
Normality returning to Jaffna

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Step by step we see normality returning to the North with the end to the three decades long conflict. Gradually all features common to the South are being supplanted in the North. Transport Minister Dullas Alahapperuma told Parliament on Thursday that a Colombo - Kandy luxury bus service is to be launched along the A9 highway. Arugambay has been picked up as the venue for the National Surfing Championship. Both the North and East are also awakening to their full tourist potential. Earlier, we saw Banks both State and private, expressing keenness to open branches in the North. Hopefully, this will be a reality soon.

The latest venture to visit the North is Lak Sathosa, the budget shop started by Trade and Commerce and Cooperatives Minister Bandula Gunawardena with the avowed aim of bringing down the cost of living in the North. A team headed by the Minister was in Jaffna on Thursday to set things in motion for the commencement of this retail marketing chain to enable the people of Jaffna to purchase their essential items at nominal prices. According to our Page One report, the Jaffna famous Windsor Theatre will be converted into the Sathosa outlet and business is to commence within two weeks. The Ministerial team had also held discussions with members of the Jaffna Chambers of Commerce, small and medium scale traders and farmers at the Jaffna Kachcheri to seek ways and means to bring down the cost of living and address other problems confronting both traders and the populace. This is a move in the right direction. Being cut off from the North all these years, there certainly are problems specific to these segments which the Minister may not be aware of. It is through such a dialogue that a correct picture would emerge and remedies applied accordingly. Without doubt there were many unscrupulous elements who exploited the war situation to heap misery of a different kind on the people of the North. It was revealed that the price of drumsticks were as high as Rs. 400 a kilo. If this is the case with so common an item in Jaffna such as drumsticks, there must be something surely wrong somewhere. It was pointed out that there is a monopoly being created by certain traders holding the poor harried Jaffna public hostage ala the Pettah Mafia. The Minister rightly emphasized that Sri Lanka has turned a new page and it was now one Sri Lanka and one Nation. He said President Mahinda Rajapaksa did not want to have different prices for essential goods whether it was it be Colombo, Galle, Matara or Jaffna. No one could agree more with the President. Since the country is now marching forward together with the defeat of separatism, there cannot be different standards and different norms for different communities and groups of people who inhabit this country. This has already being made clear by the President during his Victory Day address. Therefore, all impediments and bottlenecks that stood in the way of the Jaffna population enjoying the nation's bounties should be removed forthwith and the path smoothed for them to enjoy all benefits and fruits on par with their brethren in the South. Immediate remedies therefore should be devised to help ameliorate the conditions of the Jaffna population which had been reeling under the burden of hyper inflation brought about by artificial means during the past three decades. The Minister has acted wisely in this regard and he deserves praise for taking steps to address one of the gravest hardships being endured by the people of the North. The condition of many of escapees from the North during the final battle speaks volumes for the suffering and privations these people had been subjected to. It is no secret that only those who were receiving foreign remittances from their kith and kin were able to survive even barely by purchasing goods at exorbitant prices. The rest were condemned to a life of semi starvation due to the limited rations that were available as a result of the LTTE appropriating the bulk of the food items sent to Jaffna. The Government therefore should take immediate steps to ensure they receive an unending supply of essential items at affordable prices so that they may regain their lost strength and dignity and be able to contribute their might for the Nation's future development and prosperity. The planned lifting of the embargo slapped on certain items during the war too would help improve the situation. This should be done expeditiously, now that the reason for such embargo is no more. Courtesy: dailynews.lk