October 2026

Frontline

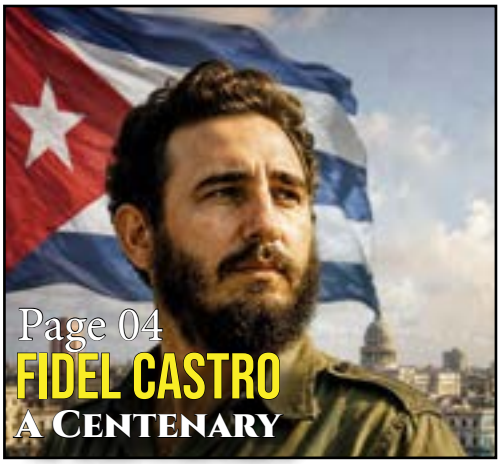
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Official Newspaper of the
**Front Line Socialist Party**

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# New Laws to Suppress People's Struggles

**Although the National People's Power (NPP) government promised upon coming to power that repealing repressive laws, including the Prevention of Terrorism Act, would be a top priority, it has submitted two repressive bills to Parliament for approval. It is preparing to introduce these wicked laws despite decades of public suffering under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, particularly at a time when a party that itself suffered under that very law has come to power.**




The NPP government has introduced a new anti-people bill, the Protection of the State from Terrorism Act (PSTA) to Parliament. It is clear that this bill has been drafted in violation of all human rights and aims to grant the government the power to subject the entire population of the country to direct state repression.

Even within the minimal social responsibilities of liberal legal foundations, the power to arrest, detain, and judge individuals was previously granted only to the constitutional judicial system. However, under this new bill, the right to exercise these judicial powers arbitrarily has been transferred to individuals such as the President, the Defence Secretary, and the Attorney General. Accordingly, they can also designate any citizen as a terrorist, arrest them, and detain them for up to a year.

Alongside this, the power to threaten any individual with house arrest for up to 20 years, stripping them of their rights to freedom of speech, writing, and expression, has been legalised. The President has also reserved the power to ban any organisation that poses a challenge to them, entirely at his discretion.

The primary objective of this is to brutally suppress any anti-state protests that may arise from a society currently experiencing Contd to P 02

## Unemployment Exceeds 17% Among Lankan Youths

The Department of Census and Statistics reports that by the end of the second quarter of 2026, youth unemployment in Sri Lanka stood at 17.8%.

According to the report, unemployment among young women rose to 22.4%, compared with 15.5% among young men.

The report also notes that the unemployment rate among youth aged 25–29 is 12.1%. In this age group, 7.7% of men and 19.7% of women are not entering the job market.

Additionally, 6.7% of youth with G.C.E. Advanced Level (A/L) or higher qualifications are unemployed. This figure stands at 9.6% for women and 3.9% for men..■

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extreme economic instability.

The Organised Crimes Act warns of another level of suppression. Under this bill, any group of three or more people acting together over time for financial or material gain could be accused of being an "organised crime gang". Individuals can be arrested based on subjective traits such as fashion, gestures, hand signs, language/ slang, or tattoos. Even in the present context, youth with long hair or tattoos are victimised by arbitrary police arrests. Innocent young people would be easily subject to harassment. Criticism of the government could also be categorised as creating terror. This act permits holding suspects for up to 72 hours (instead of 24 hours under normal law) before producing them before a magistrate. It authorises the Secretary to the Ministry of Public Security to order detention in police custody or non-prison facilities for up to 1 year (in 2-month increments). It strips magistrates of the power to grant bail to arrested suspects. Another controversy is that the new law reintroduces an unfair provision allowing confessions made in police custody to be used as court evidence, a practice previously removed from the old PTA.

The Front Line Socialist Party (FLSP) urgently calls upon all working people to organise immediately to defeat this anti-person bill.

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POLITCAL VIEW

**NPP government, having pledged to re-negotiate to change the unfair conditions of debt restructuring agreemnet by the former regime, continued with the same agreement. The IMF austity measures hardly impacted the working class and the general public and thus the government should be able to show certainty in respect of policies relating to IMF. However it is another EFF program on the table to be discussed.**

# Incapability of Policies Create Instability



Minister Bimal Rathnayake, a key government cabinet minister, said the government does not currently see a need to enter another IMF programme linked to debt restructuring after the existing arrangement ends in March 2027. However, a few days later, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said the government remains in “consideration mode” about whether Sri Lanka will enter a follow-up Extended Fund Facility programme with the International Monetary Fund after the active facility concludes in March 2027. If the IMF austerity measures had little impact on the working class and the general public, the government should be able to demonstrate certainty about IMF-related policies. However, as in most other sectors, the economy is concerned that imperial agendas and the capitalist class control the government.

