

'Medical Council takes UGC for a ride': A response

This has reference to Dr. Janaka Wickramasinghe's letter entitled Medical Council Takes the UGC for a ride in The Island of 6th July 2009.

The Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC) had meetings with the Chairman University Grants Commission (UGC), UGC members, Members of the Standing Committee on Medical and Dental Courses, administrative staff of the UGC, the UGC legal advisor and SLMC Lawyers. Everyone had a copy of the full Court Order referred to in Dr. Wickramasinghe's letter before them during these discussions. Informed decisions were taken, with mutual respect, understanding and responsibility on both sides.

Neither the Chairman UGC nor other members of the UGC are so naive as to be taken for a ride by anyone, least of all, the SLMC.

Dr. Wickramasinghe has failed to reveal the source of his

reliable information from which he came to conclude about the SLMC's stinking dishonesty.

His clumsy effort to take the public and other ERFM students for a ride is regrettable.

Based on decisions taken regarding the implementation of the Court Order, from the 7th July 2009 onwards, a notice was mailed to all candidates preparing for the ERFM examination. This notice is also on the SLMC website www.slmc.lk.

Candidates requiring clarification should phone the Registrar/SLMC on 5356769.

Prof. Lalitha Mendis
President
Sri Lanka Medical Association

Dayan recalled

The decision of the Foreign Ministry to recall Ambassador Dayan Jayatilaka has come as a surprise for we were under the impression that his contract had been extended till 31st May 2010. The news item which quoted a Foreign Ministry source, though not explicitly giving a reason has made reference to a statement made by the irrepressible Ambassador when he gave vent to his feelings over the cruel bombing of Gaza. The Gaza bombings were an overkill. Most unfortunately the Ambassador should not have said so as he as Ambassador cannot express his private views on matters such as that. No doubt it was a faux pas for we were quite dependent on Israeli support in our effort to vanquish the LTTE. The Israelis were understandably angry and they sent here their Ambassador in Delhi to lodge a strong protest. An apology would have been made to the Israelis and, I presumed, the matter sorted out with the help of the US. But instead we appear to have decided to punish the Ambassador!

It does seem that the Foreign Minister himself wanted Dayan removed. I presume that it may have been that Dayan had upstaged the Minister and this was not to be brooked. He may have even fallen foul of the Foreign Secretary. Despite his faults, there is no denying the fact that Dayan kept our flag flying at the worst of times - even his detractors would have to admit this. Yes, he may have been abrasive but considering the level of bullying by LTTE-influenced representatives of western countries, Dayan has stood up to them and exposed them in a fitting manner. Dayan had to not only take on these parties who had been virtu-

ally hired by the LTTE lobbyists but also take on prejudiced, hostile women such as Navi Pillai, who wanted Sri Lanka condemned even though the Council had expressed itself differently on the matter.

Ambassador J had his work



Dayan

done for him and he has, despite his style, done our country proud. His recall is not acceptable. At the end of two years an officer becomes truly effective, for he or she gets a measure of the job, makes his contacts and is in a position to really deliver the goods.

This is why all countries keep their representative for a minimum of three years, some are kept on for a fourth year. So to bring back Dayan after two years is not in the interest of the country.

Dayan J is not the man he was two years ago. He has come a long way since he took it upon himself (in the face of silence from Colombo) to blast British Foreign Secretary David Miliband

for his puerile and callous statement on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence.

Dayan has mellowed much since being called to order after his statement on Israel, (that was indeed ironical for Dayan J was named after Moshe Dayan, the famous Israeli General!)

Ambassador Jayatilaka has, indeed, mellowed and learnt on the job. I most sincerely hope that the Foreign Minister does not intend to replace him with a relative or a political crony, for our overseas missions are full of such untrained clueless jokers representing the country at various levels this is without doubt a crime against the people of this country.

Most unfortunately, our watchdogs in Parliament have been engaged in navel-gazing and letting the Foreign Minister and his cronies get away with what amounts to crime.

