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TUESDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2021 | 36 PAGES | VOLUME - 103 - NO 28 | RS. 30.00 | REGISTERED AS A NEWSPAPER IN SRI LANKA | LATE CITY ★

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Significant growth in Services Sector in 3Q 2020

LAHIRU FERNANDO
The Performance of the Services Sector in the Third Quarter of 2020 has recorded a significant growth of 2.1 percent compared to the same quarter in 2019. According to the Department of Census and Statistics, this has been mostly supported by Telecommunication activities, IT programming consultancy and related activities and Financial Service activities for which growth rates of 16.5 per cent, 13.5 per cent and 12.3 per cent are reported respectively. **TO PAGE 02**

Gampaha, Kalutara schools likely to reopen on Feb.15 - GL

DINULI FRANCISCO
Education Minister Prof. G.L. Peiris stated that schools in Gampaha and Kalutara districts are likely to be reopened on February 15 according to the recommendations made by the Regional Coordinating Committees while the decision regarding the Colombo district will be taken within this week. Addressing a media briefing yesterday, he said that based on the recommendations made by the Gampaha District **TO PAGE 02**

PRESIDENT AT 8TH "DISCUSSION WITH THE VILLAGE" PROGRAMME DIRECTS OFFICIALS TO WITHDRAW LAWSUITS BASED ON OLD CIRCULARS

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa instructed officials to withdraw cases filed under old Circulars with the implementation of new rules that allow farmers to continue cultivation on lands traditionally used for agriculture. President Rajapaksa has instructed all departments and institutions, including Wildlife, Forestry, Environment and Land, to take into consideration requests frequently made by the public during the "Discussion with the Village" sessions when formulating new laws in the interest of the people. Existing issues with the laws will be resolved and new laws will be implemented. This decision was taken to relieve the public of their suffering caused as a result of litigation against State institutions. **TO PAGE 02**

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AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH TRADE UNIONS

SLPA TO OPERATE ECT, A

'GOVT'S MAIN POLICY'

SHAVINI MADHARA
Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has assured that the Eastern Container Terminal (ECT) of the Colombo Port will be operated 100 per cent by the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA). The Prime Minister also stated that the Cabinet Paper to transform the ECT to a fully functioning institution under the Ports Authority would be submitted to the Cabinet. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa made these remarks at a discussion held at Temple Trees yesterday morning with the Trade Unions for the Protection of the Eastern Terminal. "During the meeting, the Prime Minister had stated that the present Government's main policy is not to sell local resources and that under this the ECT will not be sold to any country and will not be handed over to any country for administration," the Prime Minister's Office stated. The report of the Committee appointed by subject Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena to look into this matter was submitted to the President and the Prime Minister. **TO PAGE 02**

Easter Sunday terror attacks

PCol Final Report handed over to President

DILSHAN THARAKA
The Final Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCol) probing the Easter Sunday terror attacks was handed over to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa by his Chairman Supreme Court Justice Janak de Silva at the Presidential Secretariat yesterday. Members of the Commission, Secretary to the President Dr.P.B.Jayasundera and Principal Advisor to the President Lalith Weerasingha were present. **Picture courtesy President's Media Division**

The Final Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCol) probing the Easter Sunday terror attacks that took place on Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019 was handed over to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa by the Chairman of the PCol, Supreme Court Justice Janak de Silva at the Presidential Secretariat yesterday. The report consists of 472 pages, 215 attachments and six volumes. The First interim report was presented to the President on December 20, 2019 and the second interim report on March 02, 2020. The Commission was appointed by former President Maithripala Sirisena on September 22, 2019 through a Gazette Notification to investigate and report on the series of terrorist attacks on Easter Sunday and to recommend the necessary action based on the findings. According to the gazette notification, the Presidential Commission carried out its activities from October 31 to January 28, 2021 and officially concluded its proceedings on January 27, 2021. On April 21, 2019, a series of attacks targeting hotels and Catholic churches were carried out by eight suicide bombers. Kochchikade St. Anthony's, Katuwapitiya St. Sebastian's, Batticaloa Zion Churches and Shangri-La, Kingsbury and Cinnamon Grand Hotels were targeted by them. Following that, two terrorists committed suicide by detonating bombs in Dematagoda and Dehiwala areas. **TO PAGE 02**

