current report.

Likewise, *Uthayan*, a Jaffna-based publication, was selected despite the absence of its readership data, as it is a regional publication. As a state-owned newspaper was included for the Sinhala sample, *Thinakaran* was selected to represent a state-owned Tamil newspaper to maintain consistency, despite it having relatively low readership. Since COVID-19, most newspapers have been published as e-papers in addition to the physical copies. The newspapers monitored for the month of October were e-versions. However, no e-papers were available for *Uthayan* in October, and this month's report excluded it from the analysis.

In these newspapers, articles that **had a bearing on religious freedom** were selected to assess the tonality of the reporting. These articles included:¹¹

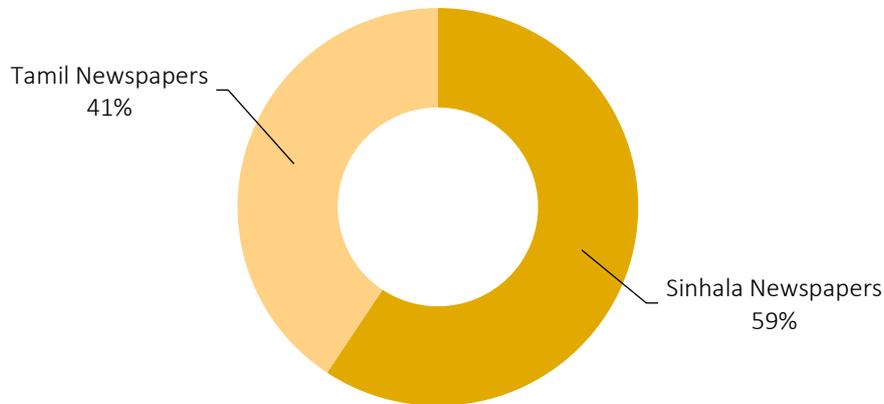
- ✦ Articles that referred to instances of physical violence that were religiously motivated, or targeted religious communities, figures or sites;
- ✦ Articles that referred to or contained speech prompting physical violence or threatening remarks targeted at religious communities, leaders or institutions;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

¹¹ NB: the aforementioned list is only illustrative and not exhaustive.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Overview

Percentage of Articles by Language

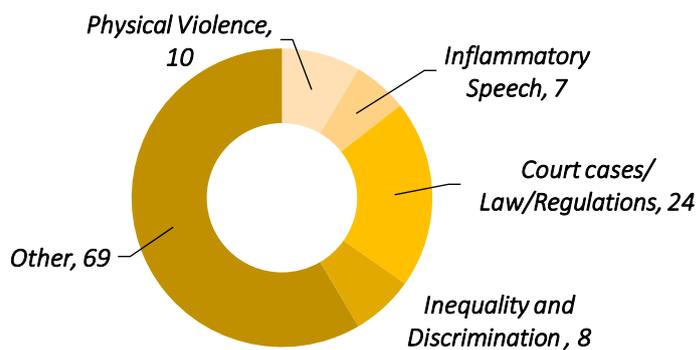


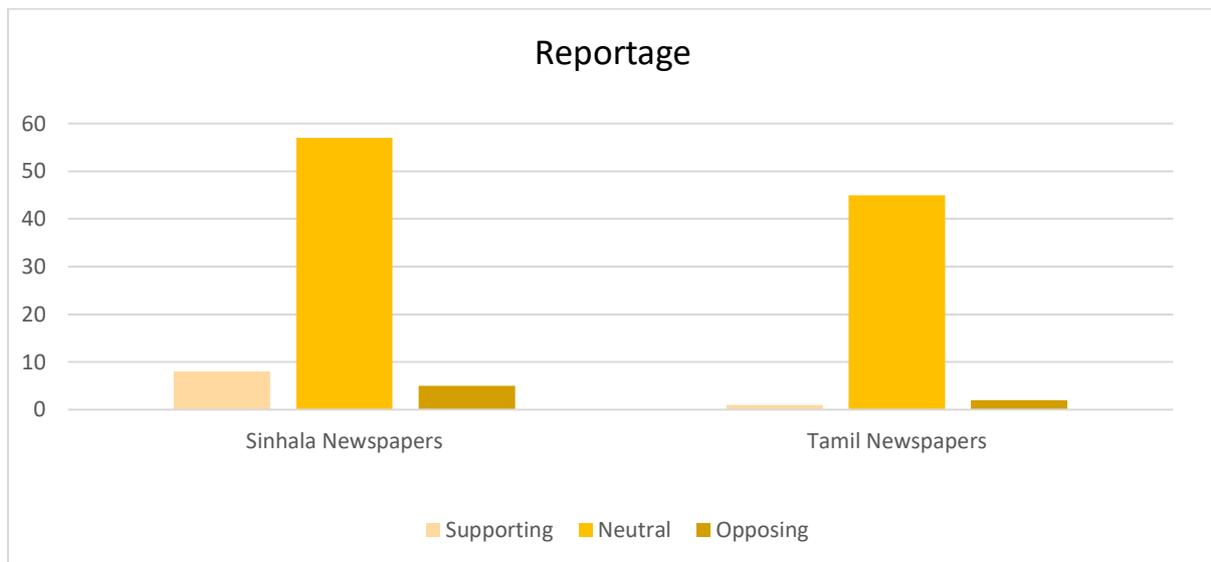
In October 2020, the Sinhala and Tamil newspapers monitored carried a total of 118 articles relating to religious freedom. Out of these, 59 percent (70 articles) were carried in the Sinhala newspapers. Meanwhile, Tamil newspapers accounted for 41 percent (48 articles) of the coverage.

Religious freedom was discussed under the following five themes:

- ✦ Physical violence;
- ✦ Inflammatory speech;
- ✦ Court cases/laws/regulations;
- ✦ Inequality and discrimination; and
- ✦ Other related reporting

Number of articles pertaining to religious freedom by theme

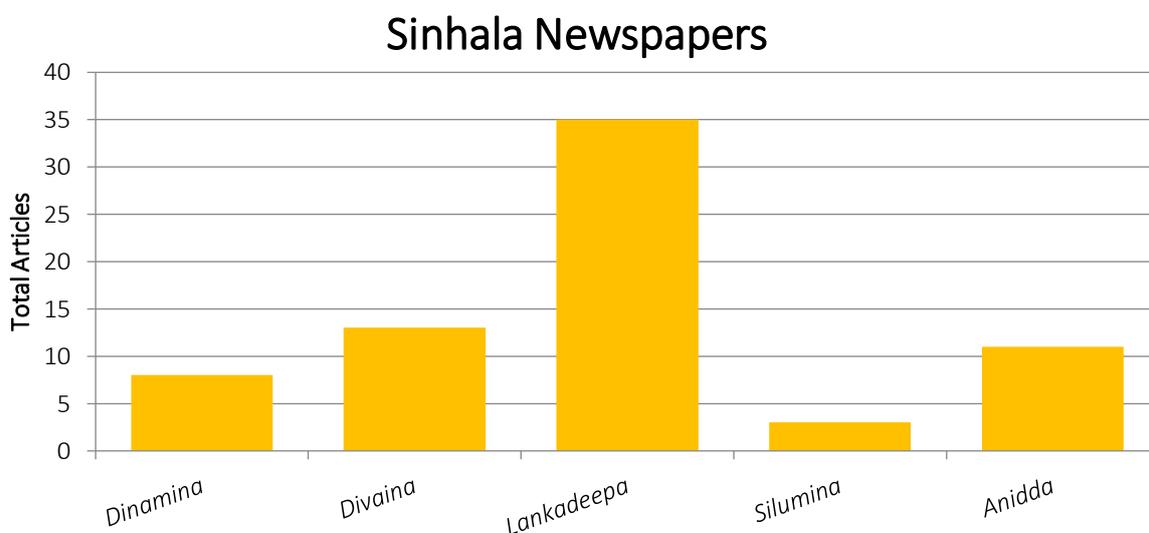




- ✦ Of the 70 articles in the Sinhala newspapers, 5 article supported religious freedom, 57 articles were neutral, and 8 articles opposed religious freedom.
- ✦ Of the 48 articles in the Tamil newspapers, 2 articles supported religious freedom, 45 articles were neutral, and 1 article opposed religious freedom.

Coverage in Sinhala newspapers

Sinhala Newspapers	No. of Articles	Reportage		
		Supporting	Neutral	Opposing
<i>Dinamina</i>	8	0	6	2
<i>Divaina</i>	13	0	9	4
<i>Lankadeepa</i>	35	3	30	2
<i>Silumina</i>	3	1	2	0
<i>Anidda</i>	11	1	10	0
Total	70	5	57	8



The Sinhala press featured 70 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. 5 articles supported religious freedom, 57 articles were neutral, and 8 articles opposed religious freedom.

The **five articles that supported religious freedom** are as follows:

- ✦ In an opinion, the writer talks about the various powers and ideologies that the Rajapaksa brothers embody and emulate, stating the differences between each and why certain aspects should be supported and some aspects should not be. He states that the national problem lies in the race/religion issue of this country. He critically points out the blatant othering created in this country due to the race/religion issue, pointing out that the LTTE were considered a terrorist organisation not just because of its activities but also because it consisted of Tamil people. He points out that aside from

Minister of Justice Ali Sabry, every single Muslim in this country was "othered" because of the Easter attack, and lists the reasons for that: the Rajapaksas, the media and state power.¹²

- ✦ A report notes that MP C.V. Wigneswaran stated that like the people in the East, people in the North have the right to commemorate their lost loved ones. He said this with regard to the commemoration ceremony held for LTTE leader Thileepan.¹³
- ✦ A report notes that Minister Douglas Devananda stated that the only solution for the problems that Tamil citizens face daily is national reconciliation. He cited the Indo-Lanka Agreement as proof that reconciliation works, and said that it is the best way to approach these problems.¹⁴
- ✦ An article criticises a recent video that was posted on social media by a woman, which contains statements harmful to the reputation of the Cardinal. The writer says that people who publish incendiary videos such as this one have the goal of creating religious disharmony, and that officials have a duty to locate and stop these people from posting anything that is harmful like this in the future.¹⁵
- ✦ A report notes that a person from the South in Sri Lanka has received a "Lanka Jothi" award from the Jaffna Multi-Religious Forum and Foundation for Coexistence. It states that this is the highest level of award that a Sinhalese person has received from Jaffna. It adds that the recipient received the award for his years of selfless service as a teacher who taught Sinhalese and Tamil languages to officials and citizens, free of charge, while being a man accepting of all faiths and religions.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the **eight articles that opposed religious freedom** are as follows:

- ✦ In an interview, Ven. Ampitiye Sumana Thera claims that he is receiving death threats from the Tamil diaspora, who are angered at the fact that he is a stronghold for Buddhist people in Batticaloa.¹⁷ He adds that much of the archaeological Buddhist treasures in the area have been destroyed. He notes that while he is aware that there is a certain code of ethics that Buddhist monks should follow in life, had he followed this code, he would have been dead and this country would have become an "Eelam state".¹⁸
- ✦ A report notes that three priests belonging to the group of caretakers of the Vedukkunari Kovil had 'conspired' to build on ground that they were forbidden by law to build on, by pretending to hold ceremonies and "pooja" rituals as a cover. It notes the three priests in questions were bailed out of jail.¹⁹

¹² *Anidda*, October 11, P. 4.

