

PRESIDENT STRESSES IN ADDRESS TO THE NATION

SECOND WAVE CAN BE TAMED

PRESIDENCY NOT A PRIVILEGE BUT A RESPONSIBILITY

NO POSSIBILITY FOR RESURGENCE OF EXTREMISM

NO ROOM FOR FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS

RS. 70,000 MILLION SPENT ON ANTI-COVID DRIVE

NON-ALIGNED, NON-PARTISAN FOREIGN POLICY

A NEW CONSTITUTION IN THE OFFING

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa while stressing that a new strain of rapidly transmitting COVID virus is the cause for the present surge, said this situation can effectively be contained in the future.

Addressing the Nation last night on the first anniversary of his ascension to the Presidency, President Rajapaksa said the Government has made all efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the country based on a viable plan and has succeeded.

The President added that the spread of COVID-19 in the country can easily be contained if people adhere to health guidelines and fulfill their duties as responsible citizens. "We can control this situation in the future in the same manner we handled the first wave of the Coronavirus," he said.

"While successfully containing the spread of the disease, our healthcare sector has been able to maintain a mortality rate of less than 0.05% of those who died with the disease and received treatment," he said.

The President added best yardstick of his success is the public and not the organized media by his political opponents on social media platform said he has never been of empty threats and stantly succeeded in facing challenges effectively. "I do not have the habit of simply running



from problems. Instead, I resolve those issues."

President Rajapaksa said that his government succeeded in ending an era of betraying war heroes, selling national assets and willingness to accept any deal for short-term gains which allowed foreign forces to interfere in the internal affairs of the country.

educational reforms to meet the demands of the modern world. "There are plans afoot to build City Universities centering the cities in ten selected districts which do not have higher education institutes," he added.

"For the first time in history we will take steps to make it mandatory for the universities to

to build a prosperous nation. I will not hesitate to take whatever action is necessary according to my conscience to achieve this target", he said.

He added that he was able to put in place an effective and robust program for the eradication of drug menace and there is no room anymore to engage in drug trafficking or operate the underworld from inside of prison cells in the past. "People of this country no longer have reasons to live in fear of underworld gangs, extortionists and racketeers", he noted.

He added that he was of the view that presidency is not a privilege but a responsibility and steps were taken to cut down unnecessary expenses, waste and vain glorifications. The President added that measures were taken to provide a number of tax concessions aiming local entrepreneurs. "Tax systems were simplified and the competitive imports unhealthy for local products were restricted", he said.

Excerpts from the President's address: "A year ago, more than 6.9 million voters in this country elected me as your new President. It is no secret that the majority who voted for me then were Sinhalese. They rallied because they had legitimate fears that the Sinhala race, our religion, national resources and the heritage would be threatened with destruction in the face of various local and foreign forces and ideologies that

support separatism, extremism and terrorism.

The main appeal made by the people to me was to, "Protect the Country".

During this short period of time we have taken steps to ensure the security of the country as requested by the people. The public should not have apprehensions on this issue any longer. An administration that protects the rights of all citizens regardless of racial or religious differences will be established during my tenure. I have always acted in accordance with the pledge I made in front of Ruwanweli Maha Seya to protect the unity of the country and to safeguard and nurture the Buddha Sasana as per the Constitution, the supreme law of this country.

I meet with an advisory council comprising leading Buddhist monks of Three Chapters every month to seek their advice on matters pertaining to governance.

Prior to my assumption of office, many lives have been lost in this country to the activities of religious extremists. The underworld had become powerful and a wave of killings had begun throughout the country. Sri Lanka had become a haven for international drug traffickers. The country was becoming insecure due to the weakening of the intelligence and security forces. Historic sacred sites of archaeological value were being encroached by extremists.



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Judgement in Sil Redi case to be delivered today

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

The Court of Appeal is to deliver its judgement today regarding the appeal petitions filed by former Secretary to the President Lalith Weeraratna and former Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) Director General Anusha Palpita who challenged the Colombo High Court's judgement to convict them regarding the Sil Redi distribution case.

The judgement in the appeal is to be delivered at 10 a.m. today by a Court of Appeal two-judge bench comprising Justice Kumuduni Wickremasinghe and Justice Devika Abeyratne.



Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa receives blessings at a Kiri Ammawaru Danaya - an alms giving to mothers held at the Abhayaramaya Temple in Narahenpita to mark his 75th birthday, yesterday. The programme organized by the Chief Incumbent of the Abhayaramaya Temple Ven. Muruththetuwe Ananda Thera is held every year to mark the Prime Minister's birthday. Mrs Shiranthi Rajapaksa was also present. Picture courtesy Prime Minister's Media Division.

Pavithra debunks attempts to create controversies on appointments

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi yesterday (18) debunked the attempts made by the Opposition to create controversies in



tasked with appointing a new DG of Health. There was a complicated process for this appointment such as interviewing and presenting papers to the Cabinet. So, while we went through this process, we

health guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) to combat this pandemic. Some of the initial recommendations given by the WHO concerning the pandemic are not followed at present. While the

Water for all by 2024 end - PM

SHAVINI MADHARA

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said that all necessary arrangements have been made to provide water for all by the end of the year 2024.

"Despite the loss of income of migrant workers and the loss of revenue from tourism, fisheries, transportation etc., we have to allocate hundreds of millions of rupees to conduct thousands of PCR tests a day. Thousands of patients have had to be rescued and thousands have had to be quarantined," he said.

He said that every effort is being taken to rebuild the country despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thousands of patients had to be rescued and quarantined. Not only that, all businesses in this country were granted relief while the salaries of 1.5 million Government employees were paid on time," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the inauguration of the Second Phase of the Kelani River South Bank Water Supply Project yesterday.

The Prime Minister said his Government ended an era in which even kites were also imported.

He said the Government stopped the importation of goods which can be produced locally. A programme has been launched to make every-



thing from clay pots to tyres in the country.

National Water Supply and Drainage Board Chairman Nishantha Ranatunga handed over the Master Plan outlining the objectives and plans of the National Water Supply and Drainage Board for the period of 2021-2025 to the Prime Minister.

This Master Plan will be implemented in parallel to the programme to provide clean drinking water to all by 2025.

The people of Colombo and Gampaha will benefit from this and the total amount spent on the project is Rs.32,700 million.

"It is expected to provide more than 120,000 new water connections which would benefit over 750,000 people in 320 Grama Niladhari Divisions," the Minister stated.

Ambassador of France to Sri Lanka Eric Lavertu, Minister of Water Supply Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Minister of Tourism Prasanna Ranatunga, State Ministers Sanath Nishantha, Nimal Lansu, Lasantha Algeyevana, Prasanna Ranaweera, Indika Anuruddha, Member of Parliament Sahana Pradeep, National Water Supply and Drainage Board Chairman Nishantha Ranatunga, Secretary to the Ministry of Water Supply and Drainage Priyath Bandu Wickrema and Government officials participated.

Senior CID officers appointed to probe Brandix cluster