Meanwhile, it was proposed to amend the existing Employees’ Provident Fund, purportedly to address practical difficulties members face when accessing their funds.

The amendment aims to reduce the central bank's

involvement by establishing a tripartite mechanism, including employers, to administer the fund.

The trade unions' main concern was that such a body would gain access to classified information on future investment decisions via powerful employer representatives.

If the EPF invests in a particular entity, that entity's share price is likely to skyrocket. When employers sit on the EPF Board and know where the EPF will invest, they possess insider information that can be used to make quick profits. This will lead to insider trading at the public fund's expense. This policy deviation also favours the capitalist class.

The Ministry of Energy also discontinued the previously available Net Metering and Net Accounting schemes for new connections and extensions of existing agreements, requiring them to operate under the Net Plus scheme. The maximum agreement period has also been reduced from 20 to 12 years.

This decision came as a few large corporates began solar power projects. It favours them by discouraging rooftop solar installations by the public and could undermine the country's energy security, increase electricity costs for consumers and businesses, and discourage investment in renewable energy at a time when the country faces the prospect of an electricity shortage in 2027.

Rooftop solar has become an important part of Sri Lanka's energy mix, with more than 2,600 MW connected to the national grid.

The solar industry estimates that rooftop solar installations save approximately Rs. 20.4 billion in foreign exchange each month by reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels. Replacing the same volume of electricity with diesel-generated power could cost around Rs. 2.5 billion per day, with diesel-generated electricity priced at approximately Rs. 170 to Rs. 180 per unit, according to industry estimates. Hence, policy-making failures also created this instability.

Not only local policymaking but also international relations are at stake; the government has become a puppet of US and Israeli imperial agendas. Following the US global warning against providing food, water, medicine and other services to Iranian vessels, the Sri Lankan government was in a bind and remains tight-

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**The solar industry estimates that rooftop solar installations help save approximately Rs. 20.4 billion in forex each month by reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels.**

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# World in Chaos: What Do They Demand?

Widespread public protests have plunged numerous nations, particularly in Europe, into chaos. Instead of fulfilling the fundamental responsibility to secure basic human needs so citizens can live in harmony, states are increasingly resorting to police suppression. This friction stems from a global politico-economic system whose priorities remain disconnected from ordinary people.

Under the umbrella of neoliberal imperialist capitalism, exploitation persists regardless of whether a regime claims to be social democratic or leftist.

The post-Cold War era did not deliver a stable US-led unipolar world; instead, it reignited pre-World War power struggles among rising imperialist forces such as the EU, Russia, and China. Open military conflicts, such as those in Ukraine and Iran, reflect intense superpower competition for resources and markets. As a result, everyday life for working people has deteriorated. Economic decline, inflation, rising living costs, and heavy tax burdens have backed taxpayers into a corner, driving them to demand necessities at fair prices.

Electoral shifts, such as in Serbia or Brazil, where Lula's victory over Bolsonaro occurred, demonstrate public desire for change. However, these national political shifts often struggle to break free from the broader neoliberal world order.

Nevertheless, global unrest should not be viewed solely through a pessimistic lens. People taking to the streets highlight their awareness of their collective power. To convert street-level resistance into lasting systemic change, spontaneous uprisings must be paired with a structured political program.

True transformation requires socialist-minded political parties to lead the oppressed towards a genuine socialist order that replaces neoliberal exploitation.

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lipped about the vessels stranded in its EEZ.

In terms of the Convention on the Law of the Sea (Article 98), Sri Lanka couldn't refuse to meet the needs of the Iranian vessels stranded in its EEZ under the Convention on the Law of the Sea, SOLAS, and SAR. However, the NPP government refused to assist the Iranian ships, simply following US dictates.

Therefore, the government remains incapable of understanding the people's mandate to take