¹³ *Lankadeepa*, October 11, Front Page.

¹⁴ *Lankadeepa*, October 11, Front Page.

¹⁵ *Silumina*, October 25, P. 6.

¹⁶ *Lankadeepa*, October 25, P. 9.

¹⁷ *Divaina*, October 13, P. 6.

¹⁸ *Lankadeepa*, October 4, P. 27.

¹⁹ *Divaina*, October 13, P. 3.

- ✦ In a column, a writer claims that the Buddhist religious stupas and monasteries in the North, which contain valuable Buddhist artefacts, are being dug up by Hindu priests in the area.²⁰
- ✦ A report notes that Prof. Ven. Meththarama Thera stated that if counter measures are not taken immediately against Islamic extremism, there will be far more 'dire consequences' that the country will face 'as opposed to Eelam extremism'.²¹
- ✦ An article states that Leader of ACMC Rishad Bathiudeen is an opportunist who has worked for any government that would take him in, and states that Bathiudeen's breaking of election laws during the last presidential election is not the only charge that can be levelled against him. The article accuses Bathiudeen of servicing his race (Muslims) and going against Buddhist values.²²
- ✦ A report notes that General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera noted that Pillayan stated that there were Muslim extremist groups that were plotting to assassinate him in the Batticaloa prison and requested the government to situate a team to 'look into Wahhabists' in the country.²³
- ✦ An article talks about the 20th Amendment and notes how the government has mentioned that it would not get the help of 'extremist parties' in getting it approved. The writer remarks that that term applies specifically to the Muslim parties.²⁴

²⁰ *Divaina*, October 13, P. 11.

²¹ *Dinamina*, October 14, P. 10.

²² *Divaina*, October 18, P. 8.

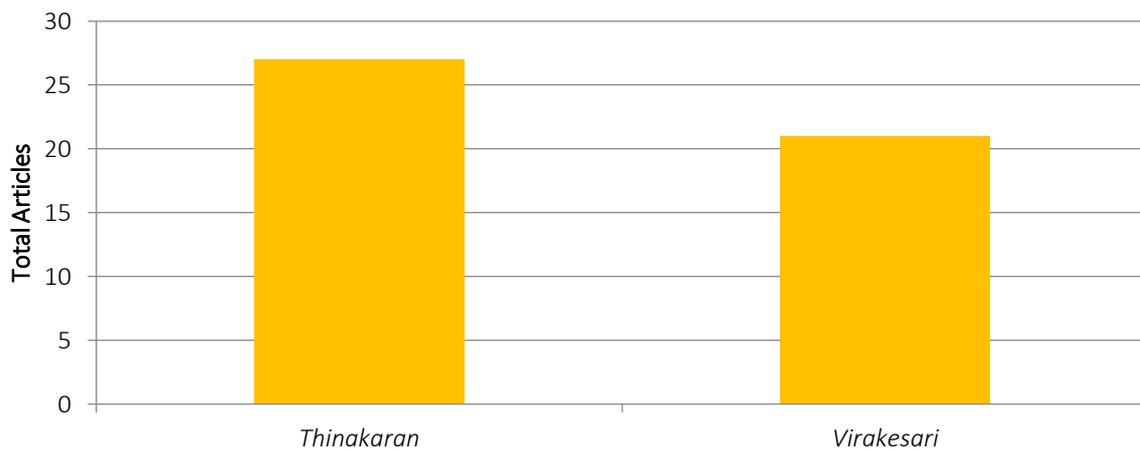
²³ *Dinamina*, October 21, P. 15.

²⁴ *Lankadeepa*, October 31, P. 4.

Coverage in Tamil newspapers

Tamil Newspapers	No. of Articles	Reportage		
		Supporting	Neutral	Opposing
<i>Thinakaran</i>	27	2	24	1
<i>Virakesari</i>	21	0	21	0
Total	48	2	45	1

Tamil Newspapers



The Tamil press featured 48 articles that had a bearing on religious freedom. 2 articles supported religious freedom, 45 were neutral and 1 article opposed religious freedom.

The **two articles that supported religious freedom** are as follows:

- ✦ A report notes that a programme to discuss Buddhist philosophy in Tamil in order to teach Tamil people about Buddhist philosophy would be held on the state channel Nethra TV today.²⁵
- ✦ In an article, a writer explains that Islam teaches reconciliation and that reconciliation started at the time humans came into being. He notes that Islam clearly shows and teaches morality and harmony.²⁶

The **article that opposed religious freedom** is as follows:

²⁵ *Thinakaran*, October 01, p. 4.

²⁶ *Thinakaran*, October 02, p. 25.

- ✦ A report notes that officers of the Department of Wildlife had prevented devotees from going for the annual feast of a Hindu Kovil, Vedukkunari Aathilingeswaran Kovil, in Vavuniya. It notes that, meanwhile, the Nedunkeni police and the Department of Archaeology had already taken measures to prevent them and the devotees were sent back.²⁷

²⁷ *Thinakaran*, October 13, p. 12..

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The 118 articles monitored during the month of October 2020 can be categorised under four overarching themes pertaining to religious freedom. These themes are *physical violence towards people and/or property; 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 these overarching themes. These events/issues are selected on the basis of the volume of coverage they received in editorials, opinion articles, feature articles and statements made by political and non-political actors/groups. Only novel events/issues that received coverage were selected for in-depth qualitative analysis in this report.

One overarching issue was selected for the month of October: the 20th Amendment to the Constitution.

The majority of reportage on this issue falls under the themes of *court cases, laws and regulations* and *other related reporting*.

Overarching themes	Events/ Issues
Court cases, laws and regulations	20 th Amendment to the Constitution
Other related reporting	

Another issue that received significant traction in the Sinhala and Tamil press in October 2020 was the release of Riyaj Bathiudeen, brother of Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) ACMC Leader MP Rishad Bathiudeen, on the grounds of insufficient evidence linking him to terrorist activity in relation to the Easter Sunday attacks. However, reporting on the Bathiudeens was deeply intertwined with reporting on the 20th Amendment, and will be analysed within that context below.

Court cases, laws and regulations and Other

20th Amendment to the Constitution (20A)

The above themes account for all reportage related to court cases, laws and regulations that promote or restrict religious freedom and for all reportage in relation to religious freedom that cannot be brought under any of the other themes. In the monitoring period, reporting on the 20th Amendment to the Constitution fell under these themes.

On September 2, the cabinet of ministers granted approval for the draft 20th Amendment (20A) Bill to be published in the government gazette and then to be tabled in parliament for approval. On October 22, parliament voted on the proposed 20A. The amendment was passed with 156 votes in favour and 65 against.

Over the last two months, the press widely featured both public support and criticism for the amendment by different factions. Proponents of the amendment have supported it by advancing arguments about the need to replace the 19th Amendment and the need to strengthen President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's powers under the constitution.²⁸ Opponents of the amendment have criticised it by asserting that it will negatively impact democracy and the rule of law and provide opportunity for corruption and 'family rule'.²⁹

This report aims to unpack the response to 20A through an ethno-religious lens. Within the larger narrative on 20A, reporting in October highlighted the response of two main groups with ethno-religious significance in Sri Lanka: 1) Muslim political parties and 2) The Buddhist clergy. Reporting reflected how both responses, and the government's actions in connection to these responses, were used by the opposition to highlight discrepancies in the government's election positions. In both instances, the opposition used these discrepancies to bolster their criticisms of 20A by appealing to ideals of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony.

Response of Muslim political parties

Reporting prior to the vote carried debate on what role Muslim parties and MPs would play in the vote on the proposed amendment. In particular, the press surfaced a debate on whether Muslim party support would be required in order to pass the 20A. Reporting on this issue was deeply intertwined with another issue that got significant coverage in October— the release of Riyaj Bathiudeen, brother of Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MP Rishad Bathiudeen. His release was positioned by the opposition as the result of a 'political deal' made between the government and Bathiudeen's party, to secure votes in favour of 20A.³⁰

²⁸ See *The Media Analysis*, Vol.10, #39

²⁹ See *The Media Analysis*, Vol.10, #39, #41 & #42

³⁰ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 15; *Anidda*, October 11, P. 8; *Lankadeepa*, October 31, P. 4.

This allegation was used by the opposition to support criticisms of the government for its unequal application of the law. Criticism drew from negative perception and stereotypes that positions Muslims as 'deal makers'. Criticism of this nature appealed to ideals of Sinhala-Buddhist majoritarianism, using 'rhetoric that polarises the Sinhala and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka', providing support to the entrenchment of 'negative nationalism that has been fuelled by the government/media'.³¹ As noted in August's report, following the general election, the press celebrated the fact that 'the victory had been achieved without the help of minorities'.³² These sentiments from the opposition implicitly called attention to the discrepancy between the government's election stance to establish power based solely on Sinhala-Buddhist strength and its dependence on minority Muslim political votes.³³

In response, voices from the government attempted to deflect the blame for the release onto law enforcement officials³⁴ and distance themselves from Bathiudeen and his party. To do so, MPs of the government declared that they would not rely on 'extremist parties' in order to secure the adoption of 20A.³⁵ This position also drew on polarising rhetoric and the anti-Muslim sentiment that emerged following the Easter attacks that all Muslims were supporters of Islamic extremism. The position also sought to reinforce the perception of the government as supporters of Sinhala Buddhist hegemony.

