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Pinkama to bless country

A SATHI pirith pinkama to invoke blessings on the government, country and the people for peace will begin at the Attanagalla Raja Maha Vihara on March 28.

Daily bodhi pooja and devapooja ceremonies and peraheras will also be conducted at the temple for the duration of the pinkama.

A *dorakada asna* recital will be held on April 3 night and the pinkama will conclude on April 4 with a *sanghika dana*.

The pinkama is sponsored by several state and private sector institutions and is in response to appeals made by the Mahanayake theras of the three nikayas for countrywide pinkamas to bless the nation.

Disco inferno death toll 157

MANILA, Monday (AFP) - The death toll from a fire which swept through a crowded disco in Manila last week rose to 157 as three more of those injured in the blaze died in hospital over the weekend, the Department of Health said here Monday.

Health Department spokesman Edgar Hilario also said that of the 11 survivors still in hospital, two of them, a 15-year-old girl and a

Dirty tricks master had armoury of assets

VIP-backed UNP politico's millions being probed

By Rodney Martinez

POLICE have launched a full scale probe into the antecedents of a UNP provincial politico who is alleged to have amassed wealth thanks to the patronage received from the late President Premadasa.

A top investigator said that this politico whom the late President used as his 'bully-boy' to harass political and personal enemies also acted as the late President's 'chief intelligence officer'.

"The late President used him to spy even on his own Cabinet Ministers," he said.

The activities of the suspect first came to light following the 1992 Colombo Fort Railway Station incident where a gang led by him set upon the late Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, and several other prominent political leaders who were canvassing public support for the impeachment motion against the late President. Some journalists who had come to cover the campaign were also assaulted and harassed by the thugs.

The other 'dirty jobs' assigned to this 'handyman' at the time included plastering city walls with abusive

and obscene posters against the political opponents of the late President, tearing off and disfiguring of posters against the then government and assaults on journalists considered virulent critics of the government.

Several palatial houses, plots of prime land in the city and several acres of valuable Land Reform Commission land, 20 trade stalls in Manning market, an air-conditioned apartment building and two hotels are among the assets he had acquired with the patronage of the late President. "The 30 perch-block at Main street, Pettah alone is worth over one billion rupees," the investigator said.

The suspect had a fleet of vehicles at his disposal when he was at the beck and call of his late master.

"The man who was 'nobody' with hardly any worldly possession in 1977 had become a multi-millionaire and 'somebody' wielding much influence in the highest echelons of power in the country a few years later. It is a typical 'rags to riches' story with a difference!" the investigator added.

High powered trade team leaves for China

By Peneetha Amerasekera

A HIGH powered delegation led by Trade, Commerce and Food Minister Kingsley T. Wick-

veyor belts, bicycles, fruit processing and cement production, and promote investment in projects such



Dyan Seneviratne was awarded the 'Bartlett Challenge Trophy' at the finals of the Seventh All Island Best Speaker's Contest held on Sunday at the Trans Asia Hotel, Colombo. The contest was presented by 'Colombo Toastmasters Club' and sponsored by the 'Observer' and 'Daily News'. In the centre is Mr. Dyan Seneviratne with his trophy. Flanking him are Miss Michelle Perera (the first runner up) and Mr. David Van Eyck (the second runner up). (Pic. by Roland Perera) (See also page 20)

Thought for the day

Every country is renewed out of the unknown ranks and not out of the ranks of those already famous and powerful and in control.

Woodrow Wilson
Speech - Chester 1912

'Future of Sri Lanka's tea industry lies in value-added exports'

COLOMBO, Monday (Reuters) - The future of "Ceylon tea", Sri Lanka's best known export commodity, lies in shifting to exports of value-added, branded consumer products like tea bags, packet and instant tea, officials and industry experts say.

"More and more of our tea exports are going out in value-added form," a government tea industry expert said on Friday. "The future of the tea industry lies in value-added exports."

Exports of value-added teas from Sri Lanka, the

Lankan tea last year, the bulk of it in packets, brokers Forbes and Walker said. This was up 194 percent from a year earlier.

Value-added tea accounted for 43 percent of total tea exports of 235 million kg last year from 36 percent in 1994, the tea industry expert said.

About half the island's total tea export earnings of 24 billion rupees (\$444 million) came from value-added teas last year, he said.

Exports of tea packets rose to 93 million kg in 1995