

# Using youth as guinea pigs



University students tear gassed by police

There has been considerable criticism of the present education system. The deterioration in the education system is symbolised by (1) Private tuition, which has reached major proportions (2) Expensive presents given to teachers on various occasions by students (3) The 'Donations' given for admission of children to a school. (4) The frequent closure of Universities due to undergraduate indiscipline ending in violence (5) Ragging of new recruits, by the older students.

With the passage of the Sinhala only Act, there was considerable lowering of standards in the whole country, which followed the abandoning the English Language. Youths were totally deprived the expansion of knowledge which English can give.

Going further the reading habit among students was completely lost. Apart from the older generation, very few among the young know about

the events in this country, such as those written by local writers, such as Alles and Thalagodapitiya. The

Bandaranaike Assassination Case by Alles gives an insight into the abuse, misuse and staining of the robe - the venerated symbol of Ahimsa. It also gives the track record of some persons who in later years received encomiums as well as

national honours. Thalagodapitiya's writings include cases to show how the Ceylon Police, a pride at that time, solved murders and mysteries.

Shri Jawaharalal Nehru, Prime Minister of India visited Ceylon from October 13 to 16, 1962. The Department of Broadcasting and Information published a 40 page booklet containing addresses given by him. This was sold at Rs 10/-, a princely sum at that time. I quote a few lines from this publication:

"... I have seen the difficulties that arise in our own country as a result of people trying to apply techniques of other countries. For example, I have found that people, who have gone abroad, take quite a lot of time to adjust themselves to conditions in India, when they come back... So after much experience, we have come to the conclusion that while learning everything from outside as far

as we can, we have to think of applying that knowledge to existing conditions in India in the way we consider best. We have to draw up our economics having learnt from others, keeping in view the objective of serving the common man in India, the generally poverty stricken people, rather than a select few".

"... If you want to copy something from our own problems during the last 17 years of independence, well, I hope you will learn from us and adapt it to your own use. Do not blindly copy from any country".

The pre-Independence system of education, the subjects etc prepared the student well to be useful citizens. All that is necessary is to adopt that system, subject to the change of languages, without experimenting and using the younger generation as guinea pigs.

S. Thambirajah,  
Colombo 03.

## A warning to electricity consumers

The Ceylon Electricity Board has introduced a new Tariff Structure for domestic consumers from April 2008 onwards.

According to this scheme, when monthly consumption exceeds a certain level, then the entire consumption from the first unit to the last unit will be charged at the higher rate applicable. For example the charges for 180 units per month @ Rs. 11.00 per unit, plus 30% fuel charge plus, Rs. 90.00 fixed charge will be Rs. 2664.00. But the charges for 181 units in that month @ Rs. 15.00 per unit plus 30% fuel charge plus Rs. 90.00 fixed charge will be Rs. 3619.00. Almost another Rs. 1000.00 for the additional one unit.

Even an error by the meter reader could result in you being slapped with these enhanced charges. If a consumer's monthly consumption is 175 units, and the meter reader under reads by 10 units in



Such levels at 30 units, 60 units, 90 units, 120 units, 180 units, 240 units, 360 units, and 600 units will be operational and the consumers must be very careful. Consumers whose monthly consumption is around 120 units must control their electricity usage and ensure

that they do not exceed 120 units. Similar care should be taken by those using around 180 units 240 units 360 units, etc as well.

We Sri Lankans cannot do anything in a simple and straightforward manner. Rice, Bread, Sugar, all food items, gas, fuel and almost every other item have a uniform price for all categories of people in this country. Why the CEB alone should have so many levels among its consumers is something which I simply cannot understand.

The above is just an example.

T. Kugamoorthy  
Colombo 6

## 'Uncle' and 'oya' mania

Randula M. Abeywardene has written on a subject most relevant to today's youth and society in general. This form of address has spread through society except to some private institutions. On several occasions, I expressed my disapproval of it and had to write to two bank managers asking them to educate their staff on how to address their customers.

To me, 'oya' is even more offensive and repulsive than 'uncle'. Today it seems to be more widely used than uncle and aunt. Watch any teledrama and you will find parents addressing their own and other children as 'oya' and vice versa. In an advertisement a child who prepares some sandwiches and takes his share says, "Ammi, meka oyata".

Most TV presenters also address the viewers as 'oya', 'oyala' or 'ogollo'. Some teachers address their pupils as 'tamuse', a term used only among equals.

In English any stranger is a Sir or a

Madam. In Sinhala they are invariably uncles, aunts, amma or 'oya' and though old ladies are ammas old gentlemen are not thaththas for obvious reasons.

We can and should protest against this form of address but the problem arises when you are at the mercy of these 'nephews' and 'nieces', say, at a government hospital where any disapproval of the form of address can land you in a lot of trouble.

Unfortunately, it is only the people of our vintage who think of such niceties, but for most young parents and youth, anything is acceptable because they have not been educated and trained in proper manners by their parents and teachers.

What is largely accepted by society becomes the norm. Protests by a few like BMA and myself will have no impact because the majority are prepared to tolerate them. Isn't TV largely responsible for this decadence?

