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Estate workers' wage hike through Wages Boards



DHANUSKA GODAKUMBURA

The Cabinet of Ministers that met yesterday presided by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has taken a firm decision on raising the daily minimum wage of plantation workers to Rs.1000, possibly through the Wages Boards.

The Cabinet is reported to have reached this decision after discussing at length a Cabinet Memorandum submitted by Labour Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva. The ministers have pointed out that a wage hike for estate workers was one of the main pledges

of the Government. It was noted at the Cabinet Meeting that the wage hike has been hampered by Collective Agreements and that Wages Boards could be a solution. Upon learning that the Finance Ministry has requested a one-week period to study the matter, President Rajapaksa has expressed the view that the Cabinet should come to an agreement on the issue at yesterday's meeting itself.

Hence the Cabinet has granted approval to implement the wage hike through the Wages Boards.

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MP Wasantha Yapa Bandara tests positive

Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) Kandy District Parliamentarian and Chairman of the Kandy District Coordinating Committee Wasantha Yapa Bandara has tested positive for COVID-19.

It is learnt that the results of the recent PCR test conducted on the Parliamentarian was received last night (24) confirming that he had COVID-19. He is the sixth Parliamentarian to test positive for COVID-19 after Ministers Vasudeva Nanayakkara and Pavithra Wanniarachchi, State Ministers Dayasiri Jayasekara and Piyal Nisheantha and MP Rauff Hakeem. MP Wasantha Yapa Bandara has held village level meetings covering nearly 60 Grama Niladhari Divisions during the past two weeks.

He had also held three meetings with Kandy District Administrative Officers. On January 16, Wasantha Yapa Bandara underwent a PCR examination at the Kaduganawa Medical Officer of Health's office on his request.

Several areas declared isolated

The Malkoniya Village in the Ambalantota Grama Niladhari Division in Hambantota and Paliyakotuwala and Galhinna Grama Niladhari Divisions in the Puttalam Ministry of Health Division have been declared as isolated areas with effect from yesterday morning due to the rise in COVID-19 cases.

Head of the National Operation Centre for Prevention of COVID-19 Outbreak, Chief of Defence Staff and Commander of the Army General Shavendra Silva announced that several other areas which were previously declared as restricted were removed from isolation. This includes the Kalmunai North Grama Niladhari division and Kalmunai South Grama Niladhari Division.

One killed in Panadura shooting

LAHIRU FERNANDO

An unidentified gunman had opened fire killing one person in the Pallemulla area in the Panadura North Police area last morning.

The incident happened when two individuals who came on a motorbike wearing full-face helmets shot at a three-wheeler plying towards Panadura around 10 a.m. One of the passengers in the three-wheeler had sustained critical injuries and succumbed to his injuries after admission to the Panadura Base Hospital for treatment.

Following the incident, the Police have deployed a special team to ensure security in the area. Panadura North Police are conducting investigations.

No arrests have been made yet.

TOWARD NEW PROTECT

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PRIORITY FOR SOVEREIGNTY, NATIONAL SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

The proposed new Constitution will protect the People's Sovereignty, National Security, Human Rights, Rule of Law and Economic Development, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa stated yesterday.

Prime Minister Rajapaksa made these remarks while participating as the chief guest at a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the 'House of Justice' building complex at Adhikarana Mawatha in Hulftsdorp.

The Prime Minister reiterated that the Government has always been committed to protect the independence of the Judiciary. "Every time we came to power, we worked to protect the independence of the Judiciary. We have no intention of bending the law through personal interference. We are at the forefront of building the national needs for a One Country, One Law policy," the Prime Minister said.

He stressed that the Government was committed to fulfill



Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Justice Minister Ali Sabry PC, Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya and Prison Management State Minister Lohan Ratwatte laying the foundation stones for the Adhikarana Piyaasa (House of Justice) at Hulftsdorp yesterday. Picture by Ruwan de Silva

people's aspirations. "People are oppressed by outdated rules and regulations. It is our responsibility to free the people from these

unnecessary pressures. This House of Justice should be the House of the People, who are seeking the help of Law and Justice," the Prime Minister added.

He said that in parallel to this House of Justice, Justice Minister Ali Sabry, PC

Indian fisherman tests positive for COVID-19 following quarantine

Sri Lanka Navy during a special operation in the Northern seas on January 9 apprehended nine Indian fishermen along with their trawler, for poaching in Sri Lankan waters. Subsequent to this apprehension, these nine individuals were directed

to 14 days of quarantine due to COVID-19 concerns.

On completion of their quarantine period on January 22, the Indian fishermen were subjected to a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test before handing them to



Children attending Nalanda Balika Central College in Minuwangoda engaged in studies while maintaining a distance and obeying health guidelines. Pictures by Samantha Weerasiri.

MEPA to assess damage to Little Basses Reef

RUKSHANA RIZWIE

A special operation has been launched by the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) to assess the damage to the Little Basses Reef after the cargo vessel *MV Eurosun* met with an accident off the South Eastern coast during the weekend.

The Liberian flagged vessel *MV Eurosun* had been transporting cement to Trincomalee from the United Arab Emirates when it ran aground on Saturday.

Officials at MEPA confirmed that a five member team had been

Selling national assets not on Govt's agenda - Prasanna

IRANGIKA RANGE

Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga said yesterday that he too was opposed to any attempt to sell the East Container Terminal (ECT) at the Colombo Port and selling national assets is not on the agenda of the present government.

"However, bringing investment to the country and selling national assets of the country are two different matters and they cannot be compared in a similar manner," he added.

The Minister was addressing the gathering at the ceremony organised to celebrate the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna's (SLPP) fourth anniversary at Udugampola.

Petition filed for national policy to protect elephants fixed for argument



LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA

A writ petition filed seeking an order in the Nature of the Writ of Mandamus directing the environmental authorities to formulate a National Policy on the Protection of Elephants, including steps to minimise attacks on people was yesterday fixed for argument by the Court of Appeal.

A Court Appeal two-judge-Bench headed by Justice Sobhitha Rajakaruna fixed the matter for argument on March 25 and the respondents were given further time to file objections.

Several SJB PC members rejoin UNP - Ruwan

ASELA KURULUWANSHA

UNP Deputy Leader Ruwan Wijewardene says that a number of Provincial Councilors who supported the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) at the last Provincial Council election have rejoined the UNP.

JOINING FORCES TO MAKE HISTORY IN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY.

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