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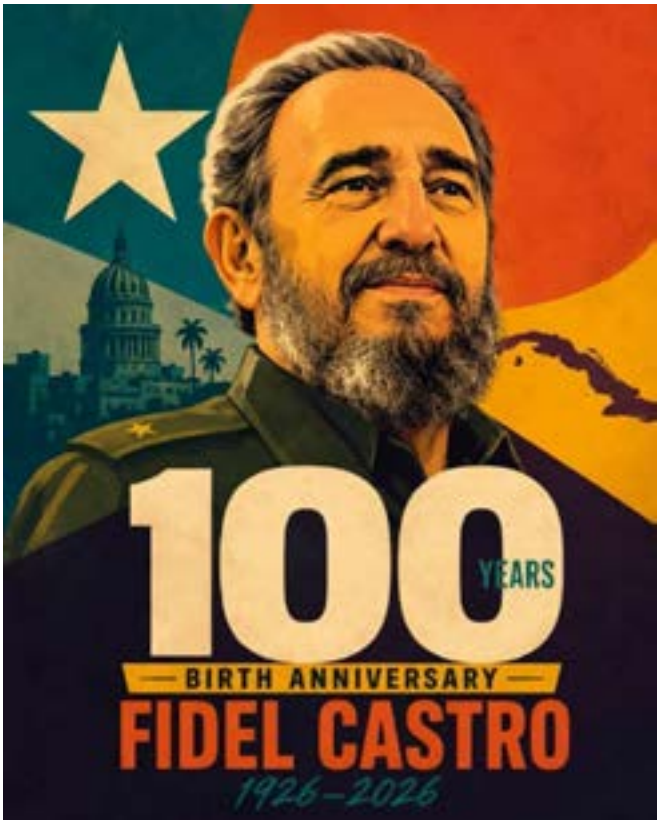
# The Legacy of Fidel Castro and the Trajectory of Revolutionary Cuba

**"I am nearing 90. I will soon pass away like everyone else. The time will come for all of us, but the ideas of the Cuban communists will remain as proof on this planet that if they are worked at with fervour and dignity, they can produce the material and cultural goods that human beings need, and we need to fight without truce to obtain them."**

Fidel Castro, 7th Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, April 19, 2016.

In 2016, during an address at the Cuban Communist Party congress, an ageing Fidel Castro reflected on his life and mortality. Ten years later, Cuba is navigating one of the most severe economic slumps and energy crises in its modern history, a stark reality Fidel himself could scarcely have envisioned during his movement's triumphant early days.

Understanding revolutionary Cuba's trajectory requires examining the conditions that preceded it. During Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship between 1952 and 1958, Cuba presented a striking economic paradox. On paper, macroeconomic indicators suggested that Cuba enjoyed one of the highest living standards in Latin America. However, this superficial prosperity masked severe structural




imbalances and extreme wealth disparities.

The Cuban economy depended heavily on sugar production and was overwhelmingly subservient to the financial interests of the United States. By 1958, American investors had invested over one billion dollars in the Cuban market, controlling roughly ninety per cent of electrical utilities and telephone services, half of the railway system, forty per cent of sugar production, and a quarter of all bank deposits.

Large U.S. agricultural conglomerates, such as the United Fruit Company, dominated most farmland and estates. While urban centres reflected foreign wealth, the rural majority endured severe socioeconomic neglect. Millions of peasants lived in makeshift dwellings without access to basic utilities, including running water and electricity. Hundreds of thousands of seasonal sugar labourers faced unemployment for up to eight months each year during the non-harvest period. Compounding these material hardships were rampant illiteracy and a lack of rural schools and medical facilities, leaving thousands of children vulnerable to preventable diseases.

Fidel Castro emerged from this environment as a key figure who could channel widespread public dissatisfaction into an organised political movement. Initially a liberal university law student in the late 1940s, Fidel engaged in anti-imperialist student politics across Latin America, participating in regional activism in Colombia, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. He came to see Batista's rule as a foreign-dominated system that suppressed the Cuban population. Before 1952, Fidel worked within the legal system as a young lawyer and congressional candidate. However, when Batista staged a military coup in 1952, suspended the national constitution, and cancelled scheduled elections, peaceful legal avenues for political change were closed. After Cuban courts dismissed his legal challenges to the coup, Fidel concluded that armed resistance was the only remaining option to dismantle the regime.

On July 26, 1953, he led about 130 armed rebels in an assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba, a major military stronghold of the Batista regime. The attack ended in a total military failure, with heavy casualties among the rebels and the capture of Fidel and his brother Raúl. During his subsequent trial, the rebel leader delivered a famous four-hour defence speech, later remembered for its concluding phrase, 'History Will Absolve Me'. Rather than offering a traditional defence, Fidel transformed the trial into a political platform to denounce the Batista regime's illegality and present a comprehensive political program for Cuba. He argued that the constitutional right to rebel against tyranny was morally and legally sound when legitimate governance had been destroyed.