Anger and confusion in Myanmar after coup

MYANMAR: The Myanmar military detained de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi early on Monday - hours before a newly elected Parliament dominated by her NLD party was expected to take its seats for the first time since November polls. By 8:30 am, a State of Emergency was announced and former General Myint Swe appointed acting president - directing the country back into direct military rule after barely a decade-long experiment with democracy. There was panic-buying of food, military roadblocks in the capital Naypyidaw and a triumphant pro-army rally in Yangon in the hours after a coup in Myanmar. A putsch had been expected for days, yet when it came it left Myanmar stunned - with roads to its main international airport blocked and communications cut - a country once more isolated from a world it only rejoined a decade ago. But aside from police, uniformed men were few and far between in the city, and no blood was shed. The guns, tanks and helicopters were further north around Naypyidaw, where armoured vehicles blocked off major roads leading to parliament. Suu Kyi's party won over 80 percent of parliamentary seats available - a seemingly unacceptable number to a military that still held key government posts, retained power over all defence and security decisions, and had 25 percent of seats ring-fenced for them. - AFP **(See page 12)**

Bathiudeen files appeal challenging Wilpattu judgment

LAKMAL SOORIYAGODA
Former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen has filed a special leave to appeal petition in the Supreme Court seeking an order to set aside the judgment of the Court of Appeal dated November 16, 2020 in connection with the deforestation of the northern sanctuary of the Wilpattu National Park. In its judgment, the Court of Appeal had issued an order in the nature of mandamus ordering the Conservator General of Department of Forest Conservation to take action to implement a tree planting programme in accordance with the provisions of the Forest Ordinance in any area equivalent to the reserve forest area used for resettlement of IDFs. The Court of Appeal further ordered former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen to bear the full cost of the tree planting programme in these areas applying the polluter pays principle. In his special leave to appeal petition, **TO PAGE 02**

Ministry closely monitoring Myanmar situation

RUKSHANA RIZWIE
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is closely monitoring the situation in Myanmar following a military coup said that the embassy in Yangon was in touch with Sri Lankans and were ready to assist. "The Sri Lanka Embas-

School enrollment based on Grade 5 Schol Exam marks postponed

CHAMINDA PERERA
The Education Ministry yesterday decided to postpone the enrollment of students to schools based on their performance at the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination in 2020 by one month. According to Education Ministry Secretary Prof. Kapila Perera the Ministry while considering the series of protests demanding the authorities to lower the Grade 5 Scholarship cut off marks, has mullied the reduction of district cut off marks by one or two points based on a proposal made by the parents. He said that the Ministry will put in place a transparent mechanism to enroll students to Grade 6 classes after taking into the consideration the requests made by the parents. The Education Ministry Secretary was speaking to the media after a group of parents and several teacher unions held protests highlighting the plight of their children opposite the Presidential Secretariat yesterday. "We will put in place a more transparent mechanism to enroll students for Grade 6 based on their Scholarship examination performance after considering the human resource capacities and classroom facilities in schools," he said. **TO PAGE 02**

JVP cannot be intimidated - Tilvyn

AMALI MALLAWARACHCHI
The Government will not be able to intimidate the JVP by leveling allegations of political revenge against its leader, said JVP General Secretary Tilvyn Silva yesterday (01). Silva also alleged that the Government is using the report submitted by the Commission of Inquiry Investigating Incidents of Political Revenge to hunt down its opponents. These observations were made during a press brief held by the JVP at the party headquarters in Battaramulla yesterday.