

Resolve prisoner issues, enhance prison infrastructure - President

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa yesterday instructed officials to act immediately to resolve shortcomings in prisons and provide the prisoners with necessary facilities while adopting a more humane approach towards them.

Observing that over 12,000 drug-addicted persons were in jail, the

President stressed the importance of implementing a drug rehabilitation programme with special attention to them.

The President was addressing a meeting at the Presidential Secretariat yesterday to look into the prevailing problems in prisons and recommend solutions to them.

The President instructed officials to look into the possibility of constructing prisons in the locations already identified using pre-fabricated material.

The President pointed out the need to study models in prisons of foreign countries and provide such facilities to prisons in the country.

Many persons are languishing in prisons due to delays on the part of the Government Analyst's Department, Attorney General's Department and the Police Department.

The President noted that a Presidential Task Force comprising of the Customs, Police, Prisons Department and other relevant

agencies must be formed to resolve the prevailing issues in prisons.

Justice Minister Ali Sabry, Prison Management and Prisons Rehabilitation State Minister Loban Ratwatte, Secretary to the President Dr. P. B. Jayasundera and Ministry officials attended the meeting.



PM TELLS PARLIAMENT WINDING UP BUDGET DEBATE

RS. 90 BILLION SPENT ON ANTI-COVID DRIVE

RS. 2,000 BILLION WORTH PROJECTS BEING IMPLEMENTED **EXPORTS REACH US\$ 1,000 MILLION** **OUTDATED LAWS AND REGULATIONS TO BE REVIEWED**

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

The Government would have spent Rs.90 billion on anti-Coronavirus efforts by December end, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa told Parliament yesterday.

Participating in the debate for the Third Reading of the Budget, Prime Minister Rajapaksa said no one expected the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019, but the country had to face this pandemic. "Under the current situation we have spent Rs. 70 billion for the anti-COVID drive and by the time the Budget was presented it

had increased to Rs. 80 billion to increase further to Rs. 90 billion by December."

The Prime Minister said the Government is the Rupee at a steady level, indicating that the Government steered the country through it. He said that it is a victory to be able to maintain the reserves, which helped in this. This, he said is a country to move forward.



No change in stance against terrorism

- Canadian, British envoys



The British and Canadian High Commissioners told Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardene that the recent spate of acts of non-state entities in their countries no way reflected a change in their official position against terrorism, the Foreign Ministry said in a press release.

Foreign Minister Gunawardene met British High Commissioner Sarah Hulton and Canadian High Commissioner David McKinnon at separate meetings on Wednesday and Tuesday to discuss matters of bilateral importance. The release said the High Commissioners stressed that their Governments have taken a strong position not to tolerate terrorist activities and not to allow glorification of terrorism in their countries.

Only essentials will be imported, local production will be enhanced - State Minister

SANDASEN MARASINGHE, CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

The Government has taken measures to discourage import of items that could be produced in the country, but has nowhere said imports will be stopped, Samurthi, Household Economy, Micro Finance, Self Employment and Business Development State Minister Shehan Senasinghe.

Eleven member Expert Committee to report on Victoria dam area tremors

An Expert Committee on seismic conditions has been appointed to conduct an extensive investigation into the occasional minor tremors around Victoria Reservoir.

The Committee has been appointed on the instructions of Environment Minister Mahinda Amarasekera.

The Committee will look into the possible causes of the minor earth tremors and possible damage such tremors could cause in the future.

The Minister has requested a comprehensive study. On several occasions, seismologists and geologists were deployed in researching the matter and several reports were prepared.

Deshapriya Chairman of Delimitation Commission

Former Chairman of the National Election Commission Mahinda Deshapriya has been appointed as the Delimitation Commission Chairman, Government Information Department said.

Elections process to get rolling - NEC Chairman



National Elections Commission Chairman Nimal Panchibewa welcomed by NEC officials yesterday.

The alternative economic policy adopted under the Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour does not match with any economic policy in the world and similar ones in history have failed, Samurthi, Household Economy, Micro Finance, Self Employment and Business Development State Minister Shehan Senasinghe.

He said the government's policy was to fill the high budget deficit by way of a Magic Money Tree (MMT) or just by printing money which in turn increases the inflation rate and depreciates the Rupee.

NEC Head Panchibewa and its other Members M.M.Mohamed, S.B.Divaratne, K.P.P. Pathirana

and Jeevan Thyagarajah assumed duties at the Election Secretariat premises yesterday.

He said that necessary legal reforms for the above purpose will be brought in consultation with the Legislature and the Executive. He added that the problems related to holding the much-delayed Provincial Council Elections will be sorted out.

Justice Obeyesekere recuses himself from Hizbullah's petition

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

Court of Appeal President Justice Arjuna Obeyesekere yesterday recused himself from hearing a writ petition filed on behalf of attorney Hejaz Hishbulah, who is being detained under CID custody in connection with the Easter Sunday attack. Justice Obeyesekere declined to hear this case stating that he had worked with Hejaz Hishbulah in the Attorney General's Department.

Accordingly, this petition will be taken up for support before Court of Appeal two-judge-bench Priyantha Fernando and Justice Sothiltha Rajakarana on December 14.

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