

Daily News

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SRI LANKA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER | SINCE 1918

SATURDAY DECEMBER 5, 2020 | 20 PAGES | VOLUME - 102 - NO 2891 | RS. 30.00 | REGISTERED AS A NEWSPAPER IN SRI LANKA | LATE CITY ★

COPA REVEALS HUGE CUSTOMS LOSSES

Sri Lanka Customs had incurred a loss of Rs. 6130 million in just four years due to negligence when clearing specific goods of two palm oil companies.

This loss of Rs 6130 million from 2013-2016 incurred by the Sri Lanka Customs related to two leading palm oil companies was brought to the attention of the Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) held on Thursday, the Parliament Communication Division said.

An audit conducted by the Auditor General's Department revealed that

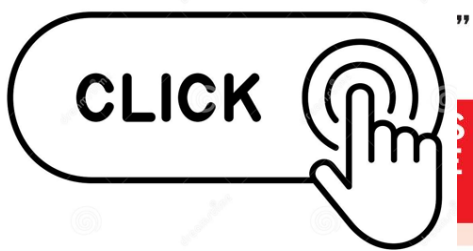
the loss of money was due to the negligence on the part of Sri Lanka Customs officials having failed to clear specific goods under the Harmonized System (HS Code) within the relevant frame.

Although the Secretary to the Treasury and Ministry of Finance Mr. S.R. Attygalle has already taken measures to investigate and recover the losses incurred by the Government due to these companies, the Committees directed the Sri Lanka Customs to also take immediate action on this regard to which the

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RS. 6,130 MN LOSS FROM CLEARING GOODS OF PALM OIL COMPANIES

RS. 1,300 MN



Mahara incident: Experts' report on drugs awaited

BUDDHIKA IMBULANA and RAKSHANA SHRIYANTHA

Expert reports are being obtained on six types of drugs which were available at the medical store at the Mahara Prison to find out whether alleged excessive use of medicinal drugs by the prisoners made them violent, Police Media Spokesman DIG Ajith Rohana stated yesterday.

He said that there were about 21,000 types of pills that were not used for common ailments and that the CID was looking into obtaining a report from experts on six types of pills which may have stimulant properties when used in high doses.

He said that expert reports are being obtained to further confirm the information received by the CID that the detainees may have behaved in a riotous manner after consuming such drugs.

The CID has recorded 56 statements so far during the investigation into the Mahara prison incident.

Thirty statements were recorded on Thursday which included 13 prison officers, one doctor, 12 inmates and four male nurses.

On December 2, the CID had recorded the statements of 26 persons regarding the Mahara Prison incident. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



SriLankan Airlines Chairman Ashok Pathirage

SriLankan Airlines named the 'World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean' at WTA

Retains title for fifth consecutive year



SriLankan Airlines CEO Vipula Gunatilleka

SriLankan Airlines, the National Carrier of Sri Lanka and a member of the one-world alliance has won the prestigious 'World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean' title once again at the World Travel Awards Grand Final held in Moscow.

SriLankan Airlines' Chairman Ashok Pathirage said the latest accolade demonstrates the Airline's commitment to delivering the Government of Sri Lanka's vision of making Sri Lanka an aviation hub in Asia and the company was building on its business plan to strengthen its position as a fully-fledged international airline. "Yet again, SriLankan Airlines has made a tremendous mark in the region. We have a proud history that spans over four decades of operations," he said. "Winning the World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean" for

the fifth-year running is commendable especially given the current situation with COVID-19 which continues to cause disruption to the aviation and travel industry. It is proof of the National Carrier's superior and dedicated focus to its service and operations time and again which gives SriLankan Airlines resilience to face any adversity."

The Airline has been winning the coveted title since 2016 and this year the National Carrier not only won the title as 'Asia's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean' but also was honored with the title 'Asia's Leading Marketing Campaign' at the WTA Asia ceremony in 2020.

The Award is also symbolic of SriLankan's commitment to serve the South Asian region, and India in particular by connecting 11 Indian cities to Sri Lanka and beyond. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Strict laws soon against wildlife poaching

and bring in new laws to deter people from killing wild animals.

