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A dignified celebration of freedom at Independence Square

Sri Lanka will hold the 73rd Independence Day celebrations in a solemn and simple manner under the theme a 'Prosperous Tomorrow - Prosperous Motherland' at Independence Square at 8 a.m. today (4) under the auspices of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The celebration will commence following the paying of floral tributes to the statue of D.S. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of independent Sri Lanka. The President will hoist the National Flag amidst the beating of Magul Bera.

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Indian PM congratulates PM on Independence Day

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on the occasion of the 73rd Anniversary of the Independence Day of Sri Lanka.



In a message sent to Prime Minister Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Modi reiterated the shared deep-rooted millennium old ties based on shared linguistic, religious and cultural traditions.

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ISHARA MUDUGAMUWA
Nearly 120,000 individuals, primarily health workers, have already been vaccinated with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine against COVID-19 and no adverse reactions or side effects have been reported so far, State Minister of Primary Health Care, Epidemics and COVID-19 Disease Control Dr. Sudarshani Fernandopulle said yesterday.

The country began administering the vaccine on January 29, after receiving 500,000 doses as a donation from the Indian Government the previous day (Jan 28).
According to the statistics of the Epidemiology Unit of the Health Ministry the vaccination of 118,767 persons has been completed by Tuesday evening (2). Statistics show that 5,286 persons

vaccine on a priority basis as each person receives a dose.

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Unflinching Sri Lankan spirit will help defeat pandemic - PM



It is with immense pride that we celebrate our 73rd Independence Day today. It is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the unflinching spirit and commitment of our people in the fight for freedom, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa stated in an Independence Day message.
The message: "Sri Lankans have stood the test of time, fighting many a battle, gallantly, in the long struggle to gain political, religious and cultural independence."

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UNHRC oblivious to grave HR violations elsewhere - SB

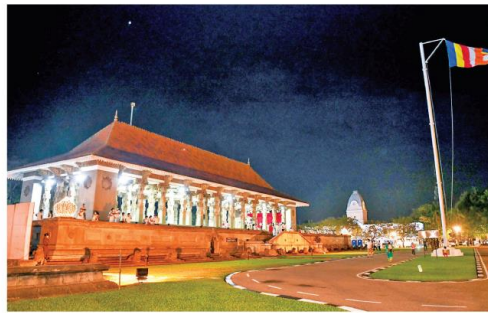
DINULI FRANCISCO

While the COVID-19 pandemic is looming in every corner and 1.7 billion are losing their occupations, the UNHRC is baselessly raising allegations against Sri Lanka, MP S.B. Dissanayake said.

UNP condemns Myanmar coup

SHIROMI ABEYASINGHE

The United National Party (UNP) has condemned the recent military coup in Myanmar.



An All-Night Pirith Chanting ceremony was held at the Independence Memorial Hall at Independence Square, Colombo, under the patronage of Defence Secretary General Kamal Gunaratne to mark Sri Lanka's 73rd Independence Day. The Independence Day ceremony will be held today at the same location.

Indian HC calls on President, PM

High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, Gopal Baglay has called on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and Foreign Affairs Minister Dinesh Gunawardena.

According to diplomatic sources, the focus of the talks was on the recent developments pertaining to the Eastern and Western Container Terminals of the Colombo Port.

The Sri Lankan Government has decided to retain 100 percent SLPA ownership of the ECT while inviting India and Japan to develop the WCT.

▶ TO PAGE 06

Govt rejects Bachelet Report - Minister Gammanpila

The Government has decided to reject the Report by the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet on alleged human rights violations in Sri Lanka, as it has acted in violation of the mandates and non-submission of reliable evidence, said Co-Cabinet Spokesman Minister Udaya Gammanpila yesterday.

He said further that the Government's response to the report has already been submitted in writing to the United Nations. He also said that it will be made public when Foreign Affairs Minister Dinesh Gunawardena addresses the UN Human Rights Council, which begins its sessions on February 22.

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Call to inoculate lottery sellers

The National Lotteries Board (NLB) yesterday wrote to Chief of Defence Staff, Army Commander and Head of the National Operations

Centre for Prevention of COVID-19 Outbreak (NOCPCO) General Shavendra Silva requesting him to give priority to its distributors and sales assistants in obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine.

▶ TO PAGE 06

Dr. Neville Fernando in IDH ICU

Dr. Neville Fernando, the founder of Neville Fernando Teaching Hospital in Malabe is being treated at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) after being diagnosed with COVID-19.

▶ TO PAGE 08

State Minister deplors bus operators' strike plans

IRANGIKA RANGE

If the private bus operators launch a strike in spite of being provided with all concessions and incentives by the Government during the pandemic situation, it

will be very unfair by the commuters, Vehicle Regulation, Bus Transport Services and Train Compartments and Motor Car Industry State Minister Dilum Amunugama said.

▶ TO PAGE 08

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