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# Daily News

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## OUTSTANDING TAX REVENUE OF EXCISE DEPT. RS.2,376.2 MN - COPA

It was disclosed at the Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) held in Parliament on December 7 that the revenue outstanding to be collected by the Excise Department for the period of five years is Rs. 2,376.2 million by December 2019.

The total amount of tax arrears due to the Excise Department for more than five years is Rs. 479.9 million, by December 31, 2019 and its delay charge alone was Rs.1,896.3 million.

The Committee on Public Accounts chaired by Prof. Tissa Vitarana stressed that prompt action should be taken to recover the arrears. The Commissioner General of Excise and other officials informed the

committee that legal action has been taken to recover the arrears.

The Committee also noted that the Excise Department had conducted 224,737 raids during the last five years, out of which 53,848 raids were carried out in 2017, 49,278 in 2018 and 47,391 in 2019 and that legal action has been taken against those criminals.

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that the relevant disciplinary inquiries regarding 48 officers who were suspended due to various reasons in



the Excise Department as at 31st December 2019, have not been completed properly even though one to three years have elapsed. It was also identified that some of the officers had been suspended due to non-participation in the District Coordinating Committees.

The Chairman of the Committee instructed that the legal proceedings be completed expeditiously and the activities of the Excise Department be maintained efficiently. The Chairman further emphasized that necessary steps should

## Do not let COVID-19 hinder implementation of education plans - President

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa urged the education authorities not to let the COVID-19 to hinder implementation of plans for the advancement of education from preschool to university level.



The prime objective of the Government is the development of the human resource. The future generation of the country must be equipped with knowledge, skills and competencies to make them productive citizens.

## Singapore-SL AG level talks on regarding Mahendran - Justice Minister

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Justice Minister Ali Sabry, PC revealed in Parliament yesterday that the Attorney General of Singapore had sought clarification from the Attorney General of Sri Lanka over the charges filed against the former Central Bank Governor Arjuna Mahendran pertaining to the controversial Treasury Bond scam.

He said that the Attorney General of Singapore had inquired from his Sri Lankan counterpart whether the indictment filed falls within the first schedule of the extradition treaty between the two countries.

Responding to several inquiries made in Parliament recently regarding the progress of the investigations



## Cremate unclaimed COVID-19 bodies - AG

DILSHAN THARAKA

Coordinating Officer to the Attorney General State Counsel Nishara Jayaratne yesterday (09) said that the Attorney General had instructed the Director General of Health Services to take immediate steps to cremate the unclaimed bodies of COVID-19 victims.

The Attorney General had given the instructions following an earlier request made by the Director General of Health Services.

The unclaimed bodies of 19 people who died due to COVID-19 are being kept in mortuaries.

Accordingly, the Attorney General had instructed the Director General of Health Services to take immediate steps to cremate the bodies.

## Mahara Prison deaths: Court orders post-mortems

RAGAMA GROUP CORR.

When the case regarding the clashes and subsequent deaths at Mahara prison were taken up by Wattala Magistrate's Court yesterday, an order was issued to conduct post-mortems on the 11 inmates who died during the bloody clashes within the Mahara prison premises.

Wattala Magistrate Buddhika Sri Ragala instructed the five-member committee appointed over the matter to conduct the post mortem examinations at the Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH).



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## 'LRT project waste'

The Light Rail Transit (LRT) proposed by the previous Government was a huge waste of money and the cost of building just one kilometer was Rs. 26,388 million, Company Estate Reforms, Tea and Rubber Estates Related Crops Cultivation and Factories Modernization and Tea and Rubber Export Promotion State Minister Kanaka Herath said.

He made these remarks while participating in the 2021 budget debate relating to the Ministry of Highways.

The Minister further stated that US \$2,200 million has been estimated for the construction of the 15 km LRT system. A huge finan-

cial irregularity was revealed for this project and if the proposal was implemented in any way, a sum of Rs. 36.6 million per day would have to be paid in loans and instalments. He also said that the Kandy Expressway project had not been implemented properly during the previous Government. That Government had failed to pay compensation for the lands acquired for the project.

"Compensation for the expressway project was formalized under the present Government. Funds have already been allocated for the construction of expressways as well as access roads," said State Minister Herath.



## 32 mn loss incurred by ICTA on e-Pension Project - COPE

It was revealed at the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) Committee Meeting held yesterday (08), that the e-Pension Project initiated by the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (Pvt) Ltd (ICTA) at a cost of Rs. 232 million is a complete failure.

ICTA was entrusted with the responsibility of developing the hardware and software for the project using government funding to initially provide pension online to the pensioners of the Western Province covering the District Secretariat, the Armed Forces, the Department of Prisons, the Department of Railways and the Department of Civil Defense. However, given various software and hardware issues, the project was not implemented island wide and was abandoned on the 1st of November 2013.

## Distribution of herbal concoction suspended

Kegalle District Group DAYARATHNA, Aranayaka PRADEEP KUMARA

The Kegalle Government Agent has decided to suspend the distribution of the herbal concoction invented by Dr. Dhammika Bandara meant as a cure for COVID-19 until Health Ministry approval is given after stringent checks and a review by the Expert Committee is tabled.

Government Agent Mahinda S. Weerasuriya said that the decision was taken after long lines of people queued up to sample and purchase bottles of the concoction was reported to Police yesterday. Police had to be called in to disperse large crowds that had gathered at the residence of the ayurvedic practitioner. Many of them were not wearing face masks or adhering to social distancing guidelines.

It was also agreed at a discussion held at the Kegalle District Secretariat to distribute the concoction free of charge to all state pharmacies once approval is granted.

## Gampaha HC rejects Shani's bail application

Shani seeks SC intervention for adequate security



## A milestone for neurosurgery in Sri Lanka

A team of doctors at the Anuradhapura Teaching Hospital has performed Sri Lanka's first "Awake Craniotomy" surgical procedure, marking a historic milestone.

Awake Craniotomy is a technique that uses language mapping, which enables neurosurgeons to remove a brain tumor while preserving cognitive function. When it's necessary to operate in areas close to the brain's cognitive centers, such as language, the only way to test cognition is for the patient to be awake and to be able to communicate during the procedure. The department of

## Probe into land grab during UNP regime

RAKSHANA SRIYANTHA

Land Minister S.M. Chandrasena says that large-scale land grabbing took place during the UNP government in 2001 and subsequently from 2015-2019 adding that much of the lands owned by the Land Reform Commission have been misused including commercially valuable land in Kandy and Colombo.

He added that it was learnt that there were many such lands belonging

## Manning Market to open from Monday

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