

Cabinet Decisions taken at the Cabinet Meeting conducted on 23-12-2024

01. Memorandum of Understanding between India and Sri Lanka relevant to the implementation of multisectoral grant aid.

It has been proposed to sign a memorandum of understanding between the Government of India and the Government of Sri Lanka for strengthening social-economic development and bilateral cooperation. According to the framework of the memorandum of understanding, it has been planned to implement a series of development projects in the northern province under the grant aid of Sri Lankan Rs. 2,371.83 million provided by the Government of India. Accordingly, 33 projects relevant to the improvement of infrastructure facilities and enhancement of livelihoods have been identified, drawing special attention towards education, health, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and community empowerment. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers has approved the proposal presented by His Excellency, the President, in his capacity as Minister of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, to sign the framework of the proposed memorandum of understanding between 02 (two) parties.

02. Memorandum of Understanding between United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment, and Tourism

It has been proposed to sign a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment, and Tourism for the period of 3 (three) years, enabling the provision of a collaborative working framework that parties can develop and implement the activities to facilitate mutual benefits by utilizing existing resources. Under this memorandum of understanding, it is expected to provide the training and learning assistance, training of diplomats, minimization of disasters and crisis management, and utilization of geo-information technology relevant to the implementation of the 2030 agenda, especially for sustainable development. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers has approved the proposal presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment, and Tourism to sign the proposed memorandum of understanding between both parties.

03. Convention on the bio – diversity in the areas situated beyond the national territory.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the bio diversity in the areas beyond the national territory has been seconded on 19.06.2023 by the Summit on Ocean Biodiversity. It is the third convention implemented under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). As a result of swelling of the human activities in the developed countries, the maritime bio - diversity has been threatened and, it has caused threat to the quality and resistance of the oceans. Based on better implementation of the United Nations convention on maritime law, broad corporation of various stakeholders for securing massive geographical areas and conservation, the requirement to enter into the said convention was recognized. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the proposal furnished by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism to sign the convention on bio – diversity of the areas situated beyond the national territory.

04. Compensation programme for the damages caused to the agriculture field of the country due to unfavourable climatic conditions.

The public had to experience numerous inconveniences due to inundation of houses, highways, paddy fields and agricultural lands, and devastation of reservoirs at large as a result of unfavourable climatic conditions prevailed in the previous days. According to data of the Department of Agrarian Services, approximately 91,300 acres of paddy fields have been devastated while approximately 86,225 acres of paddy lands were partially devastated. Apart from that 173 minor irrigation resources were devastated while 1,148 were partially damaged. Furthermore, approximately 750 acres were damaged reportedly. Also, the Department of Agriculture is taking actions to supply 2 ½ or 3 months' paddy seeds once again for the devastated paddy fields and seed paddy and seeds required for cultivating appropriate short termed crops. The Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Lands and Irrigation indicating that compensation will be given in the future from the provisions allocated to the Agriculture and Agrarian Insurance Board for the year 2025, along with a damage compensation of rupees 40,000/- to the maximum per acre up to 02 hectares (05 acres) to the maximum for paddy cultivation, as well as a damage compensation of rupees 40,000/- to the maximum per acre up to 01 hectare (2.5 acres) to the maximum for 05 crops namely corn, potatoes, chilies, big onions and Soya beans, tabled the facts to which the Cabinet of Ministers granted approval.

05. Approval to import / procurement of rice.

Activities pertaining to procurement of 70,000 metric tons of rice across Sri Lanka State Commercial Corporation are being executed as per the approval granted at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on 09.12.2024 as a result of the rice shortage prevailing within the local market. Furthermore, permission has been given to the private sector importers to import rice up to 20.12.2024 without the requirement of import control licenses. It has been observed that the shortage of rice may exist until the end of January 2025. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers granted approval to the proposal submitted by the Minister of Cooperative Development to extend the time of permission for import of rice to the private sector importers without import control licenses requirement up to 10.01.2025.

06. Carrying out the responsibility of the local government institutions to create a revolving economy formalizing the solid waste management activities in those establishments.

As per the approval granted at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers held on 02.12.2024 adhering to "Clean Sri Lanka" programme, the Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Local Governments has planned to implement a project aiming at ensuring the responsibility and liability sustained with all the citizens and the local government institutions to be engaged in waste management process recognizing the importance of community awareness as well as the community participation for sustainable urban solid waste management. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers granted approval to the resolution furnished by the Minister of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Local Governments to execute projects based on local government areas.