As for Dayan, he would be able to list his achievements on this country's behalf, but I would challenge any other political appointee to make public a report on his or her performance. Some of our diplomats seem to think that looking after Sri Lankan domestic workers is their prime responsibility! What more could we expect of these clueless diplomats?

K. Godage
Former Ambassador

Sardiel? No!

Haris de Silva's account of Sardiel's hanging [Sat Mag 18/7] has been illustrated with a picture of a wild looking man [rather like the Maname Veddah King] who is NOT Sardiel but his multi-ethnic sidekick Mammalay Marikkar. The photo of Sardiel in jail shows him as a rather effeminate chap, with his arm in a sling, seated flanked by a pill-box hat but barefooted constable.

Bandu de Silva's yarn of the bitten ear is a still persistent rural myth - far older than 1960 [as Haris conjectures]. I clearly remember an old Ammay relating this yarn in 1938.

TD

Doing it the American way

Bugs Baer is credited with many witticisms, which are oft repeated. Once he quipped that Not all women can wear slacks - but they do. Reading through The Island of 14th July, I was reminded of another of his wisecracks. He declared, We are returning to the independent American way of reaching a decision by changing the subject.

I recalled this jest when I read the front page item of The Island that the Health Minister had called for the scrapping of the Z score system as applied for the GCE A Level exam.

The media is replete with disconcerting though remediable shortcomings of the Health Department like drug shortages in government hospitals, strikes by doctors for diverse reasons, severance of power supply to hospitals due to failure to pay bills on time, no water for the Ratnapura Hospital due to broken down pumps threats from Dengue, Leptospirosis and more... Just as we wonder how the Health Department can meet the challenges, we see the Health Minister expending his energy on the Z score, which is a matter in the purview of the Education Ministry. What next?

Joe Kerr,
Gampaha.

Man landed on the moon: No doubt!



In this July 20, 1969 file photo, Astronaut Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. poses for a photograph beside the U.S. flag on the moon during the Apollo 11 mission. (AP)

I read with interest an article on the above subject that appeared in The Island of 16th July listing out ten reasons why the author of the article believed that man never landed on the moon.

That reminded me of an experience the famous British Philosopher Bertrand Russell had in London about half a century ago. Russell gave a talk on the Structure of the Solar System. He described that the sun, planets and their moons were all spherical in shape and all the planets orbit around the sun.

Then an elderly lady got up and said, Very clever young man, very clever! Everything you say is rubbish! The earth is flat and it rests on the back of a giant turtle.

After saying that she walked away. Russell then told the audience I didn't want to embarrass the lady by asking her: And where does that turtle stand on?

I am one of the scientists who analyzed the moon soil brought down to earth by Neil Armstrong four decades ago.

At that time I was at the Chemical Laboratories of the Cambridge University in England.

I used a very powerful nuclear technique known as the Mossbauer Effect Spectroscopy and it was very clear that that soil had come from a place where there is no free oxygen. It contained metallic iron which could not be found where free oxygen was present. This made it very clear that that soil had come from outside the earth.

At that time Television was not available in Sri Lanka. But in Cambridge we were watching every detail of the spacecraft landing on moon on TV at the Graduate Centre in Cambridge.

Ten reasons were given to prove that man never landed on moon.

Let me comment on just one of them. The author of the article had assumed that the NASA scientists are idiots who would send their national flag to an airless place for it to simply hang perpetually without flying.

He didn't believe that those scientists would have some mechanism to keep it flying on the moon.

Let me also add an interesting anecdote from that time. At the time Armstrong landed on moon the well known politician, Dr. Wickramabahu Karunaratne was with us in Cambridge living in Darwin's house now known as Darwin College.

He translated the name Armstrong to Sinhala as Wickramabahu. After Armstrong landed on the moon Bahu (pet name of Wickramabahu) used to raise his hand and say Wickramabahu handata bahee

Dr. Granville Dharmawardena, Melbourne, Australia

Bay leaves not Rampe

It is very good of Lionel de Silva (The Island 17-07-09) to have pointed out the silly things our bureaucrats do in the name of eradicating the mosquito menace. It looks like they will eradicate rampe long before the mosquitoes.