Some voices in the alternative press criticised the polarising rhetoric emerging from both the government and opposition. These reports stated that it the perpetuation of a negative perception of Muslims in Sri Lanka will likely 'put more votes in Rajapaksa's bag' as it aligns with their 'othering' of minority communities.³⁶ Voices in the Tamil press did not directly criticise this rhetoric, but did highlight that Bathiudeen was released on the grounds of insufficient evidence linking him to terrorist activity in relation to the Easter Sunday attacks, a fact that went largely ignored in the Sinhala press.

Response of the Buddhist clergy

On October 11, two leading chapters of the Maha Sangha, Amarapura and Ramanna, released a statement which condemned the contents of 20A and highlighted the importance of safeguarding democracy.³⁷ The statement expressed support for a new constitution instead. The opposition used this response to highlight the discrepancy between the government's

³¹See *The Media Analysis*, Vol.10, #41 & #42

³² Please see Verité Research, *Report on Understanding press coverage on religious freedom for the month of August 2020* at <http://www.minormatters.org/en/media-pdfs> [last accessed 22 November 2020].

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *Lankadeepa*, October 31, P. 4; *Virakesari*, October 05, frontpage.

³⁶ *Anidda*, October 11, P. 4.

³⁷ *Anidda*, October 11, P. 1.

Sinhala-Buddhist hegemonic position that was highlighted both pre and post elections and its current actions.

As discussed in previous reports, Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his party's victories in elections were positioned as the 'rightful re-establishment of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony'.³⁸ For example, the press commended the president's decision to hold the inaugurations at historic Buddhist locations. One aspect of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony is the status given to the opinions of Buddhist clergy on matters of governance. This is evidenced by the praise given to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa by the press for seeking 'the guidance of the Buddhist clergy in acts of state policy-making'.³⁹ Other leaders of the past have also turned to the Buddhist clergy for guidance. Buddhist monks have weighed in on matters of politics, both at the request of political leaders and of their own volition, such as when Ven. Athuraliye Rathana Thera undertook a hunger strike to call for the resignation of particular Muslim leaders following the Easter attacks.⁴⁰

In the past, some of the Buddhist clergy has tended to support the endeavours of Gotabaya Rajapaksa.⁴¹ In this context, the Amarapura-Ramanna statement stood out as it did not support Rajapaksa's position, and resulted in divided opinions among the clergy on the 20A. Several monks from within those chapters claimed that the statement was released without their consent, and others pledged support for the amendment.⁴²

The division within the clergy perhaps reflected division within the governing party as well. During this same period, several criticisms arose from within the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), calling for changes to the proposed amendment or for a new constitution instead.⁴³ However, during the vote on the amendment, the SLPP unanimously voted to pass the amendment following some changes. Following the passing of this amendment, no further dissent from the clergy was reported.

However, following the release of the Amarapura-Ramanna statement, several actors who opposed the amendment, such as MPs from the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) and the United National Party (UNP), drew on this statement to bolster their criticisms of the amendment.⁴⁴ These actors focused only on the criticisms put forward by the Amarapura-Ramanna chapters and did not engage with the divided opinion among the clergy. The members of the parliament and the alternative press recognised that in the context of the statement, the government

³⁸ Please see Verité Research, *Report on Understanding press coverage on religious freedom for the month of August 2020* at <http://www.minormatters.org/en/media-pdfs> [last accessed 22 November 2020].

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See *The Media Analysis*, Vol.09, #21

⁴¹ *Ceylon Today*, November 11, 2019, available at: <https://archive.ceylontoday.lk/print-more/44796>, *Colombo Telegraph*, June 20, 2018, available at: <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/if-they-call-you-a-hitler-then-be-a-hitler-and-build-this-country-asgiriya-anunayaka-thero-tells-gotabaya/>

⁴² *Lankadeepa*, October 14, P. 10.

⁴³ See *The Media Analysis*, Vol.10, #41 & #42

⁴⁴ *Lankadeepa*, October 14, P. 5; *Lankadeepa*, October 14, P. 8.

could either choose to respect the opinions of the clergy or continue to push for the adoption of the 20th Amendment, but not both. The opposition framed the government's continuing intent to adopt 20A as disregard for the advice of respected Buddhist leaders. By doing so, they implicitly attempted to challenge the government's position as supporters of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony.

Although the majority of reporting on this response by the clergy appeared in the Sinhala press, it also garnered some traction in the Tamil press.

CONCLUSION

This report was based on media reportage featured during the month of October 2020 on issues related to religious freedom. The reportage was carried in newspapers in the two national languages—Sinhala and Tamil. The analysis in this report took into account 118 articles dealing with religious freedom under five overarching themes. The events/issues that were qualitatively analysed in this report related to two of these five themes, i.e., Court cases, laws and regulations, and other related reporting. The articles selected for analysis were chosen on the basis that they featured new events/issues, which gained traction in the Tamil and/or Sinhala press. These articles were analysed by taking into consideration the sentiment expressed towards religious freedom. The sentiment was identified through the content, perspectives, and tone of reporting in these respective articles.

The qualitative analysis of press reporting on religious freedom focused on press commentary on the responses of significant ethno-religious groups to the 20th Amendment to the Constitution.

Reporting highlighted the responses of two groups to the 20th Amendment: 1) Muslim political parties and 2) Buddhist clergy. The press also reported on the government and opposition's actions in connection to the responses of these two groups. Reporting surfaced criticisms by the opposition that highlighted discrepancies between the government's election stance and current actions with regard to both ethno-religious groups. In particular, the opposition questioned the government's Sinhala-Buddhist hegemonic position with regards to its i) non-reliance on minority groups for power and ii) respecting opinions of the Buddhist clergy. By emphasising discrepancies that stemmed from its response to the 20A, the opposition appealed to Sinhala-Buddhist ideals to bolster its criticisms of 20A.

The majority of reporting on the responses of these two groups and the government and opposition's subsequent stances appeared in the Sinhala press. However, both also garnered some traction in the Tamil press. Reporting on the first group was unusual, showing divisions among the Buddhist clergy in the country. In contrast, reporting on the second group was in line with previous rhetoric on Muslims and Muslim politicians in Sri Lanka.

RELATED REPORTING

"If I lived according to Buddhist discipline, I would not be alive today"; Do aggressive actions and foul language befit a Buddhist monk? Questions for Ven. Ampitiye Sumana Thera from Batticaloa (Nishantha Kumara Bandara). Ven. Ampitiye Sumana Thera is the chief monk of several Buddhist temples in Batticaloa, and has been in the area during the times of the civil war, up to now. He remarks that he is someone who speaks curtly and straightforwardly, and that quality of his makes him privy to much criticism. He also remarks that nothing much has changed in the area ever since the war finished and that there were numerous occasions during the war where the LTTE attempted to assassinate him. He says that there was a huge number of Sinhalese residents in the outskirts of Batticaloa that had left the area during the war; these people have not been allowed to come back home and live in their hometowns, and this is a problem for Ampitiye Sumana Thera. He also says that much of the archaeological Buddhist treasures in the area have been destroyed. He further states that while he is aware that there is a certain code of ethics that Buddhist monks should follow in life, had he followed this code he would have been dead and this country would have become an "Eelam state".⁴⁵

We agree with the Buddhist opinion, but... (N. M. Ameen (Chairman of Muslim Council)). The writer says that if the majority of the country, Sinhala Buddhists, are against cattle slaughter, then the Muslim community is fine with that. He states that there is a wrong perception that Muslims are sellers of beef, when in fact they are merely those who eat the meat. He further explains certain Islamic rituals that involve the meat of a cow, but says that there are substitutes that can be used; he says that the real problem will be for the farmers who sell this meat to the Muslims, because their income would be taken away from them through the cattle ban.⁴⁶

Protest at Katuwapitiya Church against Riyaj Bathiudeen's release (Pushpakumara Mallawaarachchi). The relatives of the victims of the Katuwapitiya Church bomb in the string of Easter attack bombs last April 21st stated that they condemn the decision taken by the police to release the brother of Rishard Bathiudeen, Riyaj, on account of there not being enough evidence to place him under arrest. They held a silent protest in this regard in front of the church. Protesters stated their belief that the president would make sure that justice was served.⁴⁷

No deal with Rishard - If officials are to blame, they will be dealt with, says president in an official statement (Sujith Hewajulige). The president issued a statement denying that his government has any deals with Rishard Bathiudeen. He also said that if related officials have made mistakes and blunders, the appropriate corrections will be made. This statement was made with regard to the release of Riyaj Bathiudeen. He says that he is not willing to give the power of arrest and release to politicians and said that the people of Sri Lanka have placed their trust in him to dispense justice, which he will definitely do.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ *Lankadeepa*, October 4, P. 27.

⁴⁶ *Silumina*, October 4, P.20.

⁴⁷ *Lankadeepa*, October 5, P. 12.

⁴⁸ *Lankadeepa*, October 5, P. 10.

"Religious leaders: come forth to defeat 20A; All steps will be taken to defeat 20A, which paves the way for dictatorship", says UNP General Secretary Akila Viraj (Nimale Kodithuwakku). The general secretary of the UNP stated that the party will take any steps necessary to prevent the 20th Amendment to the Constitution from coming into force. He also requested the religious leaders of the country, including the Buddhist clergy, to step forward and voice their dissent and condemnation of 20A.⁴⁹

"Former PM Ranil Wickremesinghe opposed proposal to ban niqab", says Former President Sirisena (Subhashini Senanayake). Former President Maithripala Sirisena told the presidential committee probing the Easter attacks that his PM Ranil Wickremesinghe was opposed to banning the niqab, which was presented to them as a proposal from the security council. He says that at the time, ISIS had been prolific in many countries and that he and the rest of the security personnel were willing to issue a ban, but could not do so because Ranil did not agree with it. Apparently Ranil's reasoning was that, should a niqab ban be put in motion, Muslim representatives in parliament at the time would cease to support them and would not vote for their proposals and laws in the future.⁵⁰

A woman who visited Ahangama temple tests positive for the coronavirus (D.G. Sugathapala, Sumithipala Diyagahage). A woman who visited a temple in Eliketiya, Ahangama, from Diwulapitiya in order to inquire into the wellbeing of the priests, has tested positive for the coronavirus, authorities say.⁵¹

"No ban on worshipping Sri Maha Bodhi", Police says - (Athula Bandara) - The police have stated that there is no truth to the rumours swirling around that access to the Sri Maha Bodhi has been restricted on account of the current situation in the country with regard to COVID-19, and that any such rumours are false.⁵²

Indian Prime Minister grants USD 15 million towards the development of Lanka's Buddhist monasteries (Ranjan Kasthuri). India has decided to grant Sri Lanka USD 15 million to aid in the development of Buddhist monasteries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced this during a video conference between himself and Sri Lankan President.⁵³

Ramanna-Amarapura discusses 20A (Tharindu Uduwaragedara). It has been reported that the Amarapura-Ramanna Samagiri Maha Sangha Sabha held discussions and issued a statement reading "the proposed 20th Amendment should not be enacted; a whole new constitution needs to be created". Sources report that the discussion revolved around how 20A rejects the core of democracy and how the Sangha Sabha would give its support for the creation of a new constitution.⁵⁴

Religious leaders comment on 20A. Professor Ven. Aththangane Rathanapala Thera says that 20A strengthens the executive and reduces the powers of the legislative and judiciary to a great

⁴⁹ *Lankadeepa*, October 6, P. 5.