**Faced with growing hostility from the United States, Fidel and his administration sought political and economic partnerships elsewhere, forging strategic ties with the Soviet Union.**

In his defence speech, Fidel outlined the concrete decrees his movement intended to implement. These included restoring the 1940 Constitution; granting land ownership to small farmers and sharecroppers while compensating large landowners; distributing 30% of corporate profits to industrial and mining workers; reserving 55% of sugar company profits for agricultural labourers; and confiscating all property stolen by corrupt public officials. Although sentenced to six years in prison, Fidel and his fellow rebels were released under a political amnesty granted by Batista in 1955 amid growing public pressure.

After their release, the Castro brothers went into exile in Mexico, where they formally organised the 26th of July Movement to prepare for a guerrilla campaign. Returning to Cuba, they built grassroots support among peasants and workers, even as major trade union leadership initially resisted calls for general strikes. By late 1958, wartime disruptions, economic vulnerability, and widespread popular disaffection had brought the Batista regime to a standstill. Domestic business elites and military commanders abandoned the government, and on January 1, 1959, Batista fled the country, allowing the revolutionary forces to establish a new government.

In April 1959, Fidel Castro visited the United States as a celebrated figure, the victorious leader of Cuba, at the invitation of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. After a lengthy meeting with the Cuban leader, US Vice President Richard Nixon concluded that Fidel was moving towards radicalism, despite Fidel publicly stating that he was not seeking financial aid from the U.S. government. For much of 1959 and into 1960, official U.S. policy remained uncertain

about whether Cuba would transition to a socialist state. However, tensions escalated rapidly when the revolutionary government began nationalising large sugar plantations and private assets held by U.S. corporations and individuals. Although Cuba offered compensation through twenty-year government bonds, the U.S. government rejected the terms as inadequate, leading to a breakdown in diplomatic relations.

Faced with mounting hostility from the United States, Fidel and his administration sought political and economic partnerships elsewhere, forging strategic ties with the Soviet Union. The Soviet government agreed to purchase Cuban sugar and supply the island with crude oil, machinery, and credit lines. The US government viewed a Soviet partnership ninety miles off Florida's coast as a direct threat to its regional influence. In response, US President Eisenhower imposed a partial embargo in late 1960, and the US formally severed diplomatic relations in January 1961. US President Kennedy expanded these measures in February 1962 by issuing a complete trade embargo, followed in 1963 by financial regulations freezing Cuban assets in the United States.



**Counterweight to U.S.-led free-market policies like the FTAA, ALBA prioritized South-South cooperation, social welfare, poverty reduction, and non-capitalist barter trade in healthcare and education. Fidel astutely utilized the alliance to counter American economic dominance, offering left-leaning nations, including Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Caribbean states.**

To manage the domestic economy, Fidel appointed prominent revolutionary figures to key positions, including Ernesto Che Guevara, who served as head of the Central Bank and Minister of Industry. Che and Fidel initially sought to diversify the Cuban economy away from sugar dependence by developing domestic manufacturing of machinery, consumer goods, and steel. However, these early industrialisation efforts faltered because of severe shortages of raw materials, limited technical expertise, and the U.S. trade embargo, which blocked access to replacement parts. Recognising the need for foreign exchange, the government shifted its strategy to sugar production, using its primary export to secure trade agreements with socialist nations in Eastern Europe.

Over subsequent decades, the economic confrontation between the United States and Cuba was codified in law. In 1964, the Organisation of American States adopted diplomatic and trade sanctions against Cuba under U.S. pressure, though these were repealed a decade later. While the Jimmy Carter administration briefly relaxed travel restrictions in the late

1970s, subsequent administrations tightened them. In 1982, U.S. President Ronald Reagan placed Cuba on the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s, the U.S. Congress passed the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which made the embargo permanent federal statutory law and restricted foreign trade with the island. President Obama relaxed some sanctions during his tenure. However, subsequent administrations under Trump and Biden reimposed specific restrictions on travel, remittances, and targeted sanctions, while the core economic framework remained in place.

Despite U.S. pressure, several international partners maintained relations with Cuba. Canada sustained trade and diplomatic ties throughout the post-1959 period, with Canadian mining firms investing in Cuban nickel and Canadian tourists providing foreign exchange. Similarly, European nations such as Spain, France, and the United Kingdom rejected the extraterritorial application of U.S. sanctions, and Spanish hotel chains financed major investments in Cuba's tourism infrastructure in the 1990s.

Fidel was a dedicated, patriotic leader whose legacy extends far beyond Cuba, defined by his commitment to internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity. Beyond leading his own nation, Fidel consistently provided material, military, and ideological support to global liberation movements. He fully backed Ernesto "Che" Guevara's guerrilla campaigns in the Congo and Bolivia, aligned with revolutionaries fighting U.S.-backed dictatorships across Latin America, sent troops to support the liberation movement in Angola, and openly championed Nelson Mandela's fight against apartheid in South Africa.



