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Agreeing to conditions for fielding Fonseka for presidency

Finally, JVP accepts Ranil as caretaker Premier

UNF-JVP pact on common candidate sealed - UNP official

by Shamindra Ferdinando

Contrary to speculation over the past few days, the UNP-led United National Front (UNF) and the JVP have resolved a simmering dispute over a UNP condition that its leader Ranil Wickremesinghe should be the Prime Minister in a future caretaker government.

The UNF-JVP combine has settled the issue at talks involving key negotiators, including Ranil Wickremesinghe, Mangala Samaraweera, Tissa Attanayake,

Anura Kumara Dissanayake and retired Army Chief General Sarath Fonseka. Well informed sources told *The Island* that the JVP had been reluctant to accept

Wickremesinghe as their (joint opposition) prime ministerial candidate though Fonseka strongly supported the UNP condition. Sources said that he had emphasised the importance of resolving the issue immediately to enable them to move forward. The former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) said that fielding a common candidate would very much depend on an early settlement of this issue, according to sources.

At one point, the JVP had suggested that a caretaker cabinet could be named leaving prime ministerial post vacant. The JVP subsequently softened its stand after being told that the success of their campaign would depend on Wickremesinghe's appeal to UNP supporters.

Sources said that UNF-JVP dispute had been a major obstacle though many

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President orders Presidential poll first

by Anura Balasuriya and Ranil Dharmasena

President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday ordered the Elections Commissioner to hold a presidential election in January 2010.

The United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) yesterday summoned all party leaders in the alliance, Ministers and Parliamentarians to Temple Trees and announced the forthcoming election.

The Elections Commissioner was scheduled to issue the Gazette notification at midnight yesterday.

All those present at the meeting wished the President well and assured their unstinted support to ensure his re-election.

The President ordered the Elections Commissioner under the powers vested in him under the section 31 3 (A) of the Constitution to hold a Presidential election at the end of the fourth year of holding office.

Nominations for the election have to be called within 16 to 21 days of the issuance of the Gazette notification announcing the election, which should be held between four to six weeks of the calling for nominations.

Swine flu vaccine due soon

by Dasun Edirisinghe

Health Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva yesterday said that the H1N1 influenza (swine flu) vaccine would be available in the country within a month. The first consignment of 380,000 doses of Novel AH1N1 2009 would arrive from the US.

Addressing a press conference at the Ministry auditorium, Minister de Silva said that the vaccine would be first given to health staff and then to the most vulnerable group, which included pregnant mothers, children and those who suffered from diabetes.

He said that the Ministry was also taking steps to equip the Medical Research Institute (MRI) to test a large number of samples and if the need arose the private sector, too, would be called in to assist.

Director (Public Health) of the Health Ministry Dr. Palitha Mahipala said that according to the official statistics there were 254

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Yaqoub Yousef Ateegi, Ambassador-Designate for Kuwait, Bruce Levy, High Commissioner- Designate for Canada, Jens Uwe Plotner, Ambassador-Designate for Federal Republic of Germany and Ashok K. Kantha, High Commissioner- Designate for the Republic of India presented their credentials to President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the President's Office today (23/11) at 10.30 a.m. Rohitha Bollagama, Minister Foreign Affairs and Lalith Weeraratunga, Secretary to the President were present on the occasion. (Pix by Sudath Silva)

Heated argument in Malaysian Parliament over Lankan issue

A heated argument broke out in the Malaysian Parliament yesterday after the country's Deputy Foreign Minister A. Kohilan Pillay accused opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim of attempting to champion the Indian community by claiming that the Sri Lankan government had ignored the welfare of the refugees. Kuala Lumpur based web agencies reported yesterday.

A news item published by Bernama online said that earlier yesterday deputy Foreign Minister Senator A. Kohilan Pillay told the lower house of Parliament that Malaysia sees the Sri Lanka's crisis as an internal problem in line with the country's foreign policy.

The Bernama story said: "He said Sri Lanka had assured United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, who visited Sri Lanka's refugee camps after the conflict ended in May last year; that it would work closely with human rights groups to address the welfare and safety of refugees.

Special UN representatives have given a positive evaluation on the progress made by Sri Lanka in addressing the issues, Kohilan said in reply to a question by P. Ramasamy (DAP-Batu Kawan).

Ramasamy wanted to know why the Malaysian government refused to condemn the Sri Lankan government over civilian deaths in the conflict and the plight of about 300,000 ethnic-minority Tamil refugees.

Kohilan said as Malaysia valued friendly relations with Sri Lanka, it supported efforts made by Sri Lanka in tackling the issues and was confident that the wishes of the international community would be fulfilled.

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Time not ripe - Fonseka

by Norman Palihawadana

Retired Chief of Defence Staff General Sarath Fonseka said the time was still not opportune for him to say whether he would contest the presidential polls or not.

When told that certain newspapers had quoted him as saying that he would contest, General Fonseka said that it would be better to check with the

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Fonseka UNF's Presidential Candidate, says John

Symbol will be decided on in due course

Govt. to hold Presidential Election

by Zacki Jabbar

The United National Front has decided that General Sarath Fonseka will be its Presidential Candidate, but no official announcement

would be made, until the government Gazetted the election notification.

Senior Vice President of the UNP, John Ameratunga told *The Island* that after several rounds of talks the UNF leaders had agreed on Fonseka as their candidate.

Asked if Fonseka was agreeable to the UNF's 10 point policy statement, he said that unless

there had been agreement, the alliance would not have picked Fonseka.

Questioned what the UNF's symbol would be, Ameratunga said that it was being discussed and a decision would be taken shortly.

According to the conditions laid down, Fonseka had to sign a Memorandum of

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Foreign trips of Health officials cancelled

by Dasun Edirisinghe

The Health Ministry has cancelled all foreign tours of Ministry officials and government doctors with immediate effect until January 30 as a precautionary measure to prepare the country for a possible epidemics such as AH1N1 influenza commonly known as Swine flu, Leptospirosis commonly known as rat fever and Dengue.

Addressing a Press Conference at the

Delay to import bacteria to fight diseases is in the Registrar of Pesticide office

Ministry, Health Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva said that all officers including doctors working islandwide would have to go abroad for their training and further studies, but their leave would be cancelled for the next two months due to the prevailing epidemic situation.

The Minister said that the Ministry had decided to import certain bacteria as a bio-prevention method in respect of dengue and rat fever, but it had been delayed due to the registration



Nimal

process at the office of the Pesticides Registrar.

Registrar of Pesticides Champa Magamage addressing the press said that the Ministry's request was being evaluated and it would take two to three months since it was a lengthy process. However, the approval would be given soon to import 30,000 litre of the BTI bacteria to be used in selected MOH divisions.

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