⁵⁰ *Dinamina*, October 6, P. 8.

⁵¹ *Lankadeepa*, October 8, P. 2.

⁵² *Lankadeepa*, October 8, P. 2.

⁵³ *Lankadeepa*, October 10, P. 12.

⁵⁴ *Anidda*, October 11, P. 1.

extent, and points out that it is unnecessary to bring in 20A if a new constitution is being drafted anyway, and that bringing 20A is merely creating arbitrary pressures on everyone. Ven. Doctor Aturatiye Nanda Thera says that he disagrees with many of 20A's new clauses, most notably the unlimited powers that it vests on the president. He also says that the 19th Amendment does not restrict the president from doing his work, as it has been claimed to, and states that he will not stand for 20A being enacted. Ven. Mahamangkadawala Piyarathana Thera states that the new government has taken a two-third majority power and introduced 20A so that they can hold the public by its throat. Rev. Sarath Iddamalgodha states that 20A contains many clauses that take away the rights and freedoms of the country and the public, and that it is not lawful to give the public's power to the president in this way. Rev. S. Sathyavel says that the situation in the country is dangerous now because one family is trying to push the public back into an era of servitude. Moulavi Munir Mulaffar says that 20A has no good aspects and is purely detrimental to the country and society.⁵⁵

Rishard Bathiudeen: A great example of the "Rajapaksa-vadaya" (Gamini Viyangoda). The writer talks about the various powers and ideologies that the Rajapaksa brothers embody and emulate, stating the differences between each and why certain aspects of them should be supported and some aspects should not be. He says that the national problem lies in the race/religion issue of this country. He speaks about how being the family of a terrorist does not mean that other family members are also terrorists. He says that the reasons for suspecting and then releasing Rishard Bathiudeen's brother from any suspicion of terrorism are both things that the Rajapaksa-vadaya achieved in this country. He points out the blatant othering created in this country due to the race/religion issue, pointing out that the Tiger rebels were considered as a terrorist organisation not just because of its activities but also because it consisted of Tamil people. He points out that, aside from Ali Sabry, every single Muslim in this country was "othered" because of the Easter attacks, and lists the Rajapaksas, the media and state power as the reasons for that. He says that Bathiudeen was shown to be the "other" and the votes from the South were therefore deflected from him and secured by the Rajapaksas.⁵⁶

According to the cardinal, did Bathiudeen lead the Easter attacks? (Aruna Jayawardena). The writer claims that the cardinal was the most incensed when Riyadh Bathiudeen was released from custody, and that the cardinal's claim that the Yahapalana government was not investigating the Easter attacks to uncover something that only he knew, helped Gotabaya Rajapaksa win the presidency. Releasing Riyaj Bathiudeen from the CID's hold, the cardinal suspects, could have been the result of a deal struck with Bathiudeen. The writer claims that because of this accusation, the idea that 'Muslims are good at striking deals' has once again been perpetuated in society. He also says that the government is merely investigating the Easter attacks to keep the cardinal and the catholic community happy, by arresting people every once in a while for effect. The writer posits that the cardinal is probably not oblivious to the fact that his claims and statements have put more votes in the Rajapaksas' bag.⁵⁷

Is public opinion the greatest power? (Kathleen Jayawardena). In a review of Eric Illayapparachchi's novel "Petha", the writer speaks about the definition of democracy and how it is challenged today. She points out that democracy is meant to give power to the public

⁵⁵ *Anidda*, October 11, P. 1.

⁵⁶ *Anidda*, October 11, P. 4.

⁵⁷ *Anidda*, October 11, P. 8.

opinion and stance on a subject, but questions whether it is the absolute justice anymore. She talks about the novel and its ideas on democracy and public opinion. She shares that the book primarily focuses on the Terrorism Prevention Act.⁵⁸

They will sell the name of the Nelligala Temple and carry out scams in other temples (Samanthi Weerasekara). This article explains the incident surrounding the Nelligala International Buddhist Centre, where a young man was caught duping laypeople into giving him money, saying that he was collecting money for the centre. The Buddhist monk in charge of the Centre says that such activities are possible because it has become normal for religious centres to send representatives to collect money; he warns that this system needs to be regulated so that scam artists cannot dupe people into giving up their money for fake causes.⁵⁹

Like in the East, people in the North have a right to commemorate their lost loved ones, says MP Wigneswaran (Nishantha Kumara Bandara). Member of Parliament C.V. Wigneswaran stated that, like the people in the East, people in the North have the right to commemorate their lost loved ones. He said this with regard to the recent commemoration ceremony held for LTTE leader Thileepan. He also said that because the government sent many obstacles to get in the way of those remembering Thileepan's passing, the Tamil political parties in the North banded together in their collective opposition to such obstacles.⁶⁰

"The only solution for Tamil citizens is reconciliation" Minister Devananda (Nishantha Kumara Bandara). Minister Douglas Devananda stated that the only solution for the problems that Tamil citizens face on the daily is national reconciliation. He cited the Indo-Lanka Agreement as proof that reconciliation works, and said that it is the best way to approach these problems.⁶¹

"I was told only that Zahran was an extremist; I was not told that he was a terrorist" Former President Sirisena to Easter Attacks Commission (Muditha Dayananda). The writer criticises the political giants in this country for always brushing off their responsibility when it is more advantageous for them to pawn it off on someone else. One such example is former President Maithripala Sirisena and his statement to the presidential committee probing the Easter attacks, who says he was not aware of an attack and also states that, had he known of an imminent threat, he would not have left the country at that time. Former Secretary of Defence Hemasiri Fernando says that the state intelligence service should have connected the dots with regards to Zahran Hashim and the explosive equipment that was found. He further claimed that nobody is expected to believe that a "normal" man would cause any explosions, and that those suspected had to be terrorists. The article further exposes how Fernando attempts to throw intelligence officers under the bus for being incompetent at their jobs, although the state intelligence service was under his jurisdiction.⁶²

The children who don't go to school and don't have food to eat (Kanchana Kumara (Dambulla). There is a set of children in Anuradhapura who have given up going to school because they do not want to endure the societal shaming that would result because they do not have enough

⁵⁸ *Anidda*, October 11, P. 18.

⁵⁹ *Divaina*, October 11, P. 17.

⁶⁰ *Lankadeepa*, October 11, Front Page.

⁶¹ *Lankadeepa*, October 11, Front Page.

⁶² *Lankadeepa*, October 11, P. 10.

food to feed themselves. This entire village is suffering from severe financial setbacks. Some of these children have commented that they have been forced to beg for food, which is why the rest of the villages shame them for not having food. The writer points out that these children are Sinhala Buddhist children, and that none of the keyboard warriors who start Facebook fights and insult other religions in the name of Buddhism have ever come to these children's aid.⁶³

Venerable Pelpola Vipassi Thera implores for the Sudharshanarama Temple in Borella to be protected. Ven. Vipassi Thera has stated that a certain group of people are attempting to sell a piece of land that had been donated to the Borella Sudharshanara monastery, by forging false documents and deeds. He asks that nobody gets fooled by the fraud.⁶⁴

Three Hindu priests who built on forbidden land, released on bail - (Dinasena Rathugamage) - Three priests belonging to the group of caretakers of the Vedukkunari Kovil had conspired to build on ground that they were forbidden by law to build on, by pretending to hold ceremonies and "pooja" rituals as a cover. The Jaffna court had issued a ban on any building taking place in the land and had only allowed for ceremonies and sacred rituals to be carried out there. The three priests in questions were bailed out of jail.⁶⁵

Death threats to monk of Mangalarama Monastery in Batticaloa - protection reduced (Susantha Amarabandu). Ven. Ampitiye Sumanarathana Thera, the chief monk of the Mangalarama Monastery in Batticaloa, stated in a special announcement to Divaina that death threats are continuously being directed at him, and that his life is in serious danger given the fact that the police protection provided to him has also reduced. He claims that the death threats are coming from the Tamil diaspora, angered at the fact that he is a stronghold for Buddhist people in Batticaloa. He explains how he helped people in the area during the war. He also explains that he is perceived as a corrupt monk because he does not bend to the police officers' demands and because he prioritizes the wellbeing of the lay people in the area. His police detail has been reduced from four police officers to none. He asks the leaders of the country to look after the people in the East and also to preserve the archaeological sites and treasures.⁶⁶

Because of the actions of the Ministry of Law and Order, there was a shortage of elephants for the Dalada Perahera (procession) - former President Maithripala Sirisena - (Eric Gamini Jinapriya). While giving his statement to the presidential commission probing the Easter attacks, former President Maithripala Sirisena criticised the actions of the Ministry of Law and Order, saying that their actions led to a shortage - even complete lack of - elephants for the Kandy Dalada Perahera (procession). He said that it caused major issues for Sinhala Buddhist tradition in this country. He further explained the various reasons why there were so many presidential secretaries and defence secretaries appointed to posts when he was president. He

⁶³ *Lankadeepa*, October 11, P. 17.

⁶⁴ *Divaina*, October 12, P. 13.

⁶⁵ *Divaina*, October 13, P. 3.

