Clarification related to comments made on 5th July on Derana TV:

It has been brought to my attention that on the 5th of July certain comments were made by the State Minister of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal and Community Cleanliness, Hon. Dr. Nalaka Godahewa in an interview on Derana TV as per below.

This statement is to clarify that I did not have a discussion of this nature with said State Minister at any point in time.

Thank you,
Asha de Vos.

Interview between Derana TV journalist, Mr Sanka Amarajith and the state minister of Urban Development, Coast Conservation, Waste Disposal and Community Cleanliness, Hon. Dr. Nalaka Godahewa

TV Derana - Derana 360° | පරිපාලන ස්වරාජා ස්වරාජය ඉංග්රීසියේ මෙහෙය 5th July 2021

Term ‘වාරකතා’ in Sinhalese and ‘offseason’ in English refers to the South-West monsoon of Sri Lanka.

The interview happened on-screen as follows

Journalist - Question. Do turtles die because of the offseason?

Minister - I don't know the answer to that. But from the things different people have told me, what I can say is that turtles die because of the offseason as well. Environmentalists have told me that.
මාධ - අද අන්විකීම් උශ්‍රයා මිලි වූවත්, ගුවනකලාව වන්නේ ආදායම්ම විශේෂ කොළඹයක් නිර්දේශයක් නිර්මාණය කරන්න, මේ විශේෂ විශේෂයේ උදාහරණ ඉදිකට යොදන්න ගැටුමක්.

Journalist - Now a sub-question of the first question. Turtles die regardless of the offseason, anyone born as a living thing will eventually die.

උපලෝකාව - කොහෝකු නම් අද අන්විකීම් උශ්‍රයා මිලි වූවත්.

Minister - That's exactly what I'm telling you.

මාධ - බි, බි, බි. දර්ශන ආදායම්ම විශේෂයේ උශ්‍රයාව යැයි සමන්විතයින් පවුල්වන්න? මේ විශේෂයන්?

Journalist - Okay, the second one. Who was the environmentalist who told you that turtles die during the offseason specifically? What's the name?

මාධ - මේ අවතාරකයන්ගෙන්, මේ අවතාරකයන්ගෙන්. ආදායම්ම විශේෂයේ උශ්‍රයාව විශේෂ අවතාරකයන්ගෙන් ලබා නොගෙන. ආදායම්ම උශ්‍රයාව සිවුල්ලීම මෙහෙයි. මේවා අවතාරකයන් උශ්‍රයාව මෙහෙයි. මේවා විශේෂයේ උශ්‍රයාව සිවුල්ලීම මෙහෙයි. මේවා විශේෂයේ උශ්‍රයාව සිවුල්ලීම මෙහෙයි.

Minister - It's not correct to mention names like that. A famous environmentalist in Sri Lanka, a female environmentalist. She told me that it happens in that way. But it's not something that happens on a large scale. One or two turtles may die, that's what she said. But there is no such thing as mass turtle deaths that occur during the offseason.

උපලෝකාව - පැතිර මීටරු කළේ මීටරු පිළිගැනීම. මෙමේ මීටරු කළේ මීටරු කළේ මීටරු කළේ මීටරුකද?

Journalist - Now your seat is in the Gampaha district. Not a coastal district. Where is your hometown?

උපලෝකාව - මෙමේ මීටරු කළේ මීටරුකද?

Minister - I'm from Ambalangoda.

මාධ - අද අන්විකීම් උශ්‍රයා මිලි වූවත්, ඲ෝකාව පිළිගැනීම. මේවා අවතාරකයන් උශ්‍රයාව මෙහෙයි. මේවා අවතාරකයන් උශ්‍රයාව මෙහෙයි. මේවා අවතාරකයන් උශ්‍රයාව මෙහෙයි?

Journalist - Oh then you may have seen plenty of offseasons. Then now tell if during your lifetime have you seen turtles stranded like this?
මාධ - එයකට මම අතික්‍රමයක් යොදා ගැනීම. එමෙක් කාලයේ මම පෙන්වා ගැනීමයි. එමෙක් මම තැන්වා ගැනීම නිතම් උදහරණ මගේ අතික්‍රමයක් යොදාගන්නා. මම මගේ පොළොන්නම් මගේ අතික්‍රමයක් යොදා ගැනීමයි. එය මගේ තිබුණින් කාලයක් යොදා ගැනීම මගේ අතික්‍රමයක් යොදා ගැනීමයි. මම මගේ මාධිකරණයක් යොදා ගැනීම මගේ අතික්‍රමයක් යොදා ගැනීමයි. මම මගේ මාධිකරණයක් යොදා ගැනීම මගේ අතික්‍රමයක් යොදා ගැනීමයි.

Minister - No. That is where the mistake is Sanka. Now you said something about concluding. At no point have I come to such a conclusion. I have not mentioned that I have come to such a conclusion anywhere. I’m telling you now too, that I have not reached such a conclusion. Because at the beginning itself I mentioned that I have no knowledge regarding the matter as I’m not an environmentalist. If I said something which you told me, it doesn’t say that I have knowledge of that matter. I only say that you told me this.

Journalist - Mmm

Minister - It doesn’t mean that I accept it or that I have knowledge regarding it. So now, you are asking this question based on the big debate involving Nalaka Godahewa saying that turtles die during the off-season.

Journalist - ම
Journalist - Yes

Minister - If you have permission I'll show you my full talk, that video clip. This must have been two, three days after the M X Pearl ship’s fire when there weren’t as many deaths as there are now and only one or two turtle strandings had been reported. A journalist asked me about the dead animals. I’ll play the video of my response and we can talk about it after that.

Journalist - Okay

The Minister plays a video on his phone. The following is the conversation in the video.
මාධාවාදිය 2 - ග්‍රාමීයන්ගේ යටතේ දැක්වියේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙම විශේෂ පිළිගැටලුව අනූවහි හාමාලැඩුණි, දැනට සිටිය. අම් නිසා මෙහෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා විශේෂ පිළිගැටලුව අනූවහි. මෙහෙයන්ගේ ආකාශය මෙහෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙම පිළිගැටලුව අනූවහි මෙහෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙම පිළිගැටලුව අනූවහි. 

Journalist 2 - Minister, currently many marine animals have died and they keep washing up on shore repeatedly. Have you taken any steps towards this? Are there any investigations happening? What has happened and what is the current status?

ඇමවරයා - අතිමක්ක, අතිමක්ක පරිවර්තනය සැකිලීමකට අනුව. අතිමක්ක පරිවර්තනය සැකිලීමකට අනුව මෙම මිති පැවතියේ නිසා සිදු කළේ නිසා මෙම පිළිගැටලුව අනූවහි. මෙම පිළිගැටලුව මෙහෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙම පිළිගැටලුව අනූවහි. මