

Govt. to impress diplomats with tourist safety measures

The Tourism Development Ministry will be reaching out to the diplomatic community to show the remedial action taken by the government to ensure that tourists aren't harassed or harmed in the future after the recent trouble experienced by tourists in Mirissa and the local communal violence which took place in Kandy.

"We will invite foreign ambassadors to visit Mirissa and brief them on the safety measures taken by the government.

The Kandy Hotels Association President has also invited ambassadors to visit the hill country to show that all is well," Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs Minister John Amaratunga said.

He said that this is being done to address any reservations foreign governments are holding on their citizens visiting Sri Lanka. Law & Order and Public Administration and Management Minister Ranjith Madduma Bandara said that due to the recent incidents which were covered by the media, bad publicity is being spread about Sri Lanka in foreign countries.

The government has now called on all tourism service providers in Mirissa to register with the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, while 17 establishments constructed on the beach illegally would be removed next month by the Coast Conservation Department.

Amaratunga, who stressed that the two recent incidents in Mirissa were isolated, said that his ministry would also contribute funds to the Tourist Police to increase its effectiveness in ensuring the safety of tourists, in addition to the Rs. 50 million allocated in the 2017 budget and Rs. 30 million allocated in the 2018 budget for such purposes.

The Tourist Police, which is currently present in 11 tourism hotspots, would be expanded to another 20 locations as fast as possible, Inspector General of Police Pujith Jayasundara said. He admitted that there weren't enough police officers in the force to cover all tourism hotspots. "There aren't enough police officers. Those who are appointed to the Tourist Police however have a fair knowledge of English. We're also training them in languages like French and appointing officers who have a knowledge of Mandarin. We aren't treating this as a second tier responsibility. We are doing the best we can given the resource constraints," he said.

Amaratunga added that until new officers are recruited and trained, the police is exploring a possibility of appointing officers from other regions to tourism hotspots during the peak season of each hotspot.

Jayasundara however requested tourists to lodge complaints with the police as soon as any incidents occur, instead of complaining only to diplomats, or making complaints after going back to their home countries, as such actions delay the process of justice.

So far, 14 suspects have been arrested and remanded for their connection to the incidents in Mirissa, but the process of identifying them out of a line-up has been delayed since the tourists have returned to their home countries.

Meanwhile, Amaratunga added that the Excise Department also has to bear some responsibility since such incidents usually occur at establishments which sell liquor illegally and remain open until dawn.

Seven killed in adverse weather; depression moving away

At least seven persons were killed and five person has gone missing due to the adverse weather conditions prevailing in the country as the deep depression was moving away from Sri Lanka,

authorities said today.

The Police said three fishermen from Ambalangoda and Dodanduwa were among the deceased and another fishermen from Dodanduwa was reportedly went missing.

The other two deceased were identified as residents of Kiribathgoda and Madolsima. Police said five more persons were injured due to the adverse weather condition.

Meanwhile, the Meteorology Department said that the deep depression in the Arabian Sea was now located at 300 km to the west of Colombo.

Issuing the weather report for the next 12 hours at 10.00 am, the department said that the deep depression would likely to develop in to a cyclonic storm within next few hours and move west-northwest ward direction.

“Showery and windy condition about 60-70 kmph are expected over the island particularly in the South-Western part. Heavy falls about 100-150mm can be expected at some places in the Southern, Sabaragamuwa, Central, Uva and Western provinces,” it added.

Meanwhile, the Irrigation Department said that the water levels of Pitabeddara, Panadugama and Sapugoda areas in Nilwala River and Thawalama area in the Gin river are reaching the spill level.

Issuing a statement, the Department said that Nilwala, Gin and Kalu Rivers had received high rainfalls during the past 24 hours and advised that people living downstream areas should to be vigilant in this regard.

“Minor flood situations could be occurred around the said reservoirs if the heavy rain continues,” it added.

Meanwhile, holding a press conference in Colombo, Disaster Management Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa said though the current deep depression was moving away from the country, another atmospheric depression likely to be developed at the Bay of Bengal.

However, he said according to the present data, the Meteorology Department cannot predict its behaviour this early.

“We advise the public to be vigilant even in the next couple of days,” he added. **(Thilanka Kanakarathna)**

Sri Lanka begins process to frame new Constitution

Sri Lanka on Saturday began the process of formulating a new Constitution with President Maithripala Sirisena underlining the need for constitutional reforms aimed at achieving reconciliation with the minority Tamil community and preventing another ethnic war.

“We need a Constitution that suits the needs of the 21st century and make sure that all communities live in harmony,” Sirisena, who completed one year in office today, said in his address to the Parliament. Outlining the previous attempts in the island nation’s history to settle the Tamil issue through various forms of devolution, Sirisena said, “The extremists in the south and the north have caused the loss of thousands of young lives”.

"We must ensure reconciliation and harmony so that we will never go back to war." "I believe now, through our past bitter experiences, we must prepare ourselves for future challenges," he said. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, who also spoke in the Parliament, presented a resolution to set a Constitutional Assembly (CA) made up of legislators, who would seek public input and make recommendations for a new Constitution.