S. Abeywickrama,  
Nugegoda.

## Violence on the field, an outrage



Harbhajan Singh

Harbhajan's slapping of Sreesanth is nothing but a form of violence. Violence by anyone, is an unlawful act.

In some developed countries even if a person uses violence against his or her own child, he or she would be punished and would even be sent to jail by the state, whether the child complains or not. If an owner of an animal uses violence against it, he or she would also be punished. Should sports persons be allowed to go Scot free if he or she uses violence, though he or she might apologise to the

person on whom he had used violence later in private life. The violence by Harbhajan Singh is not only an unlawful act but is also an insult to the millions of spectators who in one way or other, pay the players. The sports bodies and governments should take appropriate action to arrest such conduct by the players. If not, there may come a time when players might even murder other players on the playing field. No man however great he may be in the game is indispensable. That point has to be driven into the players by taking action against offending players.

There will be hundreds of players in any country waiting to replace them.

If violence is condoned, especially in cricket, which is glorified as a gentleman's game, what Bernard Shaw said about cricket - that it's a case of eleven fools running about in a field in the hot sun, with eleven thousand fools sitting in the hot sun and watching it - would be absolutely correct.

Arul

The global food crisis has upstaged global warming to take centre stage as the most discussed topic. According to media reports, the Head of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, Jacques Diouf, has warned international leaders of the impending catastrophe.

Staples such as rice and corn, the prices of which have risen dramatically, have been the focal point of discussion at different fora all over the world. Civil unrest linked to inflationary prices of food has begun to raise its head in many countries which included a few in Asia, like the Philippines and Indonesia. Those countries which had produced more than their own requirements of rice and corn have politely turned down requests by the poorer countries to replenish

## Grow more food!



Pakistani men struggle to get a piece of bread during a food distribution outside the Data Durbar mosque in Lahore, Pakistan, on Sunday, May 4, 2008.

their dwindling stocks. This has placed the latter in a predicament from which it is hard to extricate

themselves. We in Sri Lanka are feeling the pinch of astronomical price

hikes of almost all commodities, mainly rice and flour. Farmers are apparently evincing a lackadaisical attitude to paddy cultivation because of the low returns they finally receive. It is time the powers that be, took urgent and drastic measures to galvanize the farming community into launching a Green Revolution. The writer believes that it is incumbent upon the media to sound the alarm to arouse the nation from its apparent somnolence. Let the people start from home gardens. Our Ministry of Agriculture has obviously a gargantuan task before it. Large scale farming of rice, manioc, sweet potatoes, gram, green gram etc must be started immediately.

Bandula M. Abeywardene,  
Talangama South.

## Armour Street traffic

The City Traffic Police should focus its attention without delay on the Nugegoda, Karagampitiya, and Dehiwela 176 bus stop at Armour Street junction, Sri Sumanathissa Mawatha.

The Colombo Municipality had erected the 176 bus stop opposite premises No 49, but the 176 buses stop at the junction opposite premises No 19, which blocks

the right of way for other vehicles coming from Jethavanaramaya road towards Panchikawatta and other 176 buses coming from Kotahena. When one or two 176 buses stop at the junction, it results in a traffic block.

When the 176 buses stop opposite premises No 19 and when the passengers start getting into the bus, the driver slowly moves the

bus when the bus behind it, toots the horn. This is a danger to the passenger. The law enforcing officials appear to turn a blind eye to this.

The police should be deployed by 6.00 a.m daily at the colour lights opposite the Armour Street Police Guard Room, as the drivers of vehicles do not pay any attention to the red light signal, and

when people cross the road. The drivers of these vehicles do not respect the red light and stop. I have noticed this on many occasions. The police should act quickly before innocent lives are lost due to irresponsible drivers.

M. M. M. Salman,  
Armour Street.

## Chikungunya Facts

Chikungunya is a viral disease spread mainly by the Aedes mosquitoes. Others may be Culex and Mansonia species.

Aedes mosquitoes are household container breeders

- \* It breeds in clean water
- \* In all stored water for drinking, washing and bathing
- \* Rainwater collected in unused materials like coconut shells, mud pots, plastic cups, tyres etc.
- \* Gutters & drains

Symptoms

- \* Fever Which Can Reach 39°C, (102.2 °F)
- \* Petechial or Maculopapular Rash Usually Involving the Limbs and Torso
- \* Arthralgia or Arthritis Affecting Multiple Joints Which Can Be Debilitating.
- \* Headache, Conjunctival Injection and Slight Photophobia.

Prevention

- \* Elimination of stagnant water at home, schools and work places to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes.
- \* Using insect repellents over the exposed parts of the body.
- \* Using mosquito screens or nets in non - Air-conditioned rooms.
- \* Wearing long sleeved clothes like long trousers of a light shade for protection against mosquitoes.
- \* Properly covering all water tanks so that mosquitoes cannot get in
- \* Getting rid of any container capable of retaining water in the outdoor surroundings (used tyres, food cans, garbage, saucers under flower pots, etc)
- \* Renew water in flower vases at least once a week

For Help

- \* Contact the Public Health Department, Colombo Municipal Council
- \* Tele. 2696594; 2676161