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President concerned on slowness of major probes

By Sunday Times Political Editor

(SundayTimes.lk) - After the Cabinet meeting last Tuesday(01), President Sirisena sat down at his suite at the Presidential Secretariat for an exclusive interview with the Sunday Times. I asked him for his views on the CBSL bond issue and what he proposed to do. His reply:

"The COPE has a history. Most governments have not acted on COPE reports. According to information available, there have been issues about the Bond transactions since 2007/2008 period. Nobody spoke of them. Now we have received the COPE report concerning the issue with Arjuna Mahendran.

"It is the politicians who are debating on the issue according to their party positions on whether it is right or wrong. It (the findings) is not a decision given based on views of political parties. Since the report is out now, it should be submitted to an independent, impartial body which does not have politicians. That is my opinion. If somebody has done wrong, he should be brought before courts. Not only this incident, but investigations should also be done on Central Bank bond issues as well as other frauds in the past 10 years.

"Therefore, I expect an investigation covering a 10-year period regarding the bond issues of the CBSL. It will begin with investigations into the current case followed by other cases through an independent body. I believe that a judicial procedure will be advisable.

Q You mean it will not be a Special Presidential Commission of Inquiry?

A: I need to get legal advice to decide whether it should be a Commission or a one person judicial process and as to how it should be handled. However, politicians should stay away and it should be handed over to the judiciary to carry out an independent investigation. That is my expectation.

On Thursday, President Sirisena went public with plans to go for an "independent and impartial judicial process" at a meeting in Maharagama. A news release from his Media Secretariat said: "The investigation into the Central Bank bond issue should be free from political interference, President Maithripala

Sirisena said, adding that the investigation regarding this issue will be directed for an independent and impartial judicial process. He made these remarks addressing the Inauguration Ceremony of SLFP membership promotion programme held in Maharagama, today (03).

"The President further emphasised that he stepped down from the previous government and established a new government with the support of all, not to allow one section in the society to do the erroneous things and to only punish some persons who did wrong things. "Even though the COPE fulfilled their duties, respecting the laws of the Parliament and the Constitution, various opinions have been brought in this regard. Nevertheless a precise response on this issue can be brought to the public through a proper judicial process," the President said..... "

Like his revelations to the Sunday Times and his public declaration, President Sirisena is quite focused on the February 27, 2015 controversial CBSL bond issue. He has clinically

dissected the issues to be addressed - who is responsible and should face punishment when the legal process he initiates completes the task. In doing so, he has made it abundantly clear that he will not be influenced by viewpoints or positions taken up by different personalities, political parties or groups. A source close to the President said yesterday President Sirisena would make a final decision on the matter in the coming week. The source said one of his concerns is not to allow a probe that would be time consuming. Thus, the source explained, that his choice may narrow down to a serving senior judge conducting the probe as against a Commission of Inquiry which consumes a long period of time. The other modalities would be worked out, the source said.

President Sirisena is still livid about "the manner in which the media" reported his speech to war heroes who received ... SEE P6



Pandith Amaradeva passes away

Sri Lanka's internationally acclaimed vocalist, violinist and composer maestro Pandith Amaradeva passed away last Thursday after he was rushed to hospital in the morning. The 88-year old musician was admitted to the Sri Jayewardenepura Hospital after taking ill suddenly and later moved to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), local reports said. Pandit Amaradeva drew inspiration from classical Indian ragas as well as Sri Lanka's own rich traditions of folk music and went on to create a music that is quintessentially Sri Lankan. His contribution to the development of Sinhala music is considered unmatched.

Final rites were held with state honours

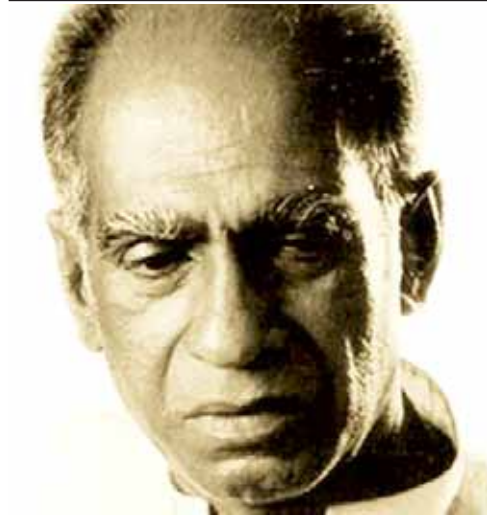
at the Independence Square on Saturday evening, ending an era in which the maestro held sway over classical music in the country. The wake was attended by the President, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet of Ministers, religious leaders, a great many foreign and local dignitaries, representatives of the film and music industries and large crowds of the general public.

In his message of condolence, President Sirisena referred to Pandit Amaradeva as 'maha yuga parushayek' (timeless) and 'poojaneeya vasthuvak' (sacred; worthy of veneration). He said the government was committed to setting up an 'Amaradeva

Kala Kendraya' (Arts Centre) to ensure the legacy of the master was carried onto into future generations.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe referred to Pandit Amaradeva as 'jathika vasthuvak' (a national treasure) and spoke on his contribution to Sri Lankan music spanning seven decades..

The musician has been the recipient of many awards including the Philippine Ramon Magsaysay Award (2001), Indian Padma Sri Award (2002)[7] and Sri Lankan "President's Award of Kala Keerthi" (1986) and Deshamanya Award (1998). See p23 for more pictures.



Our picture on the right shows the Sri Lanka pavilion at WTM 2016. The picture on the left shows the distinguished guests at the event on Monday. (Left to right) - Ms Madubhani Perera - Director Marketing Sri Lanka Tourism, Mr Shanthy Kumar - Chairman Colombo City Hotels Association, Mr Chameera Pieris - Assistant Director Marketing Sri Lanka Tourism, Mr Ajith Dias - Chairman Sri Lankan Airlines, Hon. John Amaraturanga - Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Affairs, HE Amari Wijewardena - High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the United Kingdom, Mr P M Withane - Chairman Sri Lanka Tourism, Mr Harry Jayawardena - Sri Lanka Tourism Advisory Committee member, Mr Nimal Karunatilake - Minister (Commercial) Sri Lankan High Commission, Mr Nalin Perera - Sri Lanka Tourism UK, Mr Sarath Abesundera - Chairman Sri Lanka Cricket UK, Mr Felix Rodrigo - Senior Advisor to the Minister of Development and Christian Affairs. See next week for a full report.

Sri Lanka Tourism shines at World Travel Market London 2016



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