**Reading about Fidel Castro's life is reading about revolutionary Cuba, and sometimes it is part of the history of the anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America.**

In 2004, Fidel further cemented his regional influence by co-founding ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) with Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. Established as a socialist, anti-imperialist counterweight to US-led free-market policies such as the FTAA, ALBA prioritised South-South cooperation, social welfare, poverty reduction, and non-capitalist barter trade in healthcare and education. Fidel astutely used the alliance to counter American economic dominance, supporting left-leaning nations, including Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Caribbean states. ALBA became a collaborative platform for economic solidarity and regional integration independent of US government influence.

Domestically, Cuba navigated ongoing economic shifts and demographic challenges, including major emigration waves such as the 1980 Mariel boatlift and the 1994 Raft Crisis, while developing universal free education and comprehensive public health systems. In July 2006, facing severe health issues, Fidel Castro provisionally transferred leadership to the senior-most leader in the Cuban leadership, his brother Raúl Castro, before officially stepping down in February 2008. Fidel Castro passed away in Havana on November 25, 2016, ending a long political career that permanently reshaped the modern history of Cuba and the broader Latin American region.

Reading about Fidel Castro's life is reading about revolutionary Cuba, and sometimes it is part of the history of the anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America.

He lived and fought for humanity's prospects. His vision was close to ordinary people, suffering in Cuba or

elsewhere in the world. He saw the oppressor and decided to fight back. Throughout that struggle, he never compromised. When he decided militancy was needed, he led it, recruiting fierce rebels to fight Batista's forces; when he took power, Fidel used as much diplomacy as possible and chose the best men available for that front, such as Che. After the defeat by capitalist imperialism and the fall of the Soviet bloc, Fidel decided to keep the red flag, keep communist prospects high, and let many, many people's movements follow the cause and continue the struggle for a better world. On this centenary of this unique revolutionary, we must salute him with warm hearts and hold fast to the red flag he carried until his death.■

**On October 9, 2026, the Central Committee of the Front-Line Socialist Party issued a statement on the Iranian Vessels crisis. The following is the full text of the statement, titled "The Need for a Regional Cooperative Initiative to Maintain the South Asian Region as a Zone Free from War, Amidst the Crisis Surrounding the Provision of Services to Iranian Vessels".**

# South Asia: A Zone Free from War ! The Crisis Surrounding the Iranian Vessels

## Statement by the Central Commitee of the FLSP

Media reports indicate that about 20 oil tankers linked to Iran are either anchored or navigating in international waters, roughly 15 to 25 miles off Sri Lanka's southwest coast. This situation arose because these vessels have been unable to return to Iran since July, when the United States declared a naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. News reports further confirm that the vessels stranded off the Sri Lankan coast had transported Iranian crude oil, currently subject to U.S. sanctions, to China. Unable to reach their destinations for an extended period, the crews have shut down the ships' engines to conserve fuel.

Meanwhile, reports say those on board face a severe shortage of essential supplies, including food, drinking water, and fuel. The vessels have also reportedly requested food, drinking water, and fuel from Sri Lanka. However, Cabinet Spokesperson Nalinda Jayatissa recently stated that no such official request has been received.

Nevertheless, the American newspaper 'The Wall Street Journal' reported that the U.S. Embassy in Sri Lanka has warned the Sri Lankan government that providing services to Iranian vessels stranded in international waters near Sri Lanka could result in the imposition of secondary sanctions. According to the report, U.S. authorities conveyed this message to the Sri Lankan government in recent weeks. Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath, however, denied a few days ago that any such pressure had been exerted. Despite this, international media outlets continue to publish reports on providing services to these Iranian vessels and the pressure the United States is exerting on Sri Lanka. As a sovereign state, Sri Lanka is obliged to provide humanitarian aid to those who request it, regardless of any external pressures. At the same time, it must ensure that any decisions made in this regard do not entangle Sri Lanka in a geopolitical conflict. Such situations must be handled with extreme caution and diplomatic prudence. We believe the region should reach a common decision on this matter, taking into account the potential for the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and the Gulf region to significantly impact the Indian Ocean region. Therefore, we propose initiating discussions with the SAARC member states in South Asia to reach a consensus on how to address such situations.

