

"It is another matter that the very fact that investigators now, unlike during Rajapakse rule, invade the person of powerful political figures stands as a most refreshing outcome of yahapalanaya."

The gentleman by the name of Ravi Karunanayake, Minister of Foreign Affairs, is one of the black sheep falling off from the broad ranks of the yahapalanaya movement. He must resign; if he doesn't, he must be removed. This is not because former Minister Aluthgamage says so; that was a pot calling the kettle black. It is easy to explain why.

Yahapalanaya -not the Property of any Political Group

RAVI THE RAT

Firstly, let us all realise that Yahapalanaya is not the property of any political group. It is a social movement originally led by the Late Revd Maduluwawe Sobita that took off during the later stages of the Rajapakse ten-year-old regime. Socially conscious intellectuals and others banded together to change the direction of the country on to a sustainable path defined by democratic freedoms, accountability, and the supremacy of law and order. This, they saw, as the fundamental base from which economic and social development can be predicated and the life of people made to flourish. The present government is only the chosen political instrument for that transformation. If the government fails to deliver, the movement will opt for another political instrument. Black sheep will fall by the wayside.

From the vantage point of my location in a country (Australia) defined by established systems of yahapalanaya, I have mentally aligned myself with this civil movement. Our country profoundly needed a broad social movement emerging from the civil community since the more progressive of the political class seemed locked in an intrinsic inability to extricate itself from the menacing shackles and growing darkness of the Rajapakse regime. The Mahanayakes and the GMOA, who shout now, were conspicuous by their inactivity then-at the hour of national crisis.

Ravi's Myth Building

To begin with, I didn't like Minister Ravi advertising himself with third party testimonials as "the best Minister of Finance," somewhere. What a wise move it was, made just in the nick of time, to have replaced this best Foreign Minister! Simultaneously, what an unwise move to have attached the Lotteries Board to his new portfolio of Foreign Affairs! Sans any logic, it also smelt bad. Yet, Ravi got into the saddle. He now talks of "commercialising," the orientation of the Foreign Service. As if that styling wasn't there in the first place! I am fed up with these kinds of slogans which our politicians have been feeding on. Be it "Gam Udawa," Uthuru Wasanthaya," or "Math-

ata Thithak"-these slogans have not meant anything real in the life of our people. They are meant to deceive by myth-building. I am glad President Sirisena has not come out with something like that. Or has he?

Our religious leadership, educational institutions and media have never made it their serious responsibility to help build a critical community that would see through political myth-building. They want a worshipping community. Why on earth should we worship any entity-God, King, monk, or other person? The media is still full of astrology and superstition stalks our island.

tors had paid 165 million rupees and purchased the apartment the witness said.

The witness also said that Arjun Aloysius had called her last week and insisted that she destroyed the lease agreement. She said that she had decided against it.

She also said that the current Minister of Foreign Affairs Ravi Karunanayake had called her father Nikhil last week. The witness said that she knew that the

The News Story

Let's extract the story from a news report (Colombo Telegraph 26/7/17):

"Anika Wijesuriya, this morning told the Commission to inquire into the Bond Scandal that, her super luxury apartment at the Monarch Residences was taken on lease by Arjun Aloysius who paid for it on behalf of the then finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake.

She also said that Arjun Aloysius had called her and told her to "destroy" the lease agreement pertaining to the transaction.

When deciding to give it on rent, Karunanayake's wife Mela had called the brother of Anika who had then put her in touch with Anika.

The wife of the minister had then arrived at the apartment to inspect the apartment with two bodyguards. Thereafter she had taken a call and told the witness that, "a person known to both of us will be here."

A short while after, Arjun Aloysius had arrived at the apartment. Thereafter, following discussions the witness said it was clear that Arjun was going to pay the rent for the house in which the Karunanayakes were moving into.

The entire lease amounting close to 9 million was paid for by a company named Walter and Rowe which Arjun and his father Geoff are both Directors. It is a fully owned subsidiary of the holding company of Perpetual treasuries.

Thereafter the Karunanayakes had moved into the apartment.

Accordingly, following the end of the lease period of 6 months, which commenced in February 2016, the Karunanayakes had decided to buy the apartment. Their family company of which Mela and the daughter are Direc-

information on the transaction had been found out by the investigators when officers of the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) visited her in March this year.

The witness Anika, provided her name as Muthukudarachchige Vinodini in order to protect her identity during testimony."

The ethics

To be sure, the Ravi Karunanayake allegations aren't judicially examined



Making Sense
Shyamon Jayasinghe

yet and on that score one cannot assign guilt to him with regard to any possible involvement in influencing the infamous bond deal. But the following basic facts thus far reported appears to tell us something substantial that Foreign Minister and Minister of Lotteries Mr Ravi Karunanayake, should answer before the people, Parliament, and media. A prima facie case of serious inappropriate behaviour is what appears to emerge from the following facts as reported in the press. The yahapalanaya government faces a crisis of credibility as never before, from which it must come out if it is to go forward.

Let's leave the matter of judicial determination to the Commission and the courts. I am in the area of public ethics. The incident occurred in 2016 when Ravi was Minister of Finance. The fact that Ravi's wife, Mela, did the transaction is immaterial. Any rational being will construct the following narrative: First, Mela was acting as proxy of her husband. She eyes a penthouse belonging to Ms Wijesooriya and then approaches Perpetual Capital Holdings belonging to Aloysius to pay the money. Aloysius is a principal player in the capital market and the main party in the controversial Bond deal that was being examined. It was, therefore, in the interests of Aloysius to privilege Mela with a special offer. The lease rental was paid for by Aloysius through another company owned by him. Being a luxury penthouse, the lease rental was enormous. The payment had been made partly in cash, thereby undervaluing the amount stated in the lease agreement. Subsequently, a company belonging to Mela and Ravi's daughter purchases the property for a huge sum of Rs 165 million. Furthermore, Ravi had been pressurising the owner of the property to tear up the lease having realised the CID was investigating.

Our reasonable man will perceive a clear case of conflict of interest, bribery, and undue influence. Second, he would infer that Ravi was attempting to stave off the judicial proceedings by trying to get the documents destroyed. Third, the reasonable man cannot also be blamed for believing that the subsequent purchase was also done probably with Aloysius's money. Fourth, while all this went on Ravi stuck to his influencing position as Minister of Finance after the deal. Sixth, our reasonable man would perceive that there had been an ongoing dialogue between the Minister and Aloysius while the bond case was on. By doing this, the Minister opens him-