However, I want to point out a mistake. Rampe is known to many nationalities in the world, especially in the Asian region. It is now most commonly known as pandan leaves in the culinary world due to Asian influences.

According to Wikipedia only the Sinhalese and Hindi use the word rampe. In English it is more pandan than rampe.

Bay leaves (*launus nobilis*) though used in enhancing flavour in cooking, are totally different from rampe. They look like our more common curry leaves (*karapinchu*) but should



Bay leaves

not be mistaken for them. Bay leaves are slightly bigger than karapinchu and thicker in texture.

Austin Kumarasinghe,
Melbourne

One friend is much and two are many!

I was nursing my sick wife when somebody rang the doorbell. It was a Tamil girl promoting the sale of the Oxford Thesaurus, a dictionary of synonyms. The girl had a bagful of them and one in her hand for display. My first impulse was to politely turn her away when she noticed that I was greedily looking at her book. Do you know what it is? She asked. I said yes and how some years ago somebody had borrowed mine and never returned it.

It's less than a thousand rupees, she said placing the beautiful thesaurus in my hand. Do you wish to buy it? Yes, but, and I looked at my sick wife, Elaine, who was in the hall with her feet in a basin of warm water.

Is she sick? Yes, she has a varicose ulcer that is not healing.

Have you consulted a doctor? Many doctors, and I am doing my best to follow instructions with the

medication. This Tamil girl spoke English so well that I had to ask her how she had managed.

She said: I am an English Honours Graduate of an Indian university and I was teaching English in Jaffna, my hometown. When the LTTE started to conscript Tamil girls and boys my parents sent me to Colombo. I escaped conscription and now my desire is to go to Australia and, if lucky, teach English.

Then my wife, Elaine, joined in the conversation. She said how she and I had been teachers of English for a long time and that she had an FTCL in speech and drama. Elaine asked our Tamil friend for her name and it was spelt Vithiya. The girl was happy to have met us and she said it was the first time she had the pleasure of being received in a Sinhalese home. How do you know we are Sinhalese?, I asked. I saw your

name on the door, said she.

Yes, only the name is Sinhalese but we are essentially human beings, said my wife, adding: When God made man and woman. He did not create Tamils or Sinhalese. God made humans and the devil made races. See the ethnic conflict that is going on and on. It was a long conversation and at the end Vithiya, with a tear in her beautiful eyes, gave us the beautiful book as a gift, and said: Please accept it with my compliments.

She became our friend instantly and I remembered what Confucius, the sage once said: One friend is much and two are many.

Jayatissa Perera,
Bambalapitiya.

Citizen Perera's prayer

Give us this day our daily bread (read alleviate poverty). Lead us not into temptation through Carrot-dangling politicians at Election time. Lead us not into temptation through high interest rate-of-fering finance companies with dubious credentials.

Lead us not into white vans number plates and destinations unknown.

Deliver us from politicians, bureaucrats, the underworld and drug barons.

Deliver us from language barriers which, in effect, are barriers to inter-communal harmony and are definite impediments to fostering same.

Deliver us from a garbage-strewn environment, as we get sufficient quantities of that component from the folk in the abode by the Diyawanna.

Forgive our trespasses into state institutions and police stations to obtain redresses for our grievances, as we forgive those that trespass against us by showing ARs and FRs in our faces and addressing us in a language that some of us are not conversant with. (Whilst on the subject, why not extend that kind old soul H.E. The President's directive to give Cricket commentaries in all three languages, to cover work in state institutions, Police stations etcetera, as well?)

Answer all our above prayers and to hell with the 13th Amendment the much flaunted panacea for all ills; the excuse for NATO (no action, talk only); (and apart from a handful of students of the subject conversant with all its relevant clauses and thus, competent to talk in favour or against), the subterfuge of scheming secessionists self-elevated holier-than-thou homily deliverers and parroting politicians!

Lakshman
Dissanayake