

Decisions taken by the Cabinet of Ministers on 24.01.2024

1. Signing of the Sri Lanka-Thailand Free Trade Agreement

Development of supply capacity, attracting export-oriented foreign direct investment and expanding international market access for Sri Lankan goods and services have been identified as strategies that are essential to Sri Lanka's economic growth. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers has given approval on 16.01.2018 to start negotiations to enter into a free trade agreement with Thailand, which is one of the largest economies and the largest foreign investor in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The National Trade Negotiations Committee has also exchanged views with all relevant local stakeholders during the negotiation process. After nine rounds of discussions between the two sides, a complete 14-chapter draft Free Trade Agreement was prepared, including the preamble and annexes, to improve trade and investment, compliance with local laws and regulations and facilitating knowledge sharing. The clearance of the Attorney General and the agreement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also been received for the same. Accordingly the Cabinet of Ministers approved the proposal presented by the Hon. President to sign the proposed agreement between two parties.

2. Obtaining technical assistance under the "Sustainable Consumption and Production Promotion Project" implemented by the German Development Cooperation (GIZ).

"Promoting sustainable public procurement practices in line with national policies" has been included as the 7th Sustainable Development Goal under "Ensuring Sustainable Production and Consumption Patterns" identified as the 12th Sustainable Development Goal by the United Nations. In order to achieve that goal, the National Green Procurement Policy has been prepared to formally and adequately include green components in the public procurement process and the National Framework on Environmental Labeling has been prepared to facilitate the identification of reliable green products and services and to implement them to reduce false greening in the market. The Cabinet of Ministers has already given its approval for these. The German Development Cooperation has agreed to provide technical support for the programs planned to be implemented under the same principles under the "Sustainable Consumption and Production Promotion Project" currently implemented in several Asian countries. Accordingly the proposal presented by the Minister of Environment to enter in to an Implementation Agreement between the Ministry of Environment and German Development Corporation was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

3. Transfer of National Cinnamon Research and Training Center to Cinnamon Development Department

Cabinet approval has been given on 14.08.2023 to establish a new department named Cinnamon Development Department with effect from 01.09.2023. It has been recognized that the National Cinnamon Research and Training Center, which is currently under the Department of Export Agriculture, should be handed over to the newly established Cinnamon Development Department to carry out research work of the department. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Proposal presented by the Minister of Plantation Industries to transfer the National Cinnamon Research and Training Center and all its assets as well as all the functions currently carried out by the National Cinnamon Research and Training Center to the Cinnamon Development Department.

4. Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Health of Sri Lanka and Latter –day Saint Charities of USA

In accordance with the provisions of the agreement reached between the Ministry of Health and the Latter –day Saint Charities of United States of America to provide special wheelchairs for people with spinal cord injuries, Sri Lanka has received a stock of wheelchairs and other mobility aids as donations. Considering the acute shortage of cancer drugs faced by Sri Lanka in recent times, the Latter –day Saint Charities has agreed to give Sri Lanka a stock of 13 types of drugs as a donation through the registered suppliers of the National Drug Regulatory Authority, upon a request made by the Ministry of Health. The Cabinet of Ministers decided to give the approval to proceed based on the facts submitted by the Minister of Health regarding the acceptance of the concerned donation following the accepted procedure.

05. Obtaining assistance from Fleming Fund of the United Kingdom for the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Fighting with Antimicrobial Resistance 2023 - 2028.

It has been recognized that antimicrobial resistance is one of the 10 major public health risks confronted by the human kind. The World Health Organization in the year 2019 has estimated that 1.27 million direct deaths are caused annually by drug resistance bacteria on an effect of antimicrobial resistance while 4.95 deaths are annually drug resistance bacteria. Apart from that, the World Health Organization has identified that antimicrobial resistance causes a considerable impact on the economic cost to the countries. Under such circumstances, the Fleming Fund granting programme managed by the Health and Social Protection Department of the United Kingdom assists 25 African and Asian countries in relation to act on antimicrobial resistance. Therefore, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the resolution furnished by the Minister of Health for taking necessary actions to implement the National Strategy Plan 2023 -2028 to fight antimicrobial resistance with the assistance of the Fleming Fund under the said grant programme.

06. Amendment to the Bills of Exchange Ordinance.

Certain controversial facts have been erupted by certain provisions of the Bills of Exchange Ordinance No. 25 of 1927 which is in effect at present while some of the provisions in it are out of date. Therefore, a

committee chaired by the President's Counsel Nihal Jayawardhane has been appointed for obtaining recommendations on the Bills of Exchange Ordinance that clarify and enhance the law applicable to legitimate documents that transactions can be made. Therefore, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the joint proposal submitted by the Hon. President in his capacity as the Minister of Finance, Economic Stabilization and National Policies and the Minister of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms to direct the Legal Draftsmen to formulate a draft bill to amend the Bills of Exchange Ordinance No. 25 of 1927 based on the recommendations included in the report furnished by the above committee.

07. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code

Recognizing that it is unjustifiable for the accused or the appellants to spend a long time in the custody for the longer period in addition to the period of penalty mostly due to delays in the legal system, approval has been granted at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers held on 20.02.2023 to amend sections 323 (5) and 333 (5) of the Criminal Procedure Code so that from the period the relevant individual should be imprisoned under his penalty order can be deducted from the period the accused / appellants spent in the prison. Accordingly, the Legal Draftsman has formulated a draft bill and the clearance of the Attorney General has been granted for the same. The Cabinet of Ministers granted approval to the proposal forwarded by the Minister of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms to publish the aforesaid draft bill in the Government gazette notification and submit the same to the Parliament to obtain its concurrence.

08. Amendments to the Penal Code

Approval has been granted at the meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers held on 18.01.2021 and 28.06.2021 to introduce amendments to the Penal Code to amend laws on constitutional rape of females mentioned in the Penal Code, to correct the shortcomings in the law of raping of females and to institute raping of male children as a criminal offense. Accordingly, clearance of the Attorney General has been granted for the draft bill formulated by the Legal Draftsman. The Cabinet of Ministers granted approval to the proposal forwarded by the Minister of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms to publish the aforesaid draft bill in the Government gazette notification and submit the same to the Parliament to obtain its concurrence.

09. Draft Bill of Buddhist Women's Charity Society of Kelaniya (Incorporation) Act

The draft Bill of Buddhist Women's Charity Society of Kelaniya (Incorporation) Act has been presented to the Parliament as a personal resolution of a Parliamentarian by Hon (Rev.) Athuraliye Rathana Thero. The relevant draft bill has been adequately prepared by the Legal Draftsman to which the clearance of the Attorney General has been granted. The Cabinet of Ministers granted their approval to the resolution furnished by the Minister of Buddha Sasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs to submit a report to the Parliament by recommending the above mentioned draft bill as per provisions of Parliamentary Standing Order No. 52(6).

10. Draft Bill of International Theravada Dharmayathanaya (Incorporation) Act

The draft Bill of International Theravada Dharmayathanaya (Incorporation) Act has been presented to the Parliament as a personal resolution of a Parliamentarian by the former President and current Member of Parliament Hon. Maithreepala Sirisena. The relevant draft bill has been adequately prepared by the Legal Draftsman to which the clearance of the Attorney General has been granted. The Cabinet of Ministers granted their approval to the resolution furnished by the Minister of Buddha Sasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs to submit a report to the Parliament by recommending the above mentioned draft bill as per provisions of Parliamentary Standing Order No. 52(6).

In the event of any inconsistency between the Tamil and English translations of this document, the Sinhala text shall prevail.