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East Terminal will not be sold but developed - Minister

ASELA KURULUWANA

Ports and Shipping Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena said the Eastern Terminal of the Colombo Port will be developed by investors so that 51% of the shares can be owned without obtaining a loan and turn the Colombo Port into a new economic and naval hub.

He said Indian and Japanese investors have been

invited to invest in the project and local investors will also have the opportunity.

He was speaking after receiving blessings from Malwathu Anunayake Ven. Dimbulkumbure Wimaladhamma Thera on Saturday (2). The Minister said several groups were disseminating misinformation about the Eastern Terminal but the government will not do anything



in secret without informing the Maha Sangha and the people, especially the Mahanayake Theras and Anunayake Theras.

"Good governance is a government that sold the resources of this country. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa through his 'Visions of Prosperity' clearly stated that the resources of the country will not be sold and we stand by our promises," he said.

He emphasized that the opportunity to develop the Eastern Terminal will be given to the

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Prez pardon for Uwatenne Thera

Ven. Uwatenne Sumana Thera who was sentenced to life imprisonment has been granted a Presidential pardon.

A senior official of the Presidential Media Division said the notice regarding the pardon of Ven. Uwatenne Sumana Thera was sent to the Justice Ministry.

A Prisons Department spokesman said the

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The England cricket team arrived in Sri Lanka yesterday to resume a pandemic-hit Test series on a British Airways charter flight. England's tour of Sri Lanka, which was postponed during March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been rescheduled for January 2021. The Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA) has earned the confidence of reputed airlines to schedule international flight operations. Airport sources said that the Rapid Antigen test conducted on 44 members of the team tested negative. (Pictures by Airport and Aviation Services Limited)

68,000 SRI LANKANS AWAITING RETURN

FOREIGN SECRETARY



MINISTRY, 67 MISSIONS COORDINATE REPATRIATION

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has been carrying out repatriation for almost a year now and to date 60,470 Sri Lankans, comprising pilgrims, students, Government and Armed Forces personnel, migrant workers, short term visitors, seafarers and cases on compassionate grounds have been repatriated from 137 countries by the Ministry through Sri Lanka Missions overseas," he said.

Over 40,000 migrant workers, predominantly from the Middle-East region have been the top segment of overseas workers who have benefited so far whereas another 20,000 Sri Lankans have been brought down from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin American regions. As the conditions abroad deteriorate and due to the large number of layoffs,

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Tourists will help boost country's battered economy - Minister

IRANGIKA RANGE

Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga said it was hilarious that the Opposition which was urging the government to provide relief for the people engaged in the tourism sector is now opposed to the opening of the country for tourists.

"We are puzzled and confused by the double standards of the Opposition to the tourism industry," he added. The Opposition today derives a cruel form of joy if the number of COVID-19 cases keeps increasing by the day," he added.

"There are over three million who directly or indirectly depend on the tourism industry. Their livelihoods were



The arrival of a group of tourists from Ukraine under a bubble.

badly affected by the pandemic for past nine months. They were helpless and there is a request from them to open the country for international tourists strictly adhering to the health guidelines. That's why we decided to open the airports under Health Min-

istry recommendations. There is no danger to the country and people even though the country has been opened for tourists visiting in chartered flights. All tourists arriving have to undergo two PCR tests and they will be in a bubble away from Sri Lankans.

Even the employees in hotels located in the tourist bubbles are not allowed to go their homes during the time the tourists are staying and workers have to undergo self quarantine for 14 days after the tourists leave the hotels.

No major threat to maize crop from pest - Minister

Rwandan experts here on voluntary tour

ASELA KURULUWANA

Agriculture Minister Mahindanda Aluthgamage denied rumours that pesticide was bought from Rwanda and distributed to control the Fall Army worm (Sena caterpillar) in Sri Lanka.

He said that a team from Rwanda had come to Sri Lanka only to exchange techniques used by them

to control the pest and that they had even borne the cost voluntarily to tour Sri Lanka.

He said this at a media briefing held at the Mahindananda Foundation office in Nawalapitiya on Saturday (2).

He also said the group arrived in Sri Lanka with the intervention of the Army Commander.



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Fixed prices for 10 essentials from February - Minister

CHAMINDA PERERA

Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardene yesterday said a comprehensive mechanism is in place to provide 10 essential items to consumers at a fixed price from February.

He said quotations will be called from producers and



direct importers for the purchase of ten essential items and relevant advertisement will be published in the papers by end of this month.

The Minister was of the view that this measure will help provide high quality products to the consumer at a low cost.

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Safari drivers in quarantine quandary after Yala tour

NUWAN JAYASEKARA in Sooriyawewa

A tense situation occurred when the jeep drivers and tour guides who assisted the Ukrainian tourists here under a pilot project who toured the Yala National Park, were instructed to quarantine for 14 days.

Several Ukrainian nationals who arrived in Sri Lanka under the Tourist Pilot Project have been identified as being COVID infected, however, they have been allowed to travel in the country, it was reported.

Accordingly, the group visited the Yala Safari Park in 28 jeeps and after leaving the area,



The jeep drivers protesting their quarantine.



The Army taking away the drivers for quarantine. Pictures by Nuwan Jayasekera in Suriyawewa.

the military have instructed that the drivers of the jeeps should be quarantined for 14 days.

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DWC hunt to relocate Kudumbigala leopards

MANESHKA BORHAM

Wildlife Conservation Department Officials have begun an operation to locate and capture the leopard believed to have attacked a farmer on Thursday (1) and killed another on December 30 in Kudumbigala, Ampara.

DWC sources said the leopard will have to be located, tranquillised and moved to a different area of the reserve to safeguard the leopard and the area public.

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Ranawaka warns of Deepfake technology

CHAMINDA PERERA

SJB MP Patali Champaka Ranawaka yesterday warned that some media organizations may use Deepfake technology to create convincing but entirely fictional content to spread misinformation in society.

Referring to the Channel 4 alternative Christmas message delivered by a deepfake of the Queen in UK, Ranawaka said some media

moguls may resort to this type of strategies to dupe the public.

"Some media moguls have resorted to a strategy to bring forward unnecessary issues which have no scientific basis with the intention of making the people forget the real crisis facing the country," he said. He added that the world is in the threshold of unprecedented economic and health crisis.



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Govt leading masses on deceptive path - UNP

SHIROMI ABEYSINGHE

United National Party (UNP) Deputy Leader Ruwan Wijewardene said the government is trying to bring COVID-19 to the country by bringing in foreigners saying that it wants to rebuild the tourism industry.

As a result, there is a risk of another COVID-19 cluster being created through tourists from Ukraine, he added.

He expressed these views speaking to the media before joining the Ratnapura District Programme of the United National Party (UNP) reorganization's Islandwide district programme under the theme 'Mulawa Paradamu - Ek Wee Nagitimu' (Defeat the Deception - Let's Rise Together), after paying homage to the historic Saman Devalaya.



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Boiler explosion kills Indian, injures two

CAMELIA NATHANIEL

An Indian was killed and two others were injured following a boiler explosion in Kotadeniyawa yesterday, the Police said.

Rohana said the explosion had occurred at a steel factory in Karabuttawa in Kotadeniyawa around 6.30 am yesterday. "A boiler at the factory had exploded due to a blockage and three

Indian employees of the factory had been injured and admitted to the Meerigama Hospital. However, one of the Indian employees was pronounced dead on admission to the hospital. The deceased

has been identified as 46-year-old Javed Rasheed from Bihar, India," he said. An inquest had been held and an autopsy was also held yesterday.