In a special session, Wickremesinghe moved the resolution in Parliament to set up CA and a steering committee of 17 members to draft the new Constitution. "We will have the whole Parliament formulating the Constitution unlike the previous instances when the constitutions were drafted outside Parliament," he said. The new Constitution will replace the current executive president headed constitution adopted in 1978.

Sirisena acknowledged the difficulty in drafting a constitution that would satisfy both sides – Sinhalese and Tamils. Sinhalese oppose a federal system that would ensure more political power for minority Tamils. Sirisena said he himself had opposed the India-mooted provincial councils system introduced in 1987 as a solution but later realised that it was "a good thing".

He said a solution has to be found which will lead to lasting peace through consensus. "The move to set up the Constitutional Assembly was done with that aim," he said. Sirisena, who was elected last year after his stunning electoral victory over strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa, wants to abolish the present executive presidential system which for long has faced accusations of being authoritarian.

Sri Lankan troops in 2009 defeated the LTTE which was fighting for an independent state for minority ethnic Tamils. At least 40,000 Tamil civilians may have been killed in just the final months of the civil war, according to a UN report. The Sri Lankan government has promised that it will investigate alleged war crime allegations against government troops and Tamil Tiger rebels.

Sirisena's predecessor Rajapaksa had antagonised both Tamil and Muslim minorities in order to appease the Sinhala majority.

The resolution moved in Parliament noted that there shall be a Committee of Parliament referred to as the "Constitutional Assembly" which shall consist of all MPs, for the purpose of deliberating on, and seeking the views and advice of the people, on a new constitution for Sri Lanka, and preparing a draft of a Constitution Bill for the consideration of Parliament.

It said the Speaker of Parliament will be the Chairman of the Constitutional Assembly and there will be seven Deputy Chairmen of the Constitutional Assembly, who shall be elected by the Constitutional Assembly. A Steering Committee consisting of the Prime Minister (Chairman), Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the House, the Minister of Justice, and not more than 11 other Members of the Constitutional Assembly will be appointed by the Constitutional Assembly.

Sirisena in his address denied opposition's accusations that the new Constitution is being drafted to please the international community based on their advice. Sirisena, since coming to power, has reduced his presidential powers and strengthened key areas of governance by setting up independent commissions on police, judiciary elections and public service.

Foolish court jester is cabinet spokesman: Rajitha's blunders plunges government into Diplomatic faux pas!

The falsehoods and uncalled for un –diplomatic utterances of Minister Rajitha Senarathne , the cabinet spokesman of the Sri Lanka (SL) government , has driven the government of good governance into a grave predicament and diplomatic faux pas internationally.

Lanka e news inside information division is in receipt of two such incidents whose architect is no less a person than Rajitha Senarathne , who is also an important health minister under the government of good governance .

The Diplomatic ties with Nigeria at snapping point owing to Rajitha !

The first untoward incident relates to the diplomatic agreement signed between Sri Lanka (SL) and Nigeria under the last government. Rajitha stated at a cabinet media briefing that it pertains to the supply of arms to Bokoharam terrorists.

This statement of the cabinet spokesman was unfortunately not contradicted by the leader of the cabinet, president Maithripala Sirisena . Consequently , Nigeria had addressed a strong letter contained in 6 pages expressing its disappointment on a diplomatic level . Later an individual of the government of the highest echelons was met by an official representative of that country , who had also verbally condemned the SL cabinet spokesman's utterances roundly when he met the government higher ups.

While the country is fighting a war against the Bokoharam terrorists , the mendacious and misleading statement made by no less a person than a cabinet spokesman of SL himself has plunged the government into a huge embarrassment not only within Sri Lanka but even internationally, the Nigerian government had pointed out. (a statement made by a spokesman of the cabinet is construed as that country's official statement)

Perhaps , Minister Rajitha and president Maithripala are thinking the diplomatic ties between SL and Nigeria are what were established during the Rajapakse era, but truly , these ties began in January 1970 towards the end of Dudley Senanayake era. Besides Nigeria is a commonwealth country. It is lamentable that minister Rajitha made this rash statement , while president Maithripala Sirisena is the chairman of the commonwealth. If the 'manjang' (mendacious) cabinet spokesman noted for his recklessness has no grey matter to understand that only an ignorant frog in the well would croak over the agreement signed with that country , whether during the Rajapakse era or any other , at least the leader of the cabinet , president Maithripala ought to have known better. Sadly , president too is ignorant .

We are using the word ' mendacious' on purpose, for this cabinet spokesman who is the epicenter of the diplomatic faux pas , has on as many as 14 occasions lied brazenly. Yet President has failed to dismiss Rajitha from the position of cabinet spokesman and replace him with a suitable individual .(it is to be noted that president Maithripala has created an inglorious record as the president who appointed the most misfits to high ranking posts during the last ten months.)

