

Time to crack down on sexual and domestic violence in Sri Lanka



About 5 decades ago, there was a time when violence against women in the privacy of their homes was different, excusable or even deserved and that the woman was always found fault.

In the latter 70s and early 80s, there was a sudden awakening in the society with the knowledge that domestic violence exists.

The liberation of women and their acceptance in the workplace as equal partners, and in life, domestic violence came to be seen as a crime with which the society cannot condone.

The gradual but speedy skyrocketing to great heights, domestic violence has indeed become a threatening danger to the society despite the efforts of the government and relevant voluntary agencies to halt the trend. Sexual and

domestic violence will certainly have a tremendous negative effect on women and children.

Among the measures Sri Lanka has adopted to tackle these social problems are:

The Domestic Violence Act of 2005; signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the Vienna Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993; Reaffirmation of its commitment at international level to address the gender-based violence; the setting up of the Forum against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in 2005 to facilitate greater co-ordination and understanding, and sharing of information and resources and strengthening multi-sectoral responses to GBV, the membership of the forum being broad-based including local and international NGOs, UN Agencies, donor agencies, and government representation; the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1983; Adoption of the Women's Charter in 1993, setting standards to be observed in seven broad areas including right to protection from gender-based violence, and also setting up of the National Committee (NCW) in 1993; One-Stop-Crisis -Centres (OSCC) in government hospitals; Women's Desks at most police stations in the country; the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment (MoCDWE) to support establishment of a data unit and a

national GBV data base disaggregated by gender, sex, age, ethnicity, and location.

Domestic violence is, no doubt, a social and community problem which cannot be solely attacked or dealt with by the efforts of the government and the few voluntary agencies. It is up to every public-spirited person in the community to play a significant role by speaking publicly and denouncing the problem and creating an awareness of the issue in the community, to provide physical and emotional assistance for the victims to get back on their feet, and to offer cooperation and assistance to the police to make their jobs easier and more effective and expeditious.

Whipping and death penalty for the offenders found guilty have been raised by some politicians in their desperate attempts to reduce sexual domestic violence of women and children. Although their concerns are understandable as such laws and punishment are now in force in some countries, yet it has to be realized that deterrents alone cannot solve the problem.

It is necessary to take precautionary measures to warn potential perpetrators and serial or repeat offenders by establishing and maintaining a list of such offenders with their names and addresses, the nature of the offences committed, the dates, and details of punishment. It may also be necessary to establish a centralized database to share

the information so that the offenders could be identified and the police intervene before situations escalate into incidents. If there is a common register of offenders, the police can have access to the information in the register and track the offenders.

The list should be made available at every police station, and in offices of Provincial and District Councils, Post Offices and similar institutions. The list, which needs to be kept up to date, should be published in the print media periodically so that the general public living closer to the offenders can take precautions to protect their children.

Besides the list acting as "naming and shaming" the offenders, it will also be effective as a greater deterrent to repeat offenders and potential perpetrators.



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Reflection of Sri Lanka

A joint Trade, Tourism and Investment exhibition parallel to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) has been organized to be held from 13th to 17th November at the Janakala Kendraya in Battaramulla in Colombo under the title "Reflection of Sri Lanka".

This exhibition has been jointly organized by the Ministries of Economic Development, Industry and Commerce and Investment Promotion. More than 300 Sri Lankan exporters including 75 machinery exporters and 100 technology providers and 200 SMEs will showcase their products at this mega exhibition.

At a media conference held at the Centre for Media Development of the Information this morning, the Deputy Minister of Economic Development Mr. Susantha Punchinilame said that holding of Commonwealth Heads of Summit (CHOGM) in Sri Lanka will provide the opportunity for Heads of States, Business delegations and the international journalist to find the true situation about Sri Lanka at a time malicious propaganda are being carried out about the country by anti-national elements. He said that the Economic Development Ministry in collaboration with other Ministries has

planned to get the maximum benefit out of the CHOGM.

Minister of Investment Promotion Mr. Lakshman Yapa Abeywardene addressing the media conference criticized the stance of the opposition about CHOGM despite it is being an event beneficial to the people of this country. He said that when Sri Lanka was nominated as the host country the opposition claimed that Heads of States will not come to the country and even tried to prevent them coming for the Summit. Finally when almost all the Heads of States have confirmed their participation, the Minister said that they are now criticizing about the expenditure. He said that all infrastructure development being carried out is part of the ongoing development process since a long time and there is nothing new in these activities.

The Minister said that the Board of Investment is planning to get foreign investments increased to 10 million U.S.\$ within the next 4 years as a result of the CHOGM. He said that the BOI will present 56 Investment Proposals to the Heads of States and the participants of the Business Forum.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Mr. Rishard Badiuddin said that CHOGM is a

landmark event and the Reflection of Sri Lanka Exhibition will present more than 300 Sri Lankan products to the foreign visitors. He said that more than 1,000 buyers are expected to attend CHOGM and its related events and the Exhibition has been organized to focus their attention on products and other facilities and investment potentials available in Sri Lanka. He said that the CHOGM will create the background for Sri Lanka to increase its exports to 20 Million US\$ by 2020.

Details of the Exhibition arrangements that have been made by the Export Development Board and the Tourism Promotion Authority were made by the

Chairman and Chief Executive of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board Mr. Bandula Egodade and the Chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority Mr. Bashwara Gunaratne. The Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Mr. Anura Siriwardene also spoke at the Media Conference. The Secretary to the Ministry of Mass Media and Information Dr. Charita Herath and the Director General of the Government Information Department Professor Ariyaratne Atugala also attended the Media Conference. (niz)

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