

Defence Secretary, Army Chief promoted to General rank

CAMELIA NATHANIEL

Defence Secretary Major General (Rtd) Kamal Gunaratne and Army Commander Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva were promoted to the rank of General yesterday.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had taken the decision to promote both Major General (Rtd) Kamal Gunaratne and Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva to the rank of General.

However, no further details were available at the time the paper went to print regarding on the promotions. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



TOURISM REVIVAL BEGINS

First flight arrives from Ukraine

on till Jan 24

RAVI LADDUWAHETTY and IRANGIKA RANGE

A total of 185 passengers arrived at the Mahinda Rajapaksa International Airport, Mattala, from Ukraine aboard a SkyUp Boeing 737-900 Charter flight (PQ 555) last afternoon, heralding a new chapter in post-COVID-19 tourism.

This is the first time that a group of tourists arrived in Sri Lanka since the country opened up after the COVID-19 outbreak and this group will be staying in Sri Lanka between 10 to 14 days. The flight was scheduled to arrive at 2.40 p.m. but arrived ahead of time at 2.06 p.m., a tourism Ministry spokesman said.

The passengers who arrived at the Mattala Airport were subject to PCR Tests 72 hours prior to their departure from the Kiev Airport in Ukraine. They were subject to PCR tests on their arrival in Mattala, prior to their departure to their hotels. They will be subject to further PCR Tests during their stay.

Prior to the arrival of the tourists, Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga told a news **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Mattala Airport employees greet the first two tourists entering Sri Lanka after a lapse of nine months yesterday. A SkyUp Airlines flight from Ukraine carrying 185 tourists landed at the Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport, marking the revival of tourism in the island under a pilot project. All tourists arriving in the island have to adhere to strict health guidelines formulated jointly by the Ministries of Health and Tourism. Pictures by Gayan Pushpika

COVID-19 recoveries exceed over 80 percent - GMOA

ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA

The Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) yesterday stated that more than 80 percent of COVID-19 positive patients reported so far in the country have totally recovered and been discharged from

hospitals. GMOA Editor Dr. Haritha Aluthge said that most countries failed to achieve a recovery rate of 80 percent.

"This is a great success achieved by the country's health system," he said. He said the recovery rate of

the country reflects the success of all the measures the country has taken so far to prevent the spread of the virus as well as the dedication and the efficiency of the healthcare workers, military personnel **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Legal action against COVID-19 escapee, helpers

RAKSHANA SRIYANTHA

The Police said legal action will be taken against the COVID-19 infected person who escaped from his home in Sapugaskanda while undergoing quarantine and anyone who had given him shelter.

The Police on Sunday found the COVID-19 infected person at a house in Makola North and had admitted

him to a hospital. The Police Spokesman said that the owner of the house where the infected person was staying and his family members have also been quarantined.

He said steps will be taken to file legal action against the house owner when the quarantine period ends.

Six houses including the Sapugaskanda Makola North house where the victim was staying and 22 persons in those houses have been placed under house quarantine.

The Police Media Spokesman said that the concealment of any corona infected person was against the quarantine rules.

Murder suspect killed in



ANNUAL SRI PADA SEASON BEGINS: The processions, carrying the Sacred Casket of Relics of The Buddha, Sacred Objects, and the statue of God Saman left the Sri Pada Raja Maha Viharaya in Galpottawa, Pelmadulla following religious observances yesterday morning. The processions will proceed via four roads and will reach the upper precincts of Sri Pada, where the Sacred Objects will be placed in the morning today until the end of the Sri Pada season (Vesak Poya). Pilgrims will not be allowed to visit Sri Pada until January 31 due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Picture by Samantha Kankanange, Bellihuloya Group Corr.

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Guidelines for tourists

LADDUWAHETTY



Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga has given directions to the Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority Kimarli Fernando on the health guidelines to be implemented during the Tourism Pilot Project which is due to be implemented between December 28 and January 24. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Deepest ground water: Experts identify two locations

Water Supply Minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara has said that geological experts have found two locations in the country where the ground water level is at a considerably deep level.

Citing the report presented by experts, the Minister however has said that even at these two locations the ground water level is around 30 feet deep. The two places **▶ TO PAGE 02**

Govt. moots rehab instead of jail for drug addicts

MAHINDA PLIYANAGE, Galle Central Special Corr.

The Government is considering sending drug addicts to rehabilitation centres in the future instead of prisons, Public Security Minister Retired Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekera said.

The Minister said that studies show that imprisonment does nothing to cure drug addiction and added that rehabilitation and vocational training could be the better option. The Minister said steps have been taken to control narcotic abuse in three phases. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Give turmeric, maize farmers a fair price

- President instructs officials

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has instructed the Minister of State and officials in charge of the subject to intervene to stop irregularities in the purchase of turmeric, maize and other crops from farmers.

He has also directed the Commissioner of Excise to issue a gazette notification banning the use of maize for the production of alcohol and ethanol.

Local farmers have successfully expanded the cultivation of turmeric and maize and the Maha season harvest is nearing.

President Rajapaksa



emphasized that farmers should get a fair price.

The President pointed out that the Government should fully intervene to stop the irregularities that take place such as stockpiling by traders, the President's Media Division in a communiqué said. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

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