⁶⁶ *Divaina*, October 13, P. 6.

claims that there were many problems within the system and that it impacted things like processions as well.⁶⁷

Buddhist ruins in the North in danger again - (Dinasena Rathugamage). The writer claims that the Buddhist religious stupas and monasteries in the North, which contain valuable Buddhist artefacts, are once again being dug up by Hindu priests in the area. While previously there was no evidence to suggest the involvement of Hindu priests in the practice, an arrest was made recently by the army that serves as evidence. A Hindu priest and eight accomplices were arrested while attempting to dig up artefacts and treasures at an ancient site, following an intelligence tip-off. The writer also talks about the increased destruction of historical sites in the North, and speaks about three Hindu priests who were arrested but subsequently released in relation to that offence.⁶⁸

"The country is watching to see if the government will heed the Buddhist leaders' admonitions to not enact the 20th Amendment" - Former UNP MP Sandith Samarasinghe (Anjula Mahika Weeraratne). Former MP from the UNP Sandith Samarasinghe stated that the country is waiting to see whether the current government will decide to not enact the 20th Amendment, following the admonitions against it, issued by the Buddhist clergy in the country. He says that this is particularly of interest because this government spoke endlessly about prioritising nationality and religion in their election campaign. He challenged the government to prove that they love this country by listening to the advice of the Buddhist clergy and not enacting 20A.⁶⁹

"The Buddhist clergy always showed their support in times of hardship - The Amarapura-Ramanna Sangha Sabha's disapproval is a strength in the fight against the dictatorial 20A" - Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa (Nimala Kodithuwakku). Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa stated that throughout history the Buddhist clergy have stood up for justice whenever the country was in danger of veering in the wrong direction, and the Amarapura-Ramanna Sangha Sabha's dissent and disapproval of the proposed 20th Amendment is but the latest affirmation of the fact. He stated that the SJB admires the points brought out by the Sangha Sabha and remarks that the public disapproval is a great strength for the SJB in their fight against 20A.⁷⁰

"The Amarapura-Ramanna Sangha Sabha collective statement happened without our knowledge" - Chief monks say (Sujith Hewajulige). Chief monks belonging to the Amarapura and Ramanna chapters have stated that the collective statement made about the proposed 20th Amendment by the Amarapura-Ramanna Sangha Sabha was made without their knowledge. They claim that releasing a statement without informing them was an inappropriate thing to do. One of these monks stated that his personal view is that the executive wing of the country could do with more power.⁷¹

"Muslim extremism is far more dangerous than Eelam extremism" – Ven. Professor Munghene Meththarama Thera (Rathnasiri Pathirana). Ven. Prof. Meththarama Thera stated that if

⁶⁷ *Divaina*, October 13, P. 7.

⁶⁸ *Divaina*, October 13, P. 11.

⁶⁹ *Lankadeepa*, October 14, P. 5.

⁷⁰ *Lankadeepa*, October 14, P. 8.

⁷¹ *Lankadeepa*, October 14, P. 10.

counter measures are not taken immediately against Islamic extremism, the country will face far more dire consequences than from Eelam extremism. He said this at a book launch for a text about Eelam extremism.⁷²

"Do not disregard the books with Arabic lettering, do The needed investigation" – Venerable Prof. Valavahangunawawe Dhammarathana Thera (Ranga Chathu (Mihintale). Venerable Prof. Valavahangunawawe Dhammarathana Thera warns the authorities not to take lightly the discovery of books with the Sri Lankan map and Arabic lettering, which were published for an Arabic school, by the Mihintale police. He asks that this not be disregarded and that appropriate investigation be done into the publishing of the book. He also reminds us that due to the inactivity of state intelligence agencies on information already received, thousands of people are still suffering today.⁷³

Prime minister's monetary donations to 40 Hindu kovils. Yesterday (15.10.2020), the prime minister donated LKR 50,000 each to 40 Hindu kovils in celebration of the Maha Siva Rathri festival at Temple Trees. He stated that although the world is in a state of peril, it is our duty to honour the Hindu traditions that are followed in the country.⁷⁴

Former Minister Kabir Hashim says: I strongly suspected that a dangerous extremist group was behind the destruction of Buddhist statues in Mawanella (Muditha Dayananda). Former Minister Kabir Hashim, giving evidence to the presidential commission probing the Easter attacks, stated that he strongly suspected that a group of extremists were responsible for the destruction of Buddha statues in Mawanella. This was followed by an attack on his communications secretary. Hashim stated that the group would have targeted his secretary because it could not reach him. He also stated that although the president at the time told him to come to the security council, there was no official notice given.⁷⁵

The government was not afraid of the statements of the Amarapura-Ramanna Sangha Sabha; It is afraid of the monks' unity (Anjula Mahika Weeraratne). Prof. Ven. Atthangane Rathanapala of the Ramanna chapter stated that the government was not scared of the statement that the Amarapura-Ramanna Sangha Sabha released, but instead was scared to see how the clergy united and gave one statement. He stated that the government believes that the united nature of the Buddhist clergy of the country is an obstacle for the continued activities of the government.⁷⁶

Murder of two monks at Kotte Rajamaha Vihara: Defendant indicted (Manopriya Gunasekara). In this case, the defendant was charged with the murder of two Buddhist monks by stabbing, at the Kotte Rajamaha Vihara eight years ago, by the attorney general. The defendant was indicted by a judge at the Colombo Magistrate Court today.⁷⁷

⁷² *Dinamina*, October 14, P. 10.

⁷³ *Divaina*, October 14, P. 3.

⁷⁴ *Divaina*, October 16, P. 7.

⁷⁵ *Lankadeepa*, October 16, P. 12.

⁷⁶ *Lankadeepa*, October 16, P. 12.

⁷⁷ *Lankadeepa*, October 16, P. 14.

I have no relation to Turkey's FETO terrorist group, says MP Kabir Hashim (Subhashini Senanayake). MP Kabir Hashim told the presidential commission probing the Easter attacks that the former president did not give him a chance to state what he knew to the security council, although he was told that he would get a chance. Hashim said that not all Muslims are extremists, and that he has no relation to the FETO terrorist organisation of Turkey. He also stated that he had knowledge about Muslim extremists, that he had told the cabinet twice, and that he had asked for protection following his secretary being shot. He did not get any protection detail, however.⁷⁸

While the thief is at home, the treasure is mailed to the police. This article is about Rishad Bathiudeen, and the writer posits that he is an opportunist who has worked for various governments that would take him in, and states that Bathiudeen's breaking of election laws during the last presidential election is not the only charge that can be levied against him. While the writer does not praise the Rajapaksas, he does accuse Bathiudeen of servicing his race (Muslim) and going against Buddhist values. The conclusion posits that Bathiudeen will emerge from his latest prison stint hailed a hero.⁷⁹

"Not just Rishad; We won't take any extremist to the government", says Minister Mahinda Amaraweera (Dayaseeli Liyanage). Minister Mahinda Amaraweera stated that the government has decided not to get the help of any extremist in this country, let alone Rishad Bathiudeen. He said this while denying the rumours that the government was trying to get Bathiudeen to support 20A.⁸⁰

The decision about 20A: Various ministers' opinions (Dayaseeli Liyanage). 37 petitions were filed against the 20th amendment to the constitution. Several ministers on the government's side stated their views. They said that they have the ability to express their views and that they hope that the proposals brought forward by the SLFP will be considered. They say that the president should possess the power to dissolve parliament after one year. They say that it is their duty to give the president the powers that 19A took away from him.⁸¹

It is difficult without a ministerial position... (Prasanna Sanjeeva Tennakoon). S.B. Dissanayake, MP from Nuwara Eliya, talks about how there is no problem with regards to 20A, how the SLFP is in full agreement with 20A and that the SLFP has fulfilled all duties as a party. He points out that Gotabaya Rajapaksa won the war in Sri Lanka while he had dual citizenship.⁸²

Did the last police media spokesperson lose his position because of the Bathiudeen incident? (Srinath Prasanna Jayasuriya). The writer explains how Rishad Bathiudeen's brother was arrested on suspicion of terrorism along with other people and about how the brother was released. He also writes about how the government said that this was not a deal with Bathiudeen. He speculates about whether the police media spokesperson was taken out of his position owing to this incident, but states that the government said that it was done because of a disciplinary reason. He said that when Riyaj Bathiudeen was arrested, the comments made

⁷⁸ *Dinamina*, October 17, P. 12.

⁷⁹ *Divaina*, October 18, P. 8.

⁸⁰ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, Front Page.

⁸¹ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 8.

⁸² *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 10.

by the media spokesman of the police at the time were unsuitable and villified by society at large.⁸³

The Bathiudeen brothers, who even messed up the police (Dayaseeli Liyanage). The writer explains that Rishad Bathiudeen was arrested on suspicion of misuse of funds, and that his brother Riyaj was arrested owing to his various dealings with suspected extremists and terrorists. He talks about the very confusing situation surrounding the brothers as of late.⁸⁴

It is our duty to protect our country's leader, says former PM Ranil Wickremesinghe (Muditha Dayananda). The former president and prime minister of the country gave statements to the presidential commission probing the Easter attacks, reiterating what they were saying before. They accept that the intelligence agencies were unable to confirm that Zahran Hashim and co-conspirators were actually engaging in terrorist activity, but keep insisting that they could not do anything about it. They denied knowing anything about Hashim and co. teaching youths how to handle weaponry. Ranil Wickremesinghe stated that it was his job to protect the president, which is why he sent a protective detail to escort the president back from the airport after the attacks.⁸⁵

These people are merely talking, not working, says MP S.M. Marikkar (Prasanna Sanjeewa Tennakoon). SJB MP S.M. Marikkar stated that the government in power promised to bring in a hard-working president and obtained a two-third majority, but that no work is being done. He blamed the government for bringing in COVID-19 because of its desire to win over the people's vote. He stated that no man from his party with a conscience and self-respect would ever support the 20th Amendment. He also denied the rumours that he would support the current government.⁸⁶

Murder: Animal and man (Kathleen Jayawardena). The writer talks about how the word "murder" is only associated with the act of killing humans and not animals. She points out that all people are against murdering people, but that many do not think the same logic applies to animals. She expresses her belief that only god can help men curb his bloodlust. She further states that the subject of slaughtering animals has been taking up much space in newspapers lately, especially related to cattle slaughter owing to the recent ban and the controversy around it. She also talks about a recent short story written on the matter, and discusses how it is difficult to believe that society has not progressed beyond killing animals for food.⁸⁷

Initiative by the president's office to get the statement of the clergy (Lasantha Ruhunage) regarding the recent controversy surrounding the Amarapura-Ramanna Sangha Sabha's statement declaring their united condemnation of 20A. Certain chief monks have found that it was the president's office that had sent representatives to obtain statements about 20A before, and therefore started the entire campaign.⁸⁸

⁸³ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 15.

