


PRESIDENT TO ADDRESS THE NATION TODAY



The special Address to the Nation by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa will be telecast over all television and radio channels at 8.30 pm today (18).

President marks first anniversary in office today

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, a proven veteran who weathered many a storm marks the first anniversary since ascension to the Presidency today. The President secured a clear mandate at the last presidential election, held on November 16, 2019 for the implementation of his election manifesto "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour" which contained the national programme that was crafted during nearly four years by incorporating his vision with the ideas and recommendations of national organisations.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was sworn in as the seventh Executive President of the country at the historical Ruwanweli Maha Seya premises on November 18, last year. **TO PAGE 02**

BUDGET 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

- Rs. 18,000 million additional provisions to combat Covid-19.**
- Daily wage of estate workers increased to Rs.1,000 from January 2021.**
- Business organizations engaged in agriculture, fisheries, livestock farming industries, exempted from taxes during the next 5 years.**
- An uncomplicated online income tax system for all income tax payers.**
- Non-residents allowed to purchase super-luxury condominiums using foreign currency.**
- Amend EPF Act to expand the retirement age for both men and women up to 60 years.**
- New laws against auditors and companies that prepare false tax records and a special Court of Appeal to hear public complaints pertaining to tax.**
- Tax exemption on dividends of foreign companies for three years, if the money is invested in Sri Lankan sovereign bonds or in the stock market.**
- Value Added Taxes kept unchanged at 8% for businesses that record a turnover of more than 25 million a month except for bank, finance and insurance companies.**

PM PRESENTS BUDGET 2021

NEW VISTAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in his capacity as the Minister of Finance yesterday presented to Parliament the Government's budget proposals for 2021 mainly targeting people - centric development, economic development and welfare of the people.

The proposals included solid measures to ensure fiscal consolidation to reduce the deficit, simplified tax policy and relief and give a firm push to revive the economy.

The Government also allocated Rs 18,000 million additional provisions to combat COVID-19 and also announced more relief measures for affected individuals, business enterprises and those spearheading the State COVID-19 response.

The estimated Government Revenue for 2021 is Rs. 1,961 billion. The total Government expenditure is Rs. 3,525 billion and as such the difference between the revenue and the expenditure is Rs. 1,564 billion. The Government plans to maintain the budget gap at 9 percent of the GDP since the private investments which amounted to 32.3 percent of the GDP in 2014 has decreased up to 27.6 percent in 2019 and since it is required to provide a robust start by the Government to revive the economic growth which had stagnated recently.

It also propose public service exp 2021 and to obt 2900 billion withi

The Prime Mir of Prosperity and plified the tax pe facilitate tax pay tration more effc reviving the econ to thrive, is a co years. I propose t 8 percent, for bu than Rs. 25 millio and insurance compa except in the cas ance sectors."

The Prime Minister's budget also included provisions for a national expressway network, extending for a year in all i Valley

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Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa presenting the Budget 2021 as Finance Minister in Parliament yesterday. (Picture by Parliament Media)



Budget 2021 offers relief measures for public sector

Prime Minister and Finance Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa presenting the second reading of the 2021 Budget in Parliament yesterday, offered a number of relief measures for the public sector.

It was proposed to implement a special loan scheme to provide solar power facilities to reduce the electricity bill costs of public servants. **TO PAGE 02**

PCR tests will continue despite Rapid Antigens - Minister

ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA

The present PCR testing capacity in the country will be maintained despite the introduction of a new Rapid Antigen Test, Co-cabinet Spokesman Plantation Minister Dr. Ramesh Pathirana said.

He refuted allegations levelled by various groups which claimed that the government was attempting to abandon PCR tests through the introduction of Rapid Antigen tests.

"The PCR test was the gold standard available to detect COVID-19 virus. **TO PAGE 02**



Well planned mechanism to build national economy - Minister

The Budget proposal for 2021 is a well planned mechanism to build a national economy by placing confidence in local resources and human capital, Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardena said yesterday (17).

He added that it does not paint a rosy picture but a practical plan that the country can work for. He made these observations following Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill for Financial year 2021 in Parliament yesterday. **TO PAGE 02**



COVID recoveries top 12,000

ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA

The number of people who have recuperated from COVID-19 in Sri Lanka crossed 12,000 yesterday.

According to the statistics of the Epidemiology Unit, the total number of coronavirus recoveries reported in the country increased to 12,210 with 404 recoveries reported yesterday. **TO PAGE 02**



Rishad urged me to release suspect - Former Army Commander

SUBHASHINI SENANAYAKE and DILSHAN THARAKA

Former Army Commander retired General Mahesh Senanayake testifying before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) probing the Easter Sunday attacks said that former minister Rishad Bathuuden **TO PAGE 02**

Budget 2021 unrealistic - SJB MP

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Former State Finance Minister, Samaghi Jana Balawegaya MP Dr. Harsha De Silva expressing views on Budget 2021, said the government's Budget proposals are unrealistic.

Dr. Silva said: "The numbers-gimmick they have played in the Budget is very misleading. **TO PAGE 02**



Nothing new in this Budget - NPP Leader

National People's Power Leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake speaking on the government's new Budget for 2021 said that it has not provided a solid plan to save the country from its major debt crisis.

MP Dissanayake observed: "This is a Budget that is disheartening in every possible aspect. **TO PAGE 02**



Welcome move to increase estate sector wage - Ganesan

MP Mano Ganesan said that he had expected the 2021 budget to be one that would focus on the Covid-19 pandemic situation and include measures that would address this situation. "We did not get what we expected. Moreover, the government in this budget has not made changes to taxes, but we know what they will do later on. **TO PAGE 02**



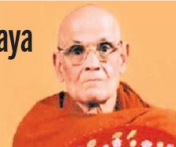
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Ramanna Maha Nikaya Chief Prelate passes away



ASELA KURULUWANSA

The Mahanayake Thera of the Sri Lanka Ramanna Maha Nikaya, Aggamaha Panditha Most Ven. Napane Pemasiri Mahanayake Thera passed away yesterday.


The Thera was 98 years at the time of his demise. Most Ven. Pemasiri Thera was the thirteenth Chief Prelate of the Sri Lanka Ramanna Maha Nikaya. He was appointed as the Chief Prelate of the Sri Lanka Ramanna Maha Nikaya on September 3, 2012.

The Thera passed away while receiving treatment at the Peradeniya Teaching Hospital yesterday (17) afternoon.

PM turns 75 today

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa turns 75 today. He assumed office as the Prime Minister, exactly two months after passing the significant milestone of completing 50 years in Parliament.

The people of Kurunegala gave him a massive endorsement at the last General Election - 527,364 preferential votes - which no other candidate has ever received. **TO PAGE 02**



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