Notably, in 1971 the United Nations adopted a resolution declaring the Indian Ocean a 'Zone of Peace', an initiative spearheaded by India and Sri Lanka at the time. We propose that the current government issue a statement reaffirming the decision to establish a 'Zone of Peace' in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, in light of the escalating war situation, we suggest that SAARC member nations reach a common consensus to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid within the Indian Ocean

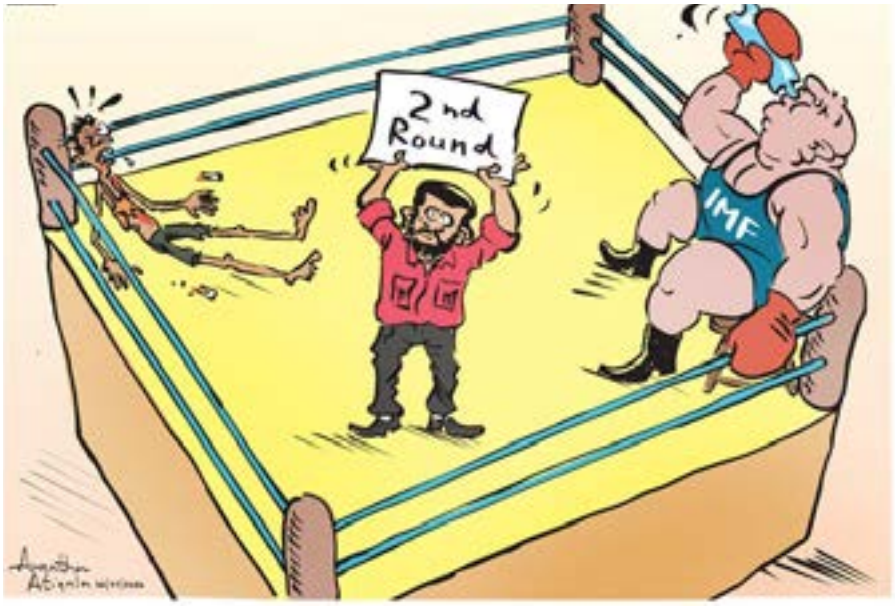
region. We also observe that the current foreign policy, characterised by passivity and double standards, risks fostering growing dissatisfaction with Sri Lanka, both internationally and among the general public. We firmly believe that an emergency meeting of heads of state from the SAARC region, and the decisions reached therein, would significantly impact regional security, regional sovereignty, and global peace. We urge the working people, led by progressive parties and organisations across all nations in the region, to pressure their respective governments to adopt the following proposals: declaring the Indian Ocean region a "Zone of Peace" and working toward that end; and, in light of the escalating war situation, ensuring the provision of humanitarian aid, without discrimination, to all affected areas, both within and beyond the region.

Furthermore, we propose that the government take the initiative to create an opportunity for a joint dialogue among the nations of South Asia to address these matters.

Central Committee
Front Line Socialist Party
October 09, 2026

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# Is the Economy Taking Us to Hell?




The National People's Power (NPP) government is also travelling down the same path to hell as previous right-wing governments in rotation. In a Daily FT article on August 11, Ronnie Peiris, a neoliberal broker during Chandrika's administration who was also accused of corruption in the Water's Edge deal, said this government is courageously and bravely implementing, at high speed, the neoliberal reforms that its predecessor governments were afraid even to touch. Because previous governments found it difficult to move swiftly along this neoliberal path, popular movements set up roadblocks on both the protest and legal fronts, through rulings on fundamental rights and constitutional interpretations of new draft bills.

As a result, they now realise that if the government is to proceed along the neoliberal road, it must first clear the path. The 22nd Amendment to the Constitution is the "shramadana" (community work) aimed at clearing obstacles on the road to neoliberal hell. Although this shramadana is labelled an initiative to "uproot weeds and plant flowers," its true objective is to drive us rapidly into hell. That is why the 22nd Constitutional Amendment goes beyond merely interfering with judicial independence; it becomes an issue of the people's democratic rights, and of the reactionary political-economic trajectory the country is heading towards.

Without any changes to the original text, the current government is implementing the IMF agreement signed in 2023, including its austerity measures. Its main features were to increase state tax revenue and curb public expenditure. In Sri Lanka, the direct-to-indirect tax ratio stands at 23:77, about 20% higher than the indirect tax ratio in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, Central Bank reports show that tax revenue in the first six months of 2026 (January–June) reached Rs. 2,710.6 billion, a 25.9% increase from the first six months of 2025. Of that total, Rs. 2,142 billion came from indirect taxes. This means that, because indirect taxes dominate revenue, a single family paid Rs. 41,146 per month in goods-and-services taxes over the past six months.

