

David Cotterrell: Capital C for Constitution

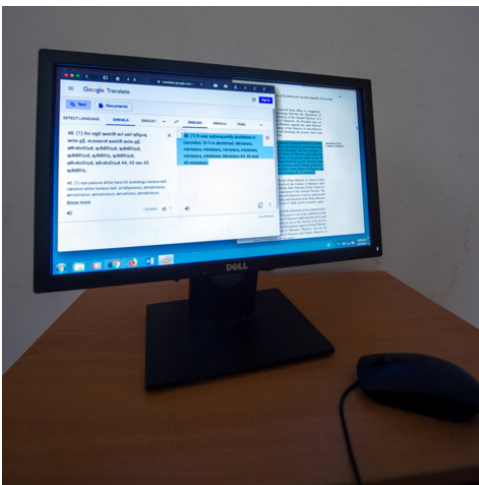
Date: 10th December 2018

Materials:

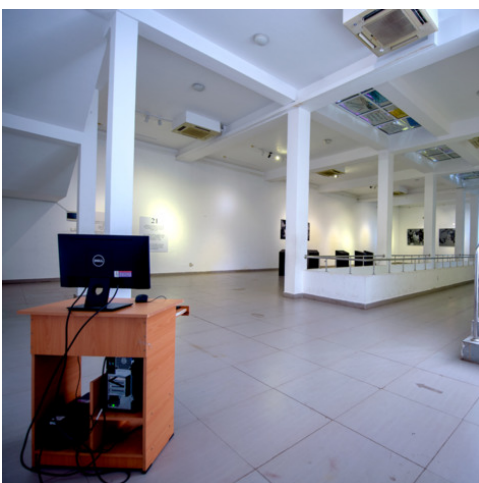
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Is a constitution to be understood in relation to its linguistic or technical loopholes, or on the basis of its normative foundations and core conceptual assumptions? What is so supreme or sacred about a constitution, which we learn in the secondary school to right with capital C, if it is interpreted with reference to its so-called loopholes? (Jayadeva Uyangoda, November 2018, Sri Lanka).

Capital C for Constitution is a playful response to a recent debate regarding the meaning of clauses of the constitution. As both sides in Sri Lanka's 2018 political crisis, claimed the constitution as evidence for their mandate, it became clear that subtle differences in the Sinhala and English versions might serve to have profound consequences. In Capital C for Constitution, a computer appears to be controlled by a ghostly presence. The mouse moves independently, as an unseen administrator uses Google to continuously translate the constitution between English, Sinhala and Tamil. The clause quickly becomes meaningless as the small flaws in the automatic translation begin to take effect. When the absent operator judges that it no longer causes a threat we see it being inserted back into the official constitution and the document is saved for future use.



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