

By Faraz Shauketaly

● Special Commissioner Omar Kamil needs to act fast

Contempt of court looms over CMC

The Supreme Court ordered in March 2009, that the CMC should “strictly enforce the by-laws and guidelines” for advertising in Colombo in the general hope that apart from applying the applicable laws, these actions would not only substantially increase the revenues but also “importantly” beautify the capital city of the ‘Pearl of the Indian Ocean.’

These were compelling words in the judgement; but clearly the CMC has been bogged down in mire that offers no respite to the weary Colombo resident and certainly no beautification. Let alone complying with the orders of the Supreme Court fully, the CMC cannot even carry out the collection of garbage regularly.

The appointment of Omar Kamil as Special Commissioner, under the Public Security Act and the tenuous nature of that position – one has to have the position extended each month – has created hope in the minds of the Colombo public. Whether these hopes are pinned on Kamil’s previous track record or whether they are a result of the frustration of the Colombo resident is left to be seen.

As the pictures show, the law is being broken regardless. The Special Commissioner is yet to seek the eviction of the deposed Mayor, Intiyaz from the mayor’s residence and the safe return of the mayoral Audi. These are mere trifling matters whilst Commissioner Kamil focuses on the greater issues. The people will not begrudge him this “space” but as Kamil returns to familiar territory, he must know what the public expects. Kamil will have to deliver.

Even the Police Department have fallen foul of the rules and their hoarding opposite the MC Shopping Mall is located precariously. If Sri Lanka as a whole was a far more litigious society, then the legal fraternity would be doing infinitely better than they are now – as the potential for law suits is very high indeed: the photographs show you a cross section of the problems faced by Kamil. Even the company employed by Opposition Leader of the Colombo Municipal Council, Vasudeva Nanayakkara has ignored the rules.

Nanayakkara said whilst he appreciates the sentiments of his supporters he cannot condone the breaking of rules and that the hoarding should be “brought down immediately by the relevant authorised authorities.” He was not for breaking the rules, he explained. Others may not be so accommodating and the CMC will have to put its foot down to force compliance.

The Supreme Court also ordered that the hoardings issue be maximised in terms of revenue. Azath Salley, the petitioner and one time deputy mayor, had provided proof of various auctions that had been carried out and the amount of increased revenue that had been generated. This is yet another area that Kamil will need to urgently address, as unlike Dick Whittington, the Lord Mayor of London in medieval times, the people of Colombo do not expect that Kamil will be able to fund CMC expenditure out of his personal funds.

The issue of unauthorised structures is also a priority that the Commissioner will need to address. Some of these structures conspire to rob Colombo City of the beauty it deserves and importantly, requires. The main road leading to the International Cricket Stadium at Kettarama is nothing short of a disgrace with the unauthorised Three Wheel Service Centre using the public road as its *de-facto* forecourt.

We contacted Commissioner Kamil and asked him what his priorities were. He said his immediate priorities were, naturally enough, garbage, roads, lighting and public health. He estimated that the people of this city would expect that. He envisaged being able to give us a better and detailed response in a fortnight’s time.

Kamil also drew our attention to a programme he has launched in various parts of the city over a four-Saturday period to clean up under a “fast track” system. Even so, he reminded us, the logistics of organising such events are fraught with delays and is time consuming but has to be done.

There is an understanding that Kamil will fast track his attention towards the Supreme Court directives – despite Salley’s pronouncements that he is contemplating invoking fresh proceedings on grounds of contempt of court.

(faraz@thesundayleader.lk) SMS your views on this subject to 0772 334334.

On The Spot



Cameron Place, Colpetty

Photos by Media Colombo



MC/Unity Plaza — an unauthorised structure of the police



Reid Avenue



Unauthorised structure off Kettarama Bodiraja Mawatha



Royal College



St. Sebastian Hill



Lipton Circle



Unauthorised three wheeler service centre using road

