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SRI LANKA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER | SINCE 1918

## ONLY CREMATION OF COVID DEAD PERMITTED - MINISTER



CAMELIA NATHANIEL and AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI

Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi told Parliament yesterday that burial of COVID dead will not be permitted and all COVID victims will only be cremated as per expert advice.

Responding to MP Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, Minister Wanniarachchi said a sub-committee to the expert committee, appointed to deliberate burials, has recommended that the bodies of COVID victims should be cremated.

The Health Minister said the decision to cremate COVID dead in Sri Lanka will not be amended on religious, political or any other grounds. Responding to Ponnambalam she said the sub-committee

consisted of virologists, Judicial Medical Officers, microbiologists, epidemiologists and general physicians. Minister Wanniarachchi said the report has now been forwarded to the main expert committee for consideration and upon studying the report the expert committee will announce its final decision. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

## Eighteen member Deregulation Commission to simplify existing laws

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has appointed a 18-member Deregulation Commission for the simplification of the existing Laws and Regulations in the interest of the people. The Commission is co-chaired by former Secretary to the President and Principal Advisor to the President Lalith Weeraratna and John Keells Group Chairman Krishan Balendra.

Other members of the Commission are S.D.A.B. Boralessa - Secretary, State Ministry of Land Management, State Enterprises Land and Property Development, M.M.C. Ferdinando - Retired Ministry Secretary, Power sector, Suresh de Mel - Chairman, Export Development Board, C. Weligamage - Director General, Department of Public Finance, Chandana Kumarasinghe - Director General of Establishments, Ministry of Public Services, **▶ TO PAGE 02**



## Constitutional protection for public officials - PM

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday stated that in future he will provide necessary constitutional protection to ensure that any public officials who have served the people in good faith will not be punished. The Prime Minister was speaking at an awareness programme for public officials about the national programme *Gama Samaga Pilisandara - Weda Samaga Yali Gamata* at Temple Trees yesterday.

The Prime Minister said that some public servants today were reluctant to go out of their way to help and serve the public due to the unpleasant experience they had during the previous Yahapalana regime. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



## Joe Biden confirmed as incoming President



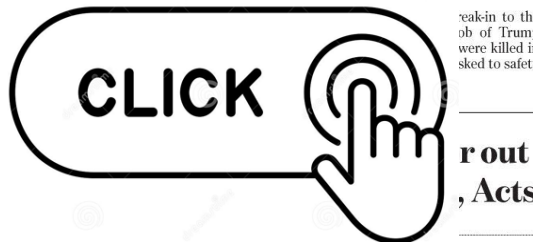
Federal agents draw their guns at the insurgents trying to break through a window of the Capitol Chamber.



Four dead in failed insurrection

A joint session of the US Congress and Senate confirmed the Electoral College victory of President-Elect Joe Biden as an insurrection mounted by pro-Trump supporters instigated by the President failed to overturn the certification of Biden's victory in the heart of the Capitol building on Thursday night.

Vice President Mike Pence was earlier urged by President



reakin to the ob of Trump were killed in sked to safety

## Accelerated repatriation of Sri Lankans from Middle East

### Increased flights from Middle East



The Government will accelerate the process of bringing back overseas Sri Lankans who seek to return home due to COVID-19 related issues from next week, Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga said.

The mini flights bringing Sri Lankans from the Middle East will be increased to five and the number of passengers brought in cargo flights will be increased to 75. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

## Mailed narco pills worth over Rs.135 mn detected

SHAVINI MADHARA

A package containing 18,000 ecstasy pills worth over Rs.135 million has been detected by Sri Lanka Customs Narcotics Control Unit during an inspection at the Central Mail Exchange in Colombo yesterday.

The stock of narcotics pills were reportedly sent from Belgium via air mail. The package of narcotic pills has been weighed at 9 kilograms. Customs Media Spokesperson Sunil Jayaratne noted that this is the largest haul of ecstasy pills that has been seized in Sri Lanka and in the South Asian region to date. **▶ TO PAGE 02**



Customs Director General Maj. Gen. G.V. Ravipriya and officials take a look at the contraband narco pills. Picture by Ranjith Asanka.

## Ruwan to be UNP's MP

SHIROMI ABEYSINGHE

UNP seniors have finally agreed to nominate the party's Deputy Leader Ruwan Wijewardene as its National List member in Parliament, highly placed sources from UNP headquarters 'Sirikotha' said.

It is reported that the final decision in this regard will be taken at the party working committee meeting to be held next Wednesday. Former Prime Minister and UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe has summoned a group of party seniors to Sirikotha today to discuss the matter.



## COPA to expose deliberate tax defaulters

The Committee on Public Accounts (COPA) will publicise all institutions which deliberately avoid paying compulsory taxes and levies on a large scale. **▶ TO PAGE 02**

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