⁸⁴ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 16.

⁸⁵ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 16.

⁸⁶ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 18.

⁸⁷ *Lankadeepa*, October 18, P. 10.

⁸⁸ *Anidda*, October 18, P. 1.

No Muslims and Tamils to Ananda or Nalanda, says the regional director of education (Rekha Nilukshi Herath). The regional director of education has stated that no Muslim or Tamil invigilators will be appointed for the supervision of students of popular Buddhist schools Ananda and Nalanda colleges, during the advanced level examination. This statement was in response to a query about why he sent a Muslim invigilator who was appointed to Ananda College, to another school. He stated that that was tradition and that no circular had been issued by the education ministry to warrant this rule.⁸⁹

Government is trying to create a rift among the Buddhist clergy. Ven. Atthangane Sasana Rathana Thera stated that the government is trying to create a rift between various chapters of the Buddhist clergy in the country. He also stated that the Sangha Sabha did not seek permission of the chief prelate of the Amarapura or Ramanna chapters before releasing their statement, and also said that the government is trying to get different statements from different monks and, therefore, create issues and doubt about the standing of the chapters.⁹⁰

This is our stance, there is no need to inform the chief prelates, we have the power to take decisions (K. W. Janaranjana). The secretaries of the Amarapura and Ramanna chapters have stated that they did not need to seek permission from the chief monks of the chapters before issuing their joint statement about 20A, and that they have the power and discretion to do so.⁹¹

For democracy after the 20th Amendment... (Jayadeva Uyangoda). The writer talks about what we need to look at in terms of democracy once the 20th Amendment is passed. He says that attention needs to be paid to certain dictatorial tendencies, and about how the president will most likely exclude himself from being subjected to a system of checks and balances of power, given the fact that the Supreme Court allowed him to keep said powers. The writer predicts that the country's politics will take two avenues: one with dictatorship and the other with democracy. He states that there are forces that are lining up ready to defend democracy, and that it is those forces that will largely shape the course of this country's future.⁹²

The people will later enjoy benefits (Professor Sarath Wijesuriya). The writer claims that the only deadly virus in this country is the idiocy of its people in being unable to identify the fake patriotism and nationalist ideologies that are being used to hoodwink them. He also talks about how the people are unaware of what is happening and will continue to live in bliss and enjoy it. He also says that nationalism is the worst thing to happen to this country.⁹³

Woman who made video to incite Buddhist-Catholic tensions, arrested (Rakshana Sriyantha). The CID arrested a woman for creating a video about the cardinal and releasing it on social media in the hopes of creating tensions and problems between the Catholic and Buddhist communities of the country.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ *Anidda*, October 18, p. 2.

⁹⁰ *Anidda*, October 18, P. 4.

⁹¹ *Anidda*, October 18, P. 4.

⁹² *Anidda*, October 18, P. 7.

⁹³ *Anidda*, October 18, P. 9.

⁹⁴ *Dinamina*, October 19, P. 15.

Woman who published video to incite religious tensions arrested (Indika Ramanayake). The CID arrested a woman for creating a video about the cardinal and releasing it on social media in the hopes of creating tensions and problems between the Catholic and Buddhist communities of the country.⁹⁵

I never said that I would release Pujith if he admitted responsibility for the attacks, says former President Maithripala Sirisena (Muditha Dayananda). Former President Maithripala Sirisena stated that he did not offer to release Pujith Jayasundara if he took responsibility for the Easter attacks by altering a document related to a report on the attack, and that the rumour about that is untrue. He says that nobody can recuse themselves from the collective responsibility for the attack happening.⁹⁶

Former State Intelligence Head Nilantha Jayawardena: If work was done according to the way we wanted it, before the 21st of April, we could have stopped the attacks (Muditha Dayananda). Former intelligence head says that it was after the Easter attacks that the documents that his office circulated were taken seriously and necessary precautions were taken; he stated that, had this been the case before the 21st of April, the Easter attacks could have been prevented as well.⁹⁷

Ven. Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera: Pillaiyan said that the Wahhabists were preparing to kill me (Upali Karunaratne). General Secretary of the BBS, Gnanasara Thera, stated that Pillaiyan said there were Muslim extremist groups that were plotting to assassinate him in the Batticaloa prison. He also requested that the government situate a team to look into Wahhabists in the country.⁹⁸

Case against Ven. Gnanasara Thera, related to the cremation of Gurukanda Thera's body, to be brought to court on 19.02.2021 (A. J. A. Abeynayake). The court case filed against General Secretary of the BBS Gnanasara Thera with regards to his disobeying the order of the Mullaitivu Magistrate Court and carrying out the cremation of the late chief monk of the Gurukanda monastery, is set to be heard in court on the February 19, 2021.⁹⁹

Woman who posted video against cardinal on Facebook, remanded (Kasuni Rebecca). The CID arrested a woman for creating a video about the cardinal and releasing it on social media in the hopes of creating tensions and problems between the Catholic and Buddhist communities of the country. A psychological assessment has been ordered to be carried out, and the woman is being held in protective custody until 02.11.2020.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Lankadeepa*, October 19, Front Page.

⁹⁶ *Lankadeepa*, October 19, P. 12.

⁹⁷ *Lankadeepa*, October 20, P. 11.

⁹⁸ *Dinamina*, October 21, P. 15.

⁹⁹ *Divaina*, October 21, P. 8.

¹⁰⁰ *Divaina*, October 21, P. 8.

Ven. Gnanasara Thera indicted - Court case set for 24.11.2020 (A. J. A. Abeynayake). Gnanasara Thera, the defendant in two cases of allegedly insulting and degrading the Islamic faith, was indicted yesterday (21). The hearing is set for November 24.¹⁰¹

Kuragala Monastery situation: Indictment handed over to Ven. Gnanasara Thera (Manopriya Gunasekara). Colombo magistrate judge handed over documents for indictment to Ven. Galagodaaththe Gnanasara Thera in relation to certain statements made by him that allegedly insulted the beliefs of Muslim people. This statement was made at the Kuragala monastery. Gnanasara Thera was ordered to appear in court on November 24, 2020.¹⁰²

"20A destroyed the country's democracy: It started the downfall of the SLPP and the Rajapaksas" – General Secretary of the Samagi Jana Balawegaya Ranjith Madduma Bandara (Nimale Kodithuwakku). General Secretary of the SJB Ranjith Madduma Bandara stated that the new 20th Amendment has ruined democracy in the country and also stated that it would mark the doom of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) and the Rajapaksas as well. He also stated that the government's blatant dismissal of the advice of the Buddhist monks and its banding together with Muslim parliamentarians to pass 20A is a shame and insult to the Buddhist monks in the country.¹⁰³

Attorney General asks Inspector General for report on Aranthalawa Massacre (Manopriya Gunasekara). The attorney general has ordered the acting inspector general of police to launch an investigation into the Aranthalawa massacre of 32 Buddhist monks in 1978 and produce a report on the investigation after two weeks. The article states that many parties had requested that an investigation be carried out into the massacre that was carried out by the LTTE.¹⁰⁴

Woman who wore saree adorned with Buddha's head produced in court (Samanthi Weerasekara). A woman travelling on a bus wearing a saree adorned with the Buddha's head was arrested on October 21, 2020, after other passengers on the bus informed the police and created a scene about the woman's attire.¹⁰⁵

Zahran's gang's plan of action is bathing our land with blood - Commission probing the Easter attacks (Muditha Dayananda). This article covers the entire story behind the Easter attacks, the ISIS claiming responsibility for the attack, and the individuals responsible for it. It also lists out the people in power who did not do anything about the attack despite having intelligence about it beforehand. A witness has further stated that the original plan was to attack several public places, then launch more attacks when others gathered around the blast sites to view the damage, and finally strike the hospitals that were being used for injured parties' care, but due to a sudden shift in alliance that plan was likely foiled.¹⁰⁶

Sinhalese person from the South receives award from Jaffna (M. Susil Priyantha and Dharmadasa Siriwardena). A man from the South has received a "Lanka Jothi" award from the

¹⁰¹ *Divaina*, October 22, P. 2.

¹⁰² *Lankadeepa*, October 23, P. 15.

¹⁰³ *Lankadeepa*, October 24, P. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Lankadeepa*, October 24, P. 6.

¹⁰⁵ *Divaina*, October 24, P. 6.

¹⁰⁶ *Lankadeepa*, October 25, P. 16.

Jaffna Multi-Religious Forum and Foundation for Coexistence; this is the highest level of award that a Sinhalese man has received from Jaffna. Karunatunga Welikala received the award for his years of selfless service as a teacher who taught the Sinhalese and Tamil languages to officials and citizens free of charge while being a man accepting of all faiths and religions.¹⁰⁷

The ghost of Kuveni that slandered the cardinal (Sureka Nilmini Illangakoon). The article is about a recent video that was released on social media by a woman, which contains statements harmful to the reputation of the cardinal. The cardinal's team has released a statement that what the woman has propagated via Facebook is baseless, untruthful and completely false in nature, and that complaints have been made to the relevant authorities. The writer says that people who publish incendiary videos like this one have the goal of creating religious disharmony, and that officials have a duty to locate and stop these people from posting anything harmful like this, in the future.¹⁰⁸

Mullaitivu's rapidly deteriorating Buddhist heritage (Rukshila Wettamuny). The article extensively describes the Buddhist heritage sites in the Northern Province and calls on experts to take steps to preserve what is still remaining.¹⁰⁹

"I believe that there was a political hand Behind the terrorist group behind the Easter attacks" - **Acting Secretary of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama, Arkam Moulavi** (Subhashini Senanayake). The acting secretary of the All-Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) told the commission probing the Easter attacks that he believes that there was a political arm behind the terrorist group that carried out the Easter attacks, and that the misguided Muslim youth were also operating under a political hand of some sort. He also testified that the terrorists who carried out the attack were mentally deranged and were under much distress and politically pressure.¹¹⁰

Unauthorised construction in Devanagala sacred site halted. The Mawanella police have intervened and halted the construction of a building near the archaeological site in Devanagala, Mawanella. The Buddhist monks who were present at the site made a complaint to the police regarding unauthorised construction and the police intervention halted the process on October 23, 2020.¹¹¹

May the Buddha Statue Being Brought to Tissamaha Vihara Be A Bridge Between the North and South (Seneviratne Kahatapitiya) Bellanwila Dhammarathana Thera expresses his sincere wish for the Buddha statue that has been kept in the iconic Tissamaha Vihara in Dondra Head, Jaffna, to be a gateway and a bridge towards unity in the North and South parts of the country.¹¹²

Will the Government Get Stuck on 20A? (M S M Ayoob) The article talks about 20A and how it is unclear if its passing will actually bring about a new constitution. The government also

¹⁰⁷ *Lankadeepa*, October 25, P. 9.

