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Weda Samaga Yali Gamata project to be reimplemented on PM's instructions



DINULI FRANCISCO
Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa instructed all the political authorities to reimplement the project *Weda Samaga Yali Gamata* throughout the country from December 14 to cater to the needs of rural and semi-urban citizens.
Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa stated this while presiding over the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Finance held at the Parliament Complex yesterday.
The Prime Minister pointed out that all the

political bodies should be ready to implement the project from the 14th, identifying the needs and priorities of the rural and semi-urban areas.
During the meeting, it was also suggested that as the tourism industry is facing a massive setback as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Finance should help uplift the industry.
Secretary to the Ministry of Finance S.R. Attgalle presented a number of steps taken by the Ministry of Finance in this regard. **TO PAGE 02**

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MAHARA PRISON UNREST INTERIM REPORT RECOMMENDS

EARLY RELEASE FOR DRUG ADDICTED INMATES

PRISON FACILITIES TO BE UPGRADED

PCR TESTS TO BE CONDUCTED

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA
The Committee investigating the unrest that broke out at the Mahara Prison in its Interim Report has recommended the release of drug addicted inmates on bail through motions filed in Courts by prison officials as an urgent matter.
The interim report has also recommended that to be released after referring them for PCR tests. The Committee led by Minister by former High Court Judge Kusala Sarajini Weerawardena yesterday handed over its Interim Report to Justice Minister Ali Sabry, PC.
Committee Member and Legal Adviser to the Justice Minister U.R. de Silva PC told the Daily News that final report pertaining

to the Mahara Prison incident is to be submitted before the end of this month.
He said the inmates will be given an opportunity to contact their relatives via telephone calls. Silva further said that the interim report has recommended to upgrade the facilities in Prisons since this unrest has reportedly broke out demanding necessary arrangements following the spread of COVID-19.
He stated that prison congestion and the spread of COVID-19 had primarily led to the unrest. He stated that the committee has also noticed the conflict between different groups within the prison, which caused extensive damage to both inmates and property. **TO PAGE 02**



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Main goal is to release at least 8,000 prison inmates - Ratwatte



Prison Management and Prisoners Rehabilitation State Minister Lohan Ratwatte, emphasizing the present congestion in prisons given the rising numbers of inmates, stated that the Government should reduce the number at least by 8,000.
He was addressing the inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Con-

sultative Committee on chaired by Minister of Justice U.R. de Silva, PC, on Saturday in Parliament.
The State Minister pointed out that there are 28, 951 inmates in the 28 prisons across the country at present causing considerable congestion. **TO PAGE 02**

Need for blueprint to develop North and East tourism highlighted

Batticaloa District MP Shanakiyan Rasamnikam highlighted the need of a blueprint to develop tourism in the North and the East as the region lacks tourist attractions to a large extent.

Speaking at the Ministerial Consultative Committee in Parliament yesterday the MP also proposed to initiate the Talaimannar ferry service for the purpose of developing tourism. **TO PAGE 02**

Full probe into minor tremors

Geological Survey and Mines Bureau (GS&MB) Chairman Anura Walpola yesterday said that a comprehensive investigation will be conducted into the minor earth tremors reported from time to time around the Victoria reservoir on the directive of Environment Minister Mahinda Amaraweera.
"Although it was stated that four minor tremors were reported around Kandy, only one minor tremor was reported from the Earth's interior. **TO PAGE 02**

Brakes put on illegal motorcycle racers

SAMEERA ABEYSINGHE - Nugegoda Group
Twenty three motorcycles along with a group of motorcyclists who held motorcycle races on the roads around the Parliament Complex and on the Madiwela Nawa Rohala road, causing loud noise and inconvenience to the public were arrested by the Mirihana Police last Sunday. **TO PAGE 02**

Financial irregularities at Mahapola Trust Fund

Minister revealed in Parliament yesterday (07).
Dr. Gunawardena said that a complaint has already been lodged at the Criminal Investigation Department on the matter.

Dr. Gunawardena pointed out that politics aside, both the Government and the Opposition should design a project to preserve the Mahapola Scholarship as it is a national resource. **TO PAGE 02**

NLB comes under COPE scrutiny

Cabinet decisions taken during the Yahapalana regime have caused a huge financial loss to the National Lotteries Board (NLB) and, it is still not possible to call for a new tender for the printing of relevant lottery tickets until 2020.
This was revealed at the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) which met in Parliament on December 04 under the chairmanship of Parliamentarian Prof. Charitha Herath to look into matters relating to the Procurement on the Print and Delivery of Lottery Tickets of National Lotteries

Board.
In addition, it was revealed that the annual reports of the National Lotteries Board for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 have not been submitted to Parliament.
Accordingly, the COPE has instructed to look into the matter and submit the relevant reports to Parliament as soon as possible. **TO PAGE 02**

G.C.E. O/L Exam to begin on March 1

RAKSHANA SRIYANTHA and SHAVINI MADHARA
The G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination is scheduled to be held from March 1 to 11, 2021, said Education Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris.
The Minister of Education was speaking at a media briefing held

at Water's Edge Hotel yesterday (07).
The GCE Ordinary Level Examination, which was earlier scheduled to be held from January 18 to 27 next year, was postponed into account the spread of coronavirus in the country. **TO PAGE 02**



Forces, Police detect 18,000 Kg of narcotics in one year

DILSHAN THARAKA
Police Media Spokesperson DIG, Ajith Rohana said that for the first time in history, the Security Forces were able to discover around 18, 000 Kg of narcotics and arrested 72,000 suspects, within the period of one year since November 2019.
He was speaking to the media at a press conference held at the Excise Department in Rajagiriya yesterday. He said that this is the biggest amount of drugs discovered by the Security Forces in history.
According to the statistics, Police and Security Forces have been able to discover around 2, 000 kg of Heroin within the period. **TO PAGE 02**



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