

## Dear Minister Bogollagama, this lifestyle is unacceptable

You and your fellow ministers must be role model leaders. There cannot be any exception. Just because you enjoy the privilege of being a minister of the state and that too holding an important portfolio as Foreign Minister, it does not mean the sky is the limit when it comes to how you handle your financial needs or create grounds that demand expensive outlay of funds that are not connected with your work.

By Pooranam Muthiah of Chavakacheri

Repeatedly, the painful news about you is your extravagant lifestyle and that too at the cost of the people of Sri Lanka or some other party like a foreign embassy. I am making this observation from what I have read in various features such as the one below. There are so many forces that are acting against the government and people of Sri Lanka and especially at this time, every minister of the state must be a proud example to our people.

Your expense accounts are not acceptable, Mr Minister.

You and your fellow ministers must be role model leaders. There cannot be any exception. Just because you enjoy the privilege of being a minister of the state and that too holding an important portfolio as Foreign Minister, it does not mean the sky is the limit when it comes to how you handle your financial needs or create grounds that demand expensive outlay of funds that are not connected with your work.

The birthday bash for your daughter, if what has been reported is true, cannot be at the expense of the state or any other party. This is a celebration for your daughter and it must come from the family. You don't as they say in Jaffna, pick a coconut from the road or worse from your neighbour's land and bash it in front of Lord Ganesh!

Furthermore, you are insulting your daughter too. A child's joy is most when the parents meet their needs especially such celebratory events as birthdays and weddings.

It is not for me to tell you what to do but I can only say that this is not done Mr Minister and you are a very poor example of what a political leader should be. I leave the rest to your conscience.

Here below is the feature to which these observations were made.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Rohitha Bogollagama is in a dilemma as the American Embassy has refused to pay the bill of Rs.4.5 million the minister has spent for the birthday celebration of his daughter held during Minister and his family's tour to the USA.

The birthday of the minister's daughter had been celebrated when the minister and his family toured the USA recently. The birthday cake and sweets had cost US\$19,000 while US\$25,000 had been paid for the photographer got down to cover the event. With all other expenses the birthday party had cost Rs.45, 00,000 and the request made by the minister from the US Embassy asking them to pay the bill has been turned down. It is reported that the minister has now asked the government of Sri Lanka to settle the bill.

Minister Bogollagama is known for his extravagant living and he used to go with his family and relatives in all his official tours. He spent the one year's vote for his ministry within six months and attempted to get more money passed for his ministry from the Parliament.

On 24th May Minister Bogollagama admitted in Parliament that during the period from January, 2008 to May this year he had gone on 25 foreign tours and spent Rs.10 million. When the opposition questioned the minister regarding the high expenses he said his tours enabled Sri Lanka to correct wrong views many countries had regarding the war in Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka was able to get support of many countries.

When suitable solutions have not been found for the families of war heroes who sacrificed their lives for the Motherland and for those who have been maimed for life due to the war, how could such outrageous spending of public money be patriotism is a questioned asked in many quarters.