These taxes are paid even as income levels remain very low.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), when wages are measured in real terms using Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), Sri Lanka ranks 120th out of 130 countries. In other words, only about 10 countries rank below Sri Lanka under this criterion. Meanwhile, unemployment remains very high. According to Krishna Srinivasan, Director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, educated youth unemployment among those aged 15–24 stands at 43%, the highest in Asia. In neighbouring countries, it is 41% in India and 36% in Bangladesh. As a result, food security has been particularly affected. According to the World Bank's 2026 Sri Lanka Development Update, 65.4% of Sri Lanka's population lives below the poverty line (based on a daily income under USD 8.30), and even when considering the government benchmark of Rs. 17,500 per month, 21% of the population falls below it. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 33% of the population faces severe food insecurity. Child malnutrition, in particular, is high. Despite this, the IMF has imposed heavy taxes on protein-rich foods as part of its conditions. A tax burden of Rs. 100 per kilogram of sprats (anchovies), Rs. 300 per kilogram of green gram (mung beans) and cowpea, Rs. 11 per egg, and Rs. 310 per kilogram of chicken is currently in effect.

**The share who believed the economy was stabilising and conditions were improving fell from 64% in March to 42% in July. According to the same survey, the percentage who said the economy was in good shape fell from 57% to 38% over that period. Notably, 56% said the country's economy was in a collapsed, extremely risky condition.**

The heavier burden of direct taxation falls not on large-scale corporations but on PAYE collected from wage earners. Through direct tax collections, the government earned Rs. 144.95 billion in 2023, Rs. 197.57 billion in 2024, and Rs. 201.12 billion in 2025 from income taxes. Yet an audit report revealed that, as of June 30, 2024, the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) failed to collect Rs. 961.4 billion in defaulted taxes, penalties, and interest. The National Audit Office report shows that, of this total uncollected tax, penalties, and interest as of June 30, 2024, Rs. 793 billion had been temporarily suspended. Of the remainder, Rs. 168.3 billion consists of collectible taxes. The report states that the collection rate for these collectible taxes is only 17%, indicating that the IRD has not recovered defaulted taxes efficiently. Another key point highlighted in this report is that between June 30, 2023, and June 30, 2024, defaulted taxes, penalties, and interest increased by more than Rs. 18 billion. Among the institutions that evaded taxes are 101 highly profitable private finance companies and 322 major private companies. In short, the burden of paying direct taxes has also been shifted onto wage earners, while capitalists have escaped.

It takes no great effort to realise that, as the government proceeds along this path, it is creating a paradise for the rich and a hell for the poor. So when racketeering capitalists like Ronnie Peiris claim that this is the absolute right path, what do the working people say? The Verité Research report released in August provides us with a clear example. According to a survey published by that institution, which projected the views of 2,031 randomly selected individuals surveyed between July 11 and July 30, 2011 to represent overall public opinion, the public is dissatisfied with the state of the economy. A comparison of the July survey report with the same institution's March report clearly shows this trend.

In March, 65% of people believed the government was acting correctly, down to 51% in July. The share who believed the economy was stabilising and conditions were improving fell from 64% in March to 42% in July. According to the same survey, the percentage who said the economy was in good shape fell from 57% to 38% over that period. Notably, 56% said the country's economy was in a collapsed, extremely risky condition. In March, when asked whether they were satisfied with this economic trajectory, 59% said "Yes," but that figure dropped to 38% in July. According to the Verité Research survey, 62% of the country's population is dissatisfied with this neoliberal economic strategy and the economy's direction.

The government intends to proceed rapidly, even amending the constitution along a path opposed by roughly two-thirds of the populace. Tabling a constitutional amendment affecting the judiciary in August, along with plans to introduce a deeply repressive bill titled the Protection of the State from Terrorism Act in September, are calculated moves to use its "two-thirds majority power" in Parliament to confront this "two-thirds dissatisfaction" among the people. An era is approaching when power inside Parliament and power outside Parliament will confront each other head-on. Because of that, there is no debate about which side we ought to stand on.■

# PSTA: Another Attempt to Deny Democratic Rights

The current government's attempt to introduce another anti-terror law, the Protection of State by Terrorism Act, is dragging the country back into the dark chapters of its history and poses a grave threat to democracy.

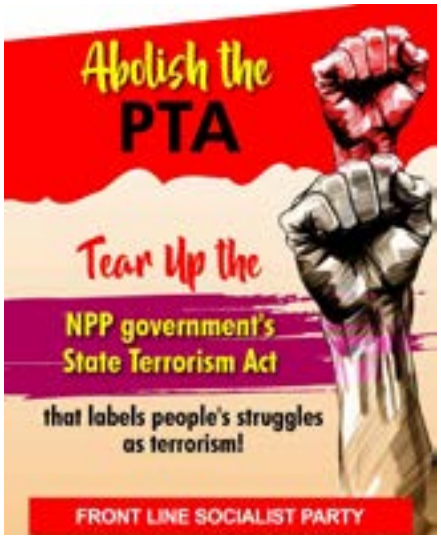
Whatever terror law ultimately paved the way to maintain state power at any cost, in blatant disregard of citizens' freedoms, included severe and draconian provisions. In terms of the proposed new law, the definition of terrorism has been framed in an alarmingly broad manner.