Rajitha casts media freedom into dust bin and dumps journalists on the CID fourth floor- whither good governance ?

While the government of good governance is plunged deeply in despair internationally owing to the cavernous mouth of reckless Rajitha , nationally too the country is driven into chaos

owing to the statement made by him to the CID against the media.

Following the report in last weekend Sinhala newspaper regarding an interview relating to another individual, Rajitha has lodged a complaint with the CID headquarters against the reporter who wrote the article and the editor of the newspaper. Based on the complaint the CID summoned the reporter and the editor.

It is very evident that these actions are reminiscent of the media freedom erosion and suppression during the Rajapakse era, and an index that same despotic trend is rearing its ugly head again.

If Rajitha was hurt over the report, he could have first notified the newspaper to rectify the error, if any. If that is not heeded, a complaint can be made to the Press council. If that is also not successful, the newspaper can be sued. When all these options are available, making a complaint to the CID and summoning the journalist for an alleged wrongdoing reflects poorly on a government of good governance, and such things don't happen in a country where truly there is good governance.

Rajitha Senarathne despite being a most responsible minister and Cabinet spokesman acting most irresponsibly, has caused irretrievable damage to the country not only nationally but internationally too.

Currently, the 2015 media suppression are being rated in respect of the countries of the world. Rajitha's rash and reckless conduct is going to affect SL's ranking detrimentally. It is learnt that others of the government in the high echelons are also thoroughly dismayed and disillusioned.

Might we recall when Mangala Samaraweera, Sripathy Sooriyaarachchi and Wijedasa Rajapakse left the Rajapakse regime somewhere in 2006 after having understood the weaknesses and evils of the regime, to join with the opposition and work untiringly along with the people of the opposition in their struggle for nine years, Rajitha on the contrary stuck with the Rajapakses for the last 9 years serving and supporting them faithfully in all their crooked and corrupt activities.

When Rajapakses hounded out and chased away the ex chief justice, it was Rajitha who 'heard' the case. Rajitha who somersaulted to the opposition at the latter stage (in the final month), surely cannot understand the aspirations of the people for good governance or the opposition struggle. Now he is conducting himself as an individual who is even above the president, while the latter is behaving as if he is in the group mortally scared of Rajitha.

The recent incident in which the president gave a phone call late in the night to a son of a high profile minister, to inform him not to criticize Rajitha in his face book, is a good illustration. In other words even the criticism of Rajitha in a page of the face book of the youth is offending the president.

In any case the relevant minister had given an answer to the president that was a 'slap' across the president's face. The minister after reminding the president on two recent unsavory episodes had stated to his face, 'by these alone you are unwittingly betraying that you are not the president of the country.' (we believe, for the moment these two episodes are not important to be elaborated to the people).

In any case, the prime minister yesterday making a special announcement told in parliament that a counter rainbow revolution is in motion. When the cabinet spokesman himself is

supplying weapons locally and internationally (apart from provoking and fuelling diplomatic disputes internationally) for these counter revolutions , the country being driven to the edge of a precipice is inevitable and inescapable.

It is in old folk tales we have heard how a single foolish monkey of a good governance King causes monumental destruction, but now we are witnessing that in reality . It is unfortunate that the modern foolish monkey has been given the cabinet spokesman post in lieu of a sword .A foolish monkey wielding a Cabinet minister post of modern times is much mre dangerous than a foolish monkey wielding a sword of ancient times.

PM proposes PSC to probe allegations against Ravi K.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday suggested the appointment of a Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) to probe the allegations made by the Opposition against Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake instead of the no confidence motion against him.

Mr Wickremesinghe said the PSC should be given one month to investigate and submit its recommendations.

He made this suggestion when the opposition asked for a date to take up the no-confidence motion against the Finance Minister.

The Prime Minister said there was no tradition of bringing a no-confidence motion against the Finance Minister with regard to matters pertaining to the budget. He said both the Finance Minister, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet has to resign if the Budget was defeated. He said the no-confidence motion was based on the budget.

Chief opposition whip Anura Kumara Disanayake said one cannot associate the no confidence motion and the budget. He said budget is more or less a Bill and a no confidence motion is on the conduct of a Minister.

MP Dinesh Gunawardane said the Speaker had assured that a date would be provided to take up the no-confidence motion. This matter should be decided at the next party leaders meeting in January and a date fixed.

Speaker Karu Jayasuriya said the matter would be discussed at the next party leaders meeting.

One killed, 40 injured in road tragedy

One person died while 40 others were injured when a bus fell off a cliff at Lindula in Nuwara Eliya this morning.

Police said the bus was transporting employees who were returning to the Tea Research Institute from Talawakele.

The person who died was identified as Kumari Kiribathgoda (59), a resident of Colombo. The injured were admitted to the Lindula and Nuwara Eliya Hospitals.





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See

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at:

<http://www.dailymirror.lk/99745/one-killed-40-injured-in-road-tragedy#sthash.Vg7Khu68.dpuf>