He was responding to a question raised by Parliamentarian Jayantha Weerasinghe, PC, at the Consultative Committee on Wildlife and Forest Conservation.

Weerasinghe stressed that the killing of animals has increased to an unprecedented extent and that the law should be strictly enforced against the killers.

Minister CB Ratnayake

also pointed out that as the legislative function is vested in Parliament, the amendment of the Penal Code to control animal hunting could be expedited.

The need for an urgent program to regulate the rearing of tame elephants was discussed at the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Wildlife and Wildlife Conservation, and special attention was paid to the need to amend the relevant ordinances in this regard.

The Government is planning to impose strict laws by amending the Penal Code to stop the illegal killing of wild animals.

Minister of Wildlife and Forest Conservation C.B. Ratnayake said that steps will be taken to amend the Penal Code expeditiously

CYCLONE BUREVI: PREPAREDNESS PAID OFF



Making a quick visit to the heavy vehicle yard in the Security Force Headquarters - Wann, Head, National Operations Centre for Prevention of COVID-19 Outbreak (NOCPCO), Chief of Defence Staff and Commander of the Army Lt. Gen. Shavendra Silva on Wednesday inspecting the readiness of the emergency fleet and troops to meet any eventuality prior to the arrival of Cyclone Burevi. The elaborate disaster preparedness of the troops both helped minimize damage due to the cyclone and provide speedy relief to those affected. Picture courtesy www.army.lk



Military personnel helping civilians affected by floods in Jaffna due to Cyclone Burevi. Picture by North Special Correspondent

Discussion held on re-opening BIA

ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA

A special discussion on the opening of the airports to attract foreign tourists to the country and to run the tourism industry was held yesterday at the Ministry of Health under the patronage of Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi, State Minister of Primary Health Services, Pandemics and COVID Prevention Dr Sudarshani Fernando, Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga and relevant health and tourism authorities.

During the meeting a joint committee consisting of officials from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism as well as members of the tourism sector institutions was appointed to prepare preliminary plans for the opening of the BIA in accordance with the health guidelines and also for the preparation of the health guidelines required for the development of the tourism industry. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Youth Trust Fund mooted

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

A Youth Trust Fund is planned to be set up next year to assist young entrepreneurs as well as small and medium scale entrepreneurs as there are less opportunities for them to obtain loan facilities for their industries, said Youth and Sports Minister Namal Rajapaksa in Parliament yesterday.

He said that this measure is taken in support of the Government's plans to reduce the unemployment rate among youth which has increased to 23 percent which was 12 percent in 2015.

In reply to Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa, Minister Rajapaksa said that it was clear as to how the UNP government assisted to enhance the industries in the country by the Presidential election result and the General election result. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Massive industrial drive in country - Wimal

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Most Government institutions under the Industries Ministry including the paper company increased production and income in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic, said Industries Minister Wimal Weerawansa in Parliament yesterday.

He also said that four industrial zones

are to be set up in Negombo, Colombo, Trincomalee for local industrialists. A special cloth textile manufacturing zone would be set up in Eravur creating 5000 job opportunities.

He made these observations joining the Committee Stage Debate on the financial heads of Industries Ministry, Trade Ministry, Batik, Handloom & Local Apparel

Industries State Ministry, Gem and Jewellery and related industries State Ministry, Cane, Brass, Clay, Furniture and Rural Industry Promotion State Ministry, Cooperatives, Sales Promotion and Consumer Protection under the Budget proposals for financial year 2021 presented to the Parliament by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on November 17. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Probe into smuggling of narcotics into Welikada Prison

PUNWANTHA KITHU GASPIYIYA

US COVID-19 deaths top 3,100 in a single day for the first time

NEW YORK: The US recorded more than 3,100 COVID-19 deaths in a single day, oblit-

Atulgama could face prolonged isolation

CAMELIA NATHANIEL

The Atulgama area may have to be isolated for a prolonged period if the residents do not cooperate with the health authorities, Army Commander Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva said.

The Commander noted that 329

(PHIs) on Wednesday (02) refusing to be taken to hospital for treatment.

Following the incident, PHIs temporarily withdrew from their duties in Atulgama and the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) Office in Bandaragama cancelled the PCR tests that were being