Despite its vague and exclusionary provisions, this law could criminalise even peaceful protests and trade union activities. Under Section 3 of the proposed law, unduly compelling a government or an international organisation to act—or to refrain from acting—could be classified as a terrorist act.

This gives the State ample scope to weaponise the law to suppress democratic dissent, neutralise political opposition, and criminalise legitimate public assembly. The legislation could therefore disproportionately affect civic activists calling for the Government to withdraw from the IMF programme and reject its devastating conditions; farmers protesting exploitative pricing or trade agreements; fishers protesting trawling; trade unions taking industrial action; and communities opposing development and mining projects that threaten the environment and local livelihoods.

Furthermore, it proposes delegating police powers to the Armed Forces, trained for active combat rather than civilian administration and law enforcement, and granting them authority to access and search homes or vehicles and make arrests based on "suspicion", all without a warrant.

Another contentious issue is granting the executive branch broad powers to restrict freedom of movement and expression. Any DIG can apply to a Magistrate for a 'Restriction Order' to restrict travel, access to places, communication, and association. Any OIC can seek the Court's approval to order vehicles to stop moving, prohibit rallies, meetings, or processions, and halt any specified activity. Furthermore, the President can issue a Proscription Order banning organisations and related activities, which could easily be abused to crush political dissidents and carry out acts of political revenge and retaliation against political opponents, as happened previously under emergency regulations.




The Defence Secretary can issue an order prohibiting access to any location that could be used, i.e. to stop mass people's protests, by labelling protestors as "terrorists", capable of potentially committing "acts of terror".

Furthermore, the Attorney General may defer or suspend criminal prosecution or a criminal trial on the condition that the suspect agrees to make a public apology, voluntarily participate in a rehabilitation programme, or engage in specified community service. This could coerce people who have not been found guilty of any crime into accepting conditions such as rehabilitation, community service, denouncing their political ideology, and potentially suspending any participation in "active politics" to avoid criminal proceedings.

Because this so-called Protection of the State from Terrorism Act provides a structural framework to severely curtail democracy and fundamental human rights and to entrench authoritarian power, people should demand that the government, if it truly values democracy, withdraw this proposed anti-democratic legislation immediately. According to page 129 of the National People's Power (NPP) Election Manifesto (2024), "A Thriving Nation, A Beautiful Life", the NPP pledged to "Abolish all oppressive acts, including the PTA, and ensure civil rights of people in all parts of the country."

Interestingly, in January 2024, MP Vijitha Herath filed a Fundamental Rights petition in the Supreme Court on behalf of the NPP against the proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill (ATA), similar to the bill the NPP opposed.■

October 2026
Frontline
e paper




It is a historic moment that the former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence during war time, arrived at the Hulftsdorp Court Complex in Colombo on September 29 to give evidence online regarding the abductions and disappearences during his tenure. He was summoned before Jaffna Magistrate's court to give evidence related to the case filed by the Front Line Socialist Party concerning the abduction and disappearance of Comrades Lalith and Kugan. Front Line Socialist Party also organized a silent demonstration in front of the Hulftsdorp Court Complex demanding Gotabhaya Rajapaksha that the truth about all disappearances must be revealed.




A scene from the 'People's Resistance' march held in Colombo on October 3rd by the People's Struggle Movement under the theme "Withdraw Unfair Taxes! Reduce the Cost of Living!"










The Che Guevara 2026 commemoration program, organized by the Youth for CHEnge, was held on October 08 at the Baddegama Town Hall premises. Comrade Lahiru Weerasekara and the Cuban Ambassador delivered remarks at the event.




A discussion on a set of proposals containing structural reforms drafted by the 'Free Women!' movement regarding child protection was held on September 30 under the theme "A Social Consensus for Child Protection." A group of political activists and social activists participated in this discussion.





A seminar organized by the Front Line Socialist Party on the 22nd Constitutional Amendment, under the theme "Another patch on the rag of the 22nd Amendment."



Printed and published by me, Pubudu Jayagoda, residing at No. 22/1, Melder Place, Nugegoda,
at Star Printers, No. 271/, Ratnapura Road, Horana.