07. Project to provide capital grants based on the performance for revenue generating projects in local government authorities

The Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Local Governments has executed a programme to measure the performance of all the local government authorities in order to introduce a formal programme to minimize cost caused to the General Treasury by strengthening the self – income generation sources in the local government institutions. Under the programme a procedure has been implemented to measure the performance in the years 2022 and 2023 covering the management of the local government bodies, service supply, administration methodologies and the contribution rendered to achieve sustainable development goals. Especially, at this performance evaluation it has been observed that the quality and quantity of the services rendered by the Pradeshiya Sabhas fluctuates owing to the differences of the areas. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers granted approval to the resolution furnished by the Minister of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Local Governments to execute a project to provide capital grants for implementing income generation projects in selected Pradeshiya Sabhas for the years 2025 – 2027 as a median sustainable programme related to strengths and weaknesses recognized during the said evaluation and to provide capital grants for the execution of that project, by identifying 54 Pradeshiya Sabhas; 06 Pradeshiya Sabhas from each province during the year 2025.

08. Long – term contract for purchase of 06 stocks of crude oil tankers of Merburn category within the period from 01.04.2025 to 31.08.2025.

Bids have been invited from registered suppliers of the Petroleum Corporation to purchase of 06 stocks of crude oil tankers of Merburn category within the period from 01.04.2025 to 31.08.2025. For this purpose 06 bids have been submitted. Accordingly, based on the recommendations of the Special Standing Procurement Committee appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers, approval of the Cabinet of Ministers was granted for the resolution submitted by the Minister of Power to award the relevant procurement to M/s Aditya Birla Global Trading (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.

09. Submission of orders, issued under the Special Commodity Levy Act No. 48 of 2007 and published through the Gazette, for approval of Parliament

The proposal presented by the Hon. President in his capacity as the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to submit the following orders published under the Special Commodity Levy Act NO.48 of 2007 to Parliament for approval, was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

- The order issued under Section 2 of the Special Commodity Levy Act No. 48 of 2007 and published through the Gazette Extraordinary No. 2384/31 dated 17.05.2024
- The order issued under Section 2 and 5 of the Special Commodity Levy Act No. 48 of 2007 and published through the Gazette Extraordinary No. 2395/32 dated 31.07.2024
- The order issued under Section 2 of the Special Commodity Levy Act No. 48 of 2007 and published through the Gazette Extraordinary No. 2404/19 dated 02.10.2024
- The order issued under Section 2 and 5 of the Special Commodity Levy Act No. 48 of 2007 and published through the Gazette Extraordinary No. 2406/02 dated 14.10.2024
- The order issued under Section 2 of the Special Commodity Levy Act No. 48 of 2007 and published through the Gazette Extraordinary No. 2408/15 dated 01.11.2024
- The order issued under Section 2 of the Special Commodity Levy Act No. 48 of 2007 and published through the Gazette Extraordinary No. 2412/38 dated 30.11.2024

10. Repeal of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No.2 of 1996

By now, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No.2 of 1996 has been amended 8 times and several previous attempts were made to introduce a new act by repealing the existing Act. However, this process has not been completed yet. A preliminary bill has been prepared by a committee comprising officials from the Ministry of Fisheries, the Attorney General's Department, the Department of Auditor General and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the technical assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, to strengthen the constitutional framework on the issues related to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing operations in Sri Lanka's territorial waters and on the high seas. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the proposal presented by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to instruct the legal draftsman to prepare a new Act based on the draft above.

11. Making Sri Lanka Ports Authority's Container Releasing Operations more efficient

The Colombo Port operates 4 container terminals, 2 privately owned and 2 government owned. Between 5000-10000 containers are inspected and released per day through each terminal, including clearance of re-shipments. Customs officers determine which containers need to be inspected at the exit gates and conduct a physical scan of the containers. Various issues have arisen in the clearance process in the past, resulting in an increased number of containers being inspected by customs officials daily. An increase in the number of ships arriving at the port has also been observed. Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the proposal presented by the Hon. President to appoint a committee chaired by the Minister of Transport, Highways, Ports and Civil Aviation to take necessary steps to implement an appropriate system to release containers from the port without any delay by further improving the efficiency of the current system for container release.

12. Appointment of an officer to the post of Director General of Combined Services

Mr. S. Aloka Bandara, a Special Grade Officer in the Sri Lanka Administrative Service who served as the Director General of Combined Services, has been appointed to the post of Secretary to the Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Council and Local Government, and therefore the post has become vacant. Since the post of Director General of Combined Services has a wide scope of duties, an officer should be appointed to the post on a permanent basis. As such, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the proposal presented by the Minister of Public Administration, Provincial Council and Local Government to appoint Mr. N.U.N.Mendis, a Special Grade officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service who is currently serving as an Additional Director General of the National Budget Department, to the post.

13. Appointment for the post of Director General of Pensions

The service of Mr. A Jagath D. Dias, the current Director General of the Department of Pensions is scheduled to end on 31.12.2024 and a new officer will need to be appointed to that position from 01.01.2025. Mr. Chaminda Hettiarachchi, a Special Grade officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, currently serving as the District Secretary/Government Agent in Trincomalee Administrative District, has been identified as suitable for appointment to the said post. As such, the proposal presented by the Minister of Public Administration, Provincial Council and Local Government to appoint him for the said post with effect from 01.01.2025 was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

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