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SL wants UN to lift embargo on evidence

By Shamindra Ferdinando

(Island.lk) - The government expects the UN to lift an unprecedented 20-year embargo on both written and oral material in its hands pertaining to alleged war crimes committed by GoSL troops and the LTTE to help domestic investigations into complaints. Authoritative sources told The Island that those sceptical of a domestic investigation process as recommended by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) should make available whatever evidence in their possession to facilitate inquiries. A UN imposed embargo shouldn't be an obstacle to Sri Lanka's inquiry, ministerial sources said.

Responding to a query, a senior official said that those wanting to haul up Sri Lanka's political and military leaders before an international war crimes tribunal should make use of the opportunity and make available information they claim to possess. In fact, such a move could strengthen their case against the GoSL. The Report of the UNSG's Panel of Experts (PoE) on Accountability in Sri Lanka declared that written and oral material wouldn't be accessible for a 20-year period. The PoE emphasised that nearly all of its records had been categorised as strictly confidential with additional protections

regarding future use in some cases. The PoE comprised Marzuki Darusman, Steven R. Ratner and Yasmin Sooka. Military sources said that the UN should tell the GoSL whether the embargo on evidence applied in the event Sri Lanka faced charges before an international tribunal. Against the backdrop of the International Crisis Group (ICG) demanding the establishment of an independent international investigation in 2012, it would be pertinent to ask all those wanting to punish Sri Lanka when evidence in the hands of the UN would be made available, sources said. The PoE is on record as having said that it has received over 4,000 submissions

from 2,300 persons. Success of a local or international inquiry would largely depend on the availability of the required evidence, both written and oral, received by those conducting a particular probe, government sources said referring to the UK's Iraq war Inquiry. The investigation team is on record as having said that it needs time till summer this year as it had to negotiate the declassification of a significant volume of currently classified material with the government to enable this to be quoted in, or published alongside, the Inquiry's report.

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Upali Dharmadasa
By Anuradha ABEYSEKERA (DailyNews.lk) - Former Interim Committee chairman Upali Dharmadasa was elected uncontested as the new Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) president for 2012 after independent contestant Sumith Perera withdrew his application for the post at the election held at the National Institute of Sports Science. The election turned into a one horse race as Thilanga Sumathipala's alliance, which constituted the opposition, did not contest any major posts. Nishantha Ranatunga was elected secretary, uncontested, while K.

Dharmadasa elected SLC president
Mathivan and Asanga Seneviratne got the two vice president posts. Nuski Mohamed was unanimously elected treasurer. Ajita Pasqual got 118 votes for the only contested title, assistant treasurer, while the other candidate Nihal Lewke got only three votes. Hirantha Perera will be the assistant secretary for 2012. There were 54 nominations for major posts. Altogether 147 votes from 85 Sports Clubs, District associations and affiliated bodies were entitled to vote with 135 casting their votes. Members were also appointed for four sub committees, namely, Tournament Committee,

Umpire Committee, Tour Organizing Committee and Sponsorship Committee. The new president assured that he will work together with the new officials for the betterment of the sport. He said that they'll have to work hard to end the crisis in the SLC. Speaking on behalf of Sumathipala's candidature, former SLC chairman Mohan de Silva expressed dissatisfaction about the election procedure, blaming the Sports Development Department but said that they will also support the new officials to develop cricket.

Conde Nast lists SL among world's top five destinations for 2012

(lewy.com) - Condé Nast Traveller has nominated Sri Lanka as one of the top five destinations to watch in year 2012. One of the world's leading travel magazine published in Britain predicts that Sri Lanka will be among the hottest new holiday destinations this year. Unveiling the list of destinations the magazine says, "One of the great joys of travel is the feeling you've discovered somewhere special, somewhere that's all yours, for the first time - before the developers move in and the crowds descend. It could be a new and unexplored region, like the Arctic Circle, or an entire country that has been off-limits to tourists for political reasons, such as Sri Lanka and Burma." Sri Lanka has been placed third in the list of destinations ahead of Britain, Australia, Abu-Dhabi.

Tag-lining Sri Lanka as "The coasts less travelled" the magazine says that "Although the north and east coasts are undeveloped, their natural beauty is unspoiled. You can find yourself the only tourist in the traditional villages, and the only person on some of the country's most beautiful beaches. Indeed, those beaches on the east coast have fine sand and calm, clear waters, unlike the surf destinations on the west. This does, of course, mean top-class accommodation is still limited - but for many, finding charming guesthouses or rustic beach huts is all part of the adventure; and being first to discover a place never loses its thrill." Recently National Geographic also named Sri Lanka among 'Best Trips for 2012' destinations.



Non Sri Lankan passport holders must get visa prior to arrival

With the activation of the on-line visa system for tourists arriving in the country from midnight Saturday, the Immigration and Emigration Department has earned a sum of Rs1.5 million within the first 10 hours. Immigration and Emigration Controller General Chulananda Perera told the Daily News that of a total number of 1,252 visitors who arrived in Sri Lanka from midnight December 31 up to 10.30 am in the morning, 839 foreigners have obtained the services of the facility of the on-line visa system introduced by the government. He further said a special counter providing this facility at the Katunayake BIA had served 413 visitors arriving in Sri Lanka within ten hours after activation of the on-line visa system. "The Immigration and Emigration Department has established a new Internet based on-line visa issuance system, namely, the 'Electronic Travel Authorization' (ETA) to simplify the visa process and facilitate short stay visitors, the Controller General said.

Accordingly, all visitors to Sri Lanka including transit passengers will have to apply for travel authorization on-line prior to their visit to the country effective from Saturday midnight. This new system will scrap the previously implemented 'on arrival visa' at the ports of entry while a fee of US\$ 10 and 20 will be levied from travellers from the SAARC countries and other passport holders, respectively. Travellers from Singapore, the Maldives and a few other countries will be exempted from the visa fee as reciprocities. The Electronic Travel Authorization has been introduced to grant prior approval for visa on-line for foreign nationals from 78 countries. He said that foreign nationals visiting the country on tourism purposes for medical treatments, sports, cultural shows, business conferences and discussions, training programmes and seminars, can apply for the Electronic Travel Authorization via www.eta.gov.lk