¹⁰⁸ *Silumina*, October 25, P. 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Silumina*, October 25, P. 21.

¹¹⁰ *Dinamina*, October 26, P. 8.

¹¹¹ *Dinamina*, October 26, P. 22.

¹¹² *Dinamina*, October 31, P. 8.

mentioned that it would not get the help of extremist parties in getting 20A approved, and the writer remarks that that term applied specifically to the Muslim parties. Although some ministers said this it is clear that secret deals were struck with members of Muslim parties, given the voting that happened in parliament. The writer talks about the suspicious release of Riyaj Bathiudeen. The writer further questions this decision and talks about the dynamic between Muslim parties and the government.¹¹³

5 People who Tried to Dig for Treasure at Siyambalanduwa's Ancient Stupa, Imprisoned (I.R. Indika, Keshara Gunatilake) Five people who were digging for treasure at the site of an ancient stupa in Syambalanduwa were caught and arrested by Police Inspector Priyantha Prematilake.¹¹⁴

Sumanarathana Thera gets bail - Ampitiye Sumanarathana Thera of the Batticaloa's Mangalaramaya who appeared in court for the physical attack on officers of the archaeological department was released on surety of Rs. 200,000.¹¹⁵

Discussion in Nethra TV on poya day A programme to discuss Buddhist philosophy in Tamil in order to teach the Tamil people of Buddhist philosophy will be held on the Nethra TV today. This programme is held every poya day. A Buddhist monk speaks on Buddha's teaching.¹¹⁶

Hindus demonstrate in Vavuniya A demonstration was carried out by all Hindu organisations collectively in Vavuniya over the challenges faced by them. They exposed six challenges, including conversion of Hindus to other religions and calling a ban on cow slaughter.¹¹⁷

Hindus demonstrate in Vavuniya A demonstration was carried out by all Hindu organisations collectively in Vavuniya over the challenges faced by them. They exposed six challenges, including conversion of Hindus to other religions and calling a ban on cow slaughter.¹¹⁸

Islam teaches reconciliation (A.M. Habibur Rahman) The writer explains that Islam teaches reconciliation. Reconciliation started at the time human beings came into existence. Islam clearly shows and teaches morality and harmony.¹¹⁹

Hindus demonstrate in Vavuniya A demonstration was carried out by all Hindu organisations collectively in Vavuniya over the challenges faced by them. They exposed six challenges, including conversion of Hindus to other religions and calling a ban on cow slaughter.¹²⁰

Hindu priest killed in Punguditivu (T. Sobithan) A 33 year old Hindu priest has been killed in Punguditivu area, police say. His body was found today near the temple pond in the area early this morning. The victim was reportedly serving as a priest in the temple and his aide was arrested by the police on suspicion. He was beaten to death by a group of men, sources further

¹¹³ *Lankadeepa*, October 31, P. 4.

¹¹⁴ *Lankadeepa*, October 31, P. 13.

¹¹⁵ *Thinakaran*, October 01, frontpage.

¹¹⁶ *Thinakaran*, October 01, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *Thinakaran*, October 02, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *Thinakaran*, October 02, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ *Thinakaran*, October 02, p. 25.

¹²⁰ *Virakesari*, October 02, frontpage.

revealed. Sources say the priest was raising his voice against cattle slaughter in the area and had engaged in several welfare activities to protect cattle.¹²¹

Basil Rajapaksa is a witness for how ACJU supported the defence forces. (M.F.M Baseer), President of All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) Mufti M.I.M. Rizwe told the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on the Easter Sunday attacks said that former Minister Basil Rajapaksa is a witness for how the ACJU had supported the defence forces in the past.¹²²

"Riyaj Bathiudeen was released due to insufficient evidence" - Police spokesperson Former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen's brother, Riyaj Bathiudeen, was released due to insufficient evidence against him on the Easter Sunday Bombings, said Police Spokesman SSP Jaliya Senaratne.¹²³

Festival at Guruthur Malai Ayappan Temple (K. Kumanan) Devotees observed a festival at the Gurunthur Ayappan Temple in Mullaitivu, which is marked as an archaeology site and is facing a challenge from Buddhistisation. Earlier in 2018, many Buddhist monks attempted to build a Buddhist temple on the location by removing the temple. The attempt failed due to the opposition of the area residents.¹²⁴

Hindu priest killed in Punguditivu (T. Sobithan) A 33 year old Hindu priest has been killed in Pungudutivu area, police say. His body was found today near the temple pond in the area early this morning. The victim was reportedly serving as a priest in the temple and his aide was arrested by the police on suspicion. He was beaten to death by a group of men, sources further revealed. Sources say the priest was raising his voice against cattle slaughter in the area and had engaged in several welfare activities to protect cattle.¹²⁵

Cardinal questions release of Easter attacks suspects (M. Manochithra) Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith has criticised the release of suspects arrested in connection with the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, casting doubt on the Sri Lankan Government's investigation into the attacks. He was speaking after Riyaj Bathiudeen, who was arrested in connection with the Easter Sunday bombing and detained for 168 days, was released due to lack of evidence. He said that security chiefs had said a few months ago that there was evidence against several individuals. "It is sad and unfortunate that those who are alleged to have been involved in the attacks are released," the cardinal said.¹²⁶

"No political deal with Bathiudeen" – President. (M. Manochithra) President Gotabaya Rajapaksa stated yesterday (4th) that the government has not entered into any political deal with MP Rishad Bathiudeen. The president further stated that he will not forsake the trust of

¹²¹ *Thinakaran*, October 03, frontpage.

¹²² *Virakesari*, October 03, frontpage.

¹²³ *Virakesari*, October 03, p.2.

¹²⁴ *Virakesari*, October 03, p.13.

¹²⁵ *Virakesari*, October 04, frontpage.

¹²⁶ *Virakesari*, October 04, frontpage.

the people. He also stated that national security is the first and foremost responsibility of his government.¹²⁷

“Ban on cattle slaughter should be imposed” – Sobitha Thera (S. Thenmoli) Ven. Dr. Omalpe Sobitha Thera stated that the ban on cattle slaughter should immediately be imposed. He added that all religions say that killing animals for eating is a sin.¹²⁸

Four arrested for selling a Buddha statue made of a Blue Sapphire Four suspects have been arrested when they attempted to sell a Buddha statue made of blue sapphire for Rs. 6 billion in Moneragala, police said. According to information received by the officers of the Moneragala Crime Investigation Division, the suspects were preparing to sell the 2-inch Buddha statue in the Kumbukkana area.¹²⁹

Hindu Aranery Schools closed Director of Department of Hindu Religious and Cultural Affairs A. Umamaheswaran stated that Hindu Aranery Schools have been closed in some districts due to the spread of COVID-19.¹³⁰

Minister Chamal Rajapaksa says Rishad’s brother will be arrested again if there is fresh evidence (R. Yasi) The release of former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen’s brother Riyaj, who was arrested in connection with the Easter Sunday carnage, did not mean that he had been cleared of all charges, Irrigation and State Minister of Internal Security, Home Affairs and Disaster Management Chamal Rajapaksa told parliament.¹³¹

Devotees place statues of Ganesh and Buddha where a Hindu kovil was demolished Devotees place statues of Ganesh and Buddha on private land where a Hindu kovil was allegedly demolished. The Kovil of Lord Ganesha was demolished by an individual, claiming that the land belongs to him.¹³²

"No religious or ethnic discrimination"- Wickramanayaka State Minister of National Heritage, Performing Arts and Rural Arts Promotion Vidura Wickramanayaka responded to a query raised by TNA MP Charles Nirmalanathan in parliament, stating that the government does not discriminate against any religion or ethnic group across the country including in the North and East. Nirmalanathan pointed out that ethnic groups and religions are discriminated in the name of archaeology.¹³³

TID investigates over “Save the Pearls” – CID informs court (F.M.F. Baseer) The Criminal Investigations Department (CID) has informed court that investigations had been underway by the Terrorism Investigations Department (TID) over “Save the Pearls” which is headed by Attorney-at-Law Hejaaz Hizbullah, who has been under police custody over the Easter Sunday bombings. Hafeel Faris informed court that the CID attempted to mislead the cardinal and the

¹²⁷ *Virakesari*, October 05, frontpage.

¹²⁸ *Virakesari*, October 05, p.2.

¹²⁹ *Thinakaran*, October 06, p. 3.

¹³⁰ *Thinakaran*, October 06, p. 3.

¹³¹ *Virakesari*, October 07, p. 2.

¹³² *Virakesari*, October 07, p. 13.

¹³³ *Thinakaran*, October 08, p. 3.

general public by labelling the charity organization in Qatar which had funded the Save the Pearls as an illegal organization.¹³⁴

Bathiudeen is the centre of controversy (Karvannan) While many have been testifying on the Easter Sunday attacks and things have been revealed, brother of former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen, Riyaj Bathiudeen who had been in custody for the last five months, was released. The government said that he was released as there were no sufficient evidence. Rishad Bathiudeen claimed that his brother was released as he was innocent. On the other hand, there are suspicions among the public over the matter. At such a juncture, Archbishop Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith has expressed concerns over the release.¹³⁵

Case of Vedukkunari Hill Kovil: bail for administrative officers The president and secretary of the Vedukkunari Hill Kovil in Vavuniya were allowed to leave the court on bail when the case filed against the kovil administration by the Nedunkeni police was taken up for hearing. The police requested the judge to arrest them as they had violated the rules on archaeology.¹³⁶

“Hizbulla provided security for Zahran”- Jayasundara Testifying before the PCoI on the Easter Sunday bombings, former IGP Pujith Jayasundara stated that former Governor of the Eastern Province M.L.A.M. Hizbulla had provided security for Leader of the National Thowheed Jama'ath (NTJ) Moulavi Mohamed Cassim Mohamed Zahran.¹³⁷

Muslim cemetery to be safeguarded Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has directed authorities to remove the fences of the Sainthamaruthu Muslim cemetery and build it with bricks.¹³⁸

Department of Wildlife also interrupts the devotees of Vedukkunari Temple. Officers of the Department of Wildlife had also prevented devotees who were on their way for the annual feast of the Vedukkunari Aathilingeswaran Kovil, in Vavuniya. Meanwhile, the Nedunkeni police and the Department of Archaeology had already taken measures to prevent them. The devotees were sent back.¹³⁹

“Sirisena was aware of the Easter attacks when he went abroad” – Fernando testifies. Former Secretary of Defence Hemasiri Fernando testified before the PCoI on the Easter Sunday bombings, saying that former President Maithripala Sirisena was aware of the Easter attacks before he went abroad.¹⁴⁰

Peiris discusses with archbishop on education restructuring Minister of Education Prof. G.L. Peiris held a discussion with Archbishop of Colombo Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith on education restructuring.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ *Virakesari*, October 09, p. 7.

