

A unique show of solidarity in Sri Lanka



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ALL high-rise buildings dot the sea front of Galle Face. Most are international hotel chains, and one is a swanky upmarket shopping mall—a nod to the fast-paced construction and development work that Galle Sea Face has witnessed in recent years.

The resentment against the Sri Lankan government's mishandling of the economy had been growing in the country since last year. Sri Lanka's two million farmers have been protesting for months against the government's decision to go "organic" and the subsequent order banning import of chemical fertilisers in April 2021.

All this coalesced into a massive street protest of a million people calling for the president and his government to resign. A curfew was clamped in the western province, social media was blocked for almost 13 hours, and then a general public emergency was declared on April 1 this year.

protest has turned into an all-night vigil near the Presidential Secretariat. Protesters have braved heavy rain and thunderstorm to stay there. Temporary tents have been set up at the protest site that is now being called "Gota-ga-Gama" (Gama is Sinhala for village).



after finishing work. Others bring their children to witness and be part of the movement. The aged and the infirm sit in wheelchairs holding placards. Protesters flank the road near the secretariat waving the Sri Lankan national flag, shouting slogans and holding placards that say "Gota Go Home," "Pissa (lunatic) go home," "Bring our money back," "Leave my future alone," "You have messed with the wrong generation."

The protest site itself is a study in civic awareness. There is no littering. Empty plastic water bottles have been strung together to read "Go Home Gota" and hung on the fence bordering the promenade. The rest have been corralled into nets to be recycled later.

through spontaneous and voluntary individual contributions. People from all walks of life, from all faiths and beliefs and from across the island, including the indigenous Vedda community, find representation here.

was always dependent on imports to sustain its economy. But indiscriminate borrowings for big infrastructure projects, which typically have low yields and long turnaround time, have tilted the already fragile foreign exchange reserves against it.

People shout slogans against Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and demand that the Rajapaksa family politicians step down, during a protest amid the country's economic crisis, at Independence Square in Colombo, Sri Lanka on April 4, 2022.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Sinhala and Tamil people have marked their biggest festival, the New Year on April 14, together.

So how did Sri Lanka descend into this economic free fall? Today, inflation is at a record high of 18.7 percent, with food inflation at over 30 percent. The Sri Lankan rupee (LKR) shows no signs of stabilising.

As an island nation, Sri Lanka

A series of missteps by the incumbent government aggravated an already precarious situation. In its desire to become the first nation in the world to go completely "organic," the government in April 2021 banned the import of all chemical fertilisers. The decision had catastrophic consequences.

The resolve of the Sri Lankan people at the protest site is almost palpable. They have rebuffed calls from the prime minister for talks and find it difficult to believe when the president says that the current situation was not his making.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Make our Eid journey safe

People from various parts of the country will soon set out for their home from their places of work to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with their families. Like every year, this will put extra pressure on public transport.

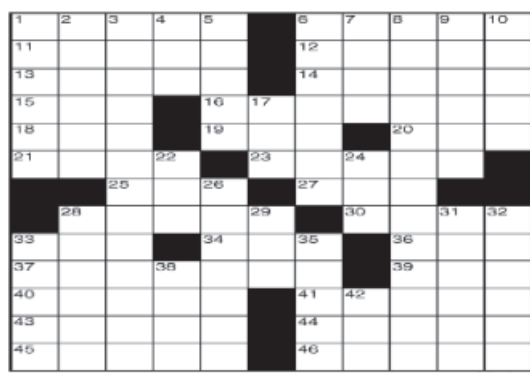
skilled drivers. Since a lot of people will take the river routes, the authorities must ensure that the launches and ferries are safe for them.

Md Rasel Sheikh
Akij Foundation School & College, Uttara

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- ACROSS
1 Ready for shipping
6 Capital of Ghana
11 Fighting star
13 Letter before iota
14 Wild party
15 Originally called
16 Swindles
18 Bank acct. addition
19 Road gunk
20 Arthur's foster brother
21 Treaty
23 Barn section
25 Torah cabinet
27 Oscar winner
Mahershala

- 28 Strain
30 Closes
33 Summer sign
34 Sister, of sorts
36 Workout unit
37 Magic setting
39 Early hour
40 Kept in reserve
41 Violinist's stuff
43 Got the lead out
44 Had a go at
45 Squid
46 Listens to
DOWN
1 Treat for Tabby
2 Wise goddess
3 Neil Diamond song
4 "Dig in!"
5 House chiller
6 Montana
neighbor
7 Porter of song
8 Neil Diamond
9 Close, as a freezer bag
10 Nervous
17 - Cruces
22 Due follower
24 Brewpub order
26 Face on a half dollar
28 Sanders in the Senate
29 Flop
31 Said no to
32 Shells out
33 Weaving machines
35 Compass point
38 Served perfectly
42 Bauxite, for one



SATURDAY'S ANSWERS



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(খ) SAQ তে প্রদত্ত তথ্যের স্বাক্ষর সকল প্রকার দলিলাদির প্রত্যায়িত কপি।

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