

BE WARY OF TERROR FUNDS UNDER COVID AID GUISE:RUSSIA

SPUTNIK VACCINE TO BE SUPPLIED SOON

FULL SUPPORT AT UNHRC SESSIONS

SUBSTANTIAL RISE IN BILATERAL TRADE

CHANDIMA KARUNARATNE
Russian Ambassador Yury Materiy has cautioned the Sri Lankan Government to focus attention on terrorist funding being funneled under the pretence of COVID-19 aid.
The Ambassador made this observation when he called

on Public Security Minister Rear Admiral (Retired) Sarath Weerasekera. The Ambassador offered the support of relevant authorities in Russia to effectively marginalize such groups.
"Many extremist groups have been moving funds for terror activities and have additionally

carried out such operations via the trade and trafficking of narcotics under the cover of humanitarian assistance for Muslim organisations and charities," the Ambassador said.
Minister Weerasekera stated that the Government, appointed in 2019, **10 PAGE 02**



Minister Weerasekera presenting a memento to the Russian Ambassador.

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Manage 2021 expenditure within provisions - Treasury Secretary

Exit point Antigen tests find 49 COVID positive
Forty nine COVID-19 positive patients were identified within eight days through Rapid Antigen tests conducted in eleven exit points of the Western Province.
Police Spokesman DIG Ajith Rohana said around 8,000 persons were tested at those exit points since December 18. "The tests are continuing. If your vehicle is stopped by Health authorities or Security Forces kindly render your fullest support to conduct Rapid Antigen tests. **10 PAGE 02**



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa visit damage caused to maize cultivations the expected yield has dropped considerably was also explained to the

Special tax on imported dresses from April
S.M.WIJAYARATNE
Kurunegala Corr.
The Government will impose a special tax on imported readymade dresses from April. Batik, Handloom and Local Apparel Products State Minister Dadasiri Jayasekera said. He told the *Daily News* yesterday in Kurunegala this tax will help to protect and encourage local textile manufacturers. He said the Government will discontinue importing low quality garments from abroad as Sri Lankan textile manufacturers can produce high quality readymade dresses.
He said around Rs. 23 billion is spent annually on importing dresses and readymade garments to Sri Lanka. **10 PAGE 02**

Cinema halls to open from January
AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI
Cinema halls which were closed due to the pandemic situation in the country will be opened from January 1 except in isolated areas, the government announced yesterday (27).
Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in his capacity as Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs Minister has given permission to open cinema halls islandwide from January 1 subject to health guidelines. **10 PAGE 02**



Treasury Secretary S.R. Attigalle has advised all Heads of public institutions to pay special attention to manage expenditure within the budgetary provisions next year due to fiscal constraints owing to COVID-19.
The Circular was sent to all Ministry Secretaries, State Ministry Secretaries, Provincial Council Chief Secretaries, Department Heads, District Secretaries and Chairmen of Statutory Boards and Corporations.
"Given the uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the amount of provisions to be allocated annually for expenditures related to the natural disasters, it will be extremely difficult to provide allocations in addition to the budgetary provisions. Therefore, expenditure to be incurred in 2021 should be managed in a well-prioritised manner. "If any request for additional allocations is made only for an essential matter, those requests should always be forwarded to the General Treasury together with the recommendation of the Chief Accounting Officers," the Circular noted. **10 PAGE 02**

Rural trade network to protect farmers, consumers
AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI
The government has initiated a rural trade network that follows the government's trade related decisions and protects the farmers and consumers, Samurdhi, Household Economy, Micro Finance, Self Employment and Business Development State Minister Shehan Semasinghe said.
He said this rural trade network will replace the present system where farmers and consumers were not given due priority.
The State Minister expressed confidence on this network of female entrepreneurs which will create a strong distribution network even in the face of epidemics such as COVID-19. **10 PAGE 02**

Largest stock of smuggled turmeric seized

A stock of 20,000 kg of turmeric smuggled from India was seized by Police Special Task Force (STF) during a raid carried out in the Hungama police area, Police Spokesman DIG Ajith Rohana said.
He said the above stock was the largest consignment of turmeric seized following the Gazette banning the imports of turmeric. The raid was conducted at the Gurupokuna fisheries harbour in Kalamatiya around 3am on Sunday. He said four suspects were arrested and a trawler was seized during the raid. They were to be produced before the Court yesterday.
Two trucks in the vicinity of Gurupokuna fisheries harbour were also taken into police custody on suspicion that those were to be used to transport the smuggled



COVID positive cases pass 40,000

ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA
The total number of COVID-19 positive patients directed in the country has exceeded 40,000 mark yesterday, the Health Ministry's Epidemiology Unit stated.
The total number of COVID positive cases currently stands at 40,380.
Around 32,701 of them have recovered while 7,492 patients remain in hospitals. **10 PAGE 02**

COVID cases exceed 80 million worldwide

The number of COVID-19 cases worldwide has topped 80 million. Data compiled by Johns Hopkins University reported the mark Saturday morning after 472,000 cases were recorded on Christmas Day. The number of deaths related to the coronavirus pandemic across the globe stands at 1.75 million. **10 PAGE 02**

Coronavirus: Cases of new variant appear worldwide

Cases of the more contagious variant of COVID-19 first identified in the UK have been confirmed in several European countries as well as Canada and Japan.
Infections linked to people reported in Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and France.
A couple found infected in Ontario, Canada, had no known travel history or high-risk contacts, officials say. Japan is to ban most non-resident foreign country for a month from Monday.
Since reporting infections in five passengers who had all arrived from the UK, the country has confirmed two more cases, one of which is said to have been News of the new variant triggered travel restrictions around the world last week.
Meanwhile, several EU countries have started to vaccinate people against the virus ahead of a co-ordinated rollout across the