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Foreign Secretary, Prasad Kariyawasam, explains govt. stand

(Island.lk) - Foreign Secretary Prasad Kariyawasam has explained to The New York Times measures taken by the government to address allegations of torture and degrading treatment in government custody.

Responding to an AP article titled 'Dozens of Men Describe Rape, Torture by Sri Lanka Government' on 8 November 2017 available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2017/11/08/world/asia/ap-as-sri-lanka-torture.html>,

Kariyawasam said that in 2017 (to-date) disciplinary action had been taken against 33 members of the Police for assault and torture, while one officer was dismissed. Disciplinary matter pertaining to 100 Police Officers were currently pending. In 2017, 28 complaints of assault and torture have been received so far. The following is the full text of the Foreign Secretary's letter: "I write with reference to the article titled 'Dozens of Men Describe Rape, Torture by Sri Lanka Government' by the Associated Press that was published in the New

York Times.

It would be appreciated in this regard, if this response from the Government of Sri Lanka could also be published in the New York Times, considering the gravity of the allegations and the



Prasad Kariyawasam, Foreign Secretary

firm commitment of the National Unity Government to uphold the rule of law.

The Government of Sri Lanka strongly condemns any act of torture, and will ensure that allegations of torture committed in the country will be investigated and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

The Government seeks the assistance and cooperation of all those relevant parties in this endeavour, including parties outside the country, as evidence is key in the conduct of investigations.

The National Unity Government that was formed in Sri Lanka following the January 8, 2015 Presidential Election and the August 2015 Parliamentary Election, is committed, as promised to the people of the country, to work towards reconciliation, good governance, rule of law, and

the promotion and protection of human rights, and has taken numerous concrete steps to prevent the commission of torture, including the following:

- Strengthening the National Human Rights Commission and ensuring that they are granted access to places where there may be complaints of torture

- Issuance of orders to all police and security officials forbidding torture of any kind, with punishment to the full extent of the law, if violated

- Issuing a standing invitation to Special Rapporteurs with 6 visits having taken place already since January 2015, including visits by the High Commissioner for Human Rights (February 2016) and the UN Secretary-General (September 2016)

- We have welcomed and continue to welcome visits by human rights organisations, including to the places where allegations of torture have been made, so that they can see for themselves that such illegal and reprehensible actions are not taking place in the country

- The National Human Rights Action Plan (2017-2021) which was launched recently, has a complete chapter on the Prevention of Torture, with indicators for action to be taken, and we are committed to its implementation

-The President of Sri Lanka himself participated in a march organized by the National Human Rights Commission in June 2016, to advocate against torture and affirm the zero tolerance policy on torture at the highest level of Government

-A Committee on Prevention of Torture, established by the Ministry of Law & Order, chaired by the Secretary to the Ministry, convenes monthly meetings to discuss the progress made by relevant stakeholder institutions in ensuring Government's zero tolerance policy on torture

- Following a decision of the Committee on Prevention of Torture, a series of one-day workshops were organized for the Senior Superintendent of Police & Superintendent of Police in all divisions of the Country and Investigative Units, such as TID, CID, CIB, all Officers-in-Charge of Police Stations (483 in total) in the months of November/December 2016.

- The total number of officers trained in 5 batches was 800. The Minister of Law & Order, the Secretary to the Ministry of Law and Order, and the Inspector General of Police attended all workshops in order to emphasize at the highest level, the Government's commitment to the zero tolerance policy on torture and to prohibit the use of torture as a means of investigation. **SEE P14**

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SL Budget 2018

Finance and Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera arriving to deliver his maiden budget speech. **SEE P16**

- *A special tax on super luxury vehicles
- *Rs. 10 excise duty per kilo on plastic resins
- *An 'open cage' concept at the Dehiweala Zoo
- *A cellular tower levy of Rs 200,000 per month
- *Rs. 300 mn to promote IT and IT related sectors
- *Alcohol volume based excise duty
- *Issuance of new liquor license to be simplified
- *NBT to be imposed on liquor, toddy not spared
- *Sugar tax on sweetened beverages
- *Rs. 1,400 million for Office of the Missing Persons
- Rs. 1,250 mn for establishing medical faculties at Wayamba, Sabaragamu and Moratuwa Universities
- The total government expenditure: Rs. 3, 001bn Budget deficit: Rs. 675 bn
- Expected govt revenue: Rs. 2,326 bn Expected expenditure: Rs. 3,982 bn

Sri Lanka at the World Travel Market



Sri Lankan delegation to the World Travel Market headed by Hon. John Amararatunga, Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs



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