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Joe Biden on the brink of victory

Inches ahead of Trump in key Arizona, Georgia and Nevada states

US: Democrat Joe Biden pulled ahead of President Donald Trump in the potentially decisive state of Pennsylvania on Friday, putting him on the brink of victory in an increasingly tense White House race.

Pennsylvania, and its 20 electoral votes, would be enough to

put the 77-year-old Biden past the magic number of 270 votes in the Electoral College, which determines the presidency.

With tens of thousands of votes remaining to be counted, many of them from heavily Democratic areas, Biden opened up a 5,500-vote lead over the Republican

incumbent, real-time state election results showed.

Biden currently has at least 253 electoral votes and is leading in three other states - Arizona, Georgia and Nevada - where votes from Tuesday's bitterly contested election continue to be counted. With a Biden victory looking increas-

ingly likely, the US Secret Service increased its protective bubble around the former vice president, The Washington Post reported Friday.

The Secret Service sent an extra squad of agents to Biden's campaign headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



NINE-MONTH GRACE PERIOD FOR SAUBHAGYA LOANS

● CBSL further facilitates borrowers

● Rs.179 bn approved for 62,173 ventures

● Loan scheme operated by 29 banks

JAYASIRI DILSHAN
 The Central Bank (CBSL) has approved the six-month grace period for borrowers who engaged in credit facilities under the Saubhagya COVID Yojana. The Resurgence of another three



7,000 people obtained their agricultural services will be a period of nine months for the loans," the Regional Director of the K. Dharma-

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Police to conduct special surveillance in curfew areas

The Police will conduct a special surveillance operation in the weekend in the areas where the Quarantine Curfew has been imposed, Police Spokesman DIG Ajith Rohana said.

Making a statement to the media yesterday, he said Police mobile and motorcycle patrols would be deployed in these areas.

"The public is requested to be at home during the weekend. We are also strictly enforcing the provisions of the Gazette notification that was published on October 15 regarding health regulations," he added.

DIG Rohana said a total of 2,532 suspects had been arrested and a total of 382 vehicles had been taken into Police custody for violating the Quarantine Curfew.

In addition, the Police have arrested a total of 96 suspects for violation of the Regulations regarding face masks and social distance in a period of seven days. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Cabinet nod to provide Rs. 1 mn loan for small and medium scale projects

DILSHAN THARAKA

Cabinet approval has been granted to the proposal made by Youth and Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa to provide a loan subject to a maximum of one million rupees for the implementation of new small and medium scale projects.

This loan scheme is aimed at empowering young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 40 to further their business ventures. Young Entrepreneurs who engage in Information technology (IT), agriculture, dairy, animal husbandry, tourism promotion related projects and innovative and machinery design projects can apply for this loan up to maximum of Rs. 1 million.

At the suggestion of Minister Namal Rajapaksa, this loan scheme operates under the "Small Business Development Division" of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa yesterday made an inspection tour of the Katuwana Pradeshiya Sabha and agreed to construct a new building for it as the current premises lacks adequate facilities to deliver its services efficiently. The President also opened the 'Ranaviru Uyana' Children's Park and jogging track near the Middeniya tank. He discussed the problems in the area and instructed the officials to provide quick solutions to them. Minister Chamal Rajapaksa and Middeniya Pradeshiya Sabha Chairman Maheen Gamachchi were also present. Pictures courtesy President's Media Division



UN summit in December to push action on COVID-19 pandemic

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The United Nations voted Thursday to hold a summit on the COVID-19 pandemic on December 3-4 to press for action on the global spread of the coronavirus and its "unprecedented" effects on societies, economies, jobs, global trade and travel.

The General Assembly voted 150-0, with the United States, Israel and Armenia abstaining, on a resolution authorizing the meeting and spelling out arrangements. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Another 23 Welikada Prison inmates test positive for COVID-19

BUDDHIKA IMBULANA AND LAHIRU FERNANDO

The number of COVID-19 infected inmates at the Welikada Prison increased to 29 with another 23 inmates testing positive yesterday.

"Of the yesterday's infected, 22 are female inmates," Prison sources said.

They will be sent to the Welikada Hospital for treatment.

Health authorities had conducted 196 PCR tests in the women's section of the Welikada Prison on Thursday and these 22 cases have been identified through them.

Minuwangoda-Peliyagoda COVID-19 cluster tops 9,000 mark

ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA

The Minuwangoda-Peliyagoda COVID-19 coronavirus cluster exceeded the 9,000 mark yesterday, the Epidemiology Unit of the Health Ministry stated.

Accordingly, the total number of COVID-19 positive cases detected from the Minuwangoda-Peliyagoda cluster has increased to 9,096.

According to the statistics of the National Operations Centre for the Prevention of COVID-19 (NOPCO) 1,041 of them are employees of the Brandix. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

GMOA calls for thorough review of all COVID-19 related fatalities

ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA

Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) Secretary Dr. Haritha Aluthge yesterday stressed the importance of conducting a more thorough review of all COVID-19 related fatalities reported so far in Sri Lanka.

He pointed out that 16 out of 29 COVID-19 related deaths of the country have been reported from the Colombo municipality area.

"It is necessary to conduct a qualitative study to determine whether the virus spreading in the Colombo Municipality area has any impact on the increase of deaths," Dr. Aluthge stressed.

He further stated that each and every COVID related death should be subjected to a more comprehensive and rigorous investigation. He commented on recent media reports which claimed that the country has already imported Rapid Antigen Test kits even before the completion of validation test.

"Who has given permission to import these test kits? If the validation process determines that antigen tests are of no use, what can we do to the test kits that have allegedly been imported to the country?" he questioned.