¹³⁵ *Virakesari*, October 11, p. 6.

¹³⁶ *Virakesari*, October 11, p. 6.

¹³⁷ *Thinakaran*, October 13, frontpage.

¹³⁸ *Thinakaran*, October 13, p. 10.

¹³⁹ *Thinakaran*, October 13, p. 12..

¹⁴⁰ *Thinakaran*, October 14, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ *Thinakaran*, October 15, frontpage.

90 persons including 74 Buddhist clergy quarantined Ninety individuals including 74 Buddhist clergy of the Piliyandala Silumina temple have been quarantined following a devotee of the temple testing positive for COVID-19.¹⁴²

20A: Buddhist clergy urge President to rethink Three leading monks in Sri Lanka have warned that the proposed 20th Amendment to the Constitution leads to the creation of a president who would be able to control the executive in an arbitrary manner and bring the judiciary and legislature under his control. Ven. Bengamuwe Nalaka Thera, Ven. Muruttettuwe Ananda Thera and Ven. Elle Gunawansa Thera, in a letter to the president, noted the 20th Amendment would lead to the formation of a weak cabinet.¹⁴³

“Many secrets behind the Easter attacks” – Jayasundara Former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Pujith Jayasundara stated that there had been many secrets behind the Easter Sunday attacks. He added that he would reveal them before the presidential task force on the Easter Sunday attacks.¹⁴⁴

"Compensation should be provided to the Easter Sunday victims at Zion church" – Viyalendran State Minister of Backward Rural Areas Development and Promotion of Domestic Animal Husbandry & Minor Economic Crop Cultivation S. Viyalanderan stated that compensation should be provided to those who had been affected by the bombings at Zion Church.¹⁴⁵

A woman arrested for insulting Cardinal Ranjith Police in Sri Lanka have arrested a 43-year-old woman on charges of spreading hate between Buddhists and Catholics after she posted a video making various allegations against Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith of Colombo. The video released on a social media network makes allegations against Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Ranjith and makes a hateful statement fomenting unrest between Buddhists and Catholics.¹⁴⁶

“Govt should not build Buddhist temples in the North and East with the fund provided by India” – Wigneswaran Tamil People’s National Alliance (TPNA) MP C.V. Wigneswaran has written a letter to Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi requesting him to secure the assurance of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa that the fund of USD 15 million granted recently for the promotion of Buddhism would not be used in the North and East.¹⁴⁷

Land to be allocated of a cemetery for non-RC The Chavakachcheri Urban Council has decided to allocate land for a cemetery for the Christian community other than Roman Catholics in the area. There has not been a cemetery for the non-Christians in the area.¹⁴⁸

“Government did not listen to what the religious leaders pointed out” – Attanayake (R. Hashan) Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MP Tissa Attanayake stated that the government had not

¹⁴² *Thinakaran*, October 16, p. 3.

¹⁴³ *Thinakaran*, October 17, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Thinakaran*, October 19, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Thinakaran*, October 19, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ *Thinakaran*, October 20, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Thinakaran*, October 20, p. 11.

¹⁴⁸ *Thinakaran*, October 21, p. 11.

listened to what the religious leaders and the general public pointed out in terms of the 20th Amendment to the Constitution.¹⁴⁹

“Government is irresponsible in terms of Islamic extremism” – Gnanasara Thera (R. Hashan) General Secretary of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera alleged that the current government follows the same mistake the previous government made in terms of Islamic extremism. He called on the government to pay more attention on it.¹⁵⁰

Pictures: Navaratri at Temple Trees Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa celebrated the Navratri Festival at Temple Trees on Wednesday.¹⁵¹

Renovation of Deegawapiya Buddhist Temple commences The renovation of Deegawapiya Stupa, an ancient Buddhist sacred shrine, has commenced. Earlier, Defence Secretary Maj. Gen. (Retd) Kamal Gunaratne said the Deegawapiya Trust Fund would be established to expedite renovation of Deegawapiya Stupa, an ancient Buddhist sacred shrine and an archaeological site in the Ampara District.¹⁵²

The very own goat has hit on the chest (Sathriyan) The current government, which was brought by the Sinhala Buddhists to power, had to seek help from the minority community to strengthen their powers. They earlier stated that they would not accept Rishad Bathiudeen if he was willing to join the government. But they had to seek help from his party MPs to pass 20A. The passing of 20A is also a slam to the Buddhist clergy and Sinhala nationalists who had objected to the amendment. Their concern was that the executive powers might be misused by the presidents who come after Gotabaya Rajapaksa.¹⁵³

The unity of the Muslims (Sahabdeen) It is the Muslim leaders who have to unite, irrespective of either ruling party or opposition party, in order to get the problems faced by the Muslim community resolved. In this situation, Muslim leaders show their willingness to join the ruling party. The support extended by Muslim MPs for 20A is the first step towards joining the government. But, at this juncture, the Muslim MPs should unite for their community, rather than joining the government. They have been part of the government in the past, but they could not resolve a single problem faced by their community. They supported the governments in all initiatives for the posts of ministries. Due to that, their political strength has been weakened. There is a vacancy among the Muslim community where there are no powerful civil societies to control the political parties. That is why every Muslim MP keeps the politics of the community in their hands. Civil societies and intellectuals urge the political parties to align with the chauvinists and racists in the government, ignoring the politics of the community. Supporting every unjust initiative of the government is foolishness. They have supported the government to pass 20A. The government will make changes in order to satisfy the hard-line

¹⁴⁹ *Virakesari*, October 21, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Virakesari*, October 21, p. 2.

¹⁵¹ *Thinakaran*, October 22, p. 2.

¹⁵² *Thinakaran*, October 23, p. 3.

¹⁵³ *Virakesari*, October 25, p. 1.

Buddhist racists. The Muslim parties and civil societies should work to safeguard their community from the measures taken by the government.¹⁵⁴

Special prayers for divine intervention over COVID-19 A special prayer service was observed at the Bishop's House Chapel in Jaffna. The prayer was headed by Rt. Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam, Bishop of Jaffna.¹⁵⁵

Gandhi-Jinnah talks and the support for 20A (S. Sivakumaran) Founder of the All India Muslim League Ali Jinnah and Leader of the Congress Mahathma Gandhi had discussed reducing Hindu-Muslim tensions prior to independence. Gandhi insisted on being united and focusing on getting independent from colonisation. But Hindu chauvinists claimed that non-Muslims were not Indians. Gandhi promised to offer premiership to Jinnah, but Jinnah told Gandhi that though Gandhi was a person of justice, the concern was who would come after him and keep the same policy. Finally, Lahore declared Pakistan and India got divided. Why is this compared with Sri Lanka? J.R. Jayawardena who brought the executive presidency died before he realised who would come after him and use it. Mahinda Rajapaksa came, and took important steps such as bringing the 18th Amendment. 215 MPs voted in favour of 19A, including the members of the Rajapaksa camp. Now, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is to bring 20A to restore executive powers. Here, Mahinda Rajapaksa, who had good experience of bring the 18A, is silent. He cannot advise his brother because he knows that GR gets advice from Buddhist clergy and Viyathmaga. GR acts in favour of Buddhist philosophy and therefore, the middle class believe that 20A would not affect them. The fear which Jinnah expressed to Gandhi is who would come thereafter, which is now visible even among the Rajapaksas. GR will take steps to be in power for the second time and on the other hand, MR will try to bring his son NR as the president and Basil Rajapaksa also may try. Rajapaksas will take steps to safeguard the power which is in their hands. GR knows that though he has been elected by Sinhala Buddhists, they would not say 'yes' to all his steps.¹⁵⁶

Renovation of Sri Muthumari Amman temple in Anuradhapura halted Chairperson of the Sri Muthumari Amman Temple in Anuradhapura says temple renovations have been halted. He added that various steps had been taken to complete the work. He called on Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to support them to complete the renovation.¹⁵⁷

"Bodies of Muslims should be allowed to be buried" – Rahuman Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MP Mujibur Rahuman told parliament that the government should allow the Muslim janazas who die due to COVID-19 to be buried, according to Islamic practices.¹⁵⁸

Three arrested while worshipping at Hindu temple Three devotees were arrested by the Puliyankulam Police at a Hindu temple during worship. They were released after three hours. Kovil administration told reporters that they had observed health guidelines.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ *Virakesari*, October 25, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ *Virakesari*, October 25, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Virakesari*, October 25, p. 8.

¹⁵⁷ *Thinakaran*, October 26, p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ *Thinakaran*, October 26, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ *Thinakaran*, October 26, p. 10.

"We evicted Zahran from NTJ as he was of the view of ISIS" – Tawfiq (M.F.M Baseer) Testifying before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry on the Easter Sunday attacks, Former President of the National Thowheed Jama'ath (NTJ) Mohamed Yusuf Mohamed Tawfiq stated that Moulavi suicide bomber Zahran Hashim was evicted from the NTJ as he supported the view of the Islamic State terrorists (ISIS).¹⁶⁰

ACJU General Secretary passed away (M.R.M. Waseem) General Secretary of the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) Ash Shaikh M.M.A. Mubarak passed away. Mubarak reportedly passed away at the age of 71. He was receiving treatment at a private hospital in Colombo at the time of his demise.¹⁶¹

"I will serve regardless of ethnicity and religion" – Ananda New Chairperson of the Navthanveli Divisional Secretariat Amaradasa Ananda stated that he would serve regardless of ethnicity and religion.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ *Virakesari*, October 26, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ *Virakesari*, October 28, p. 3.

¹⁶² *Thinakaran*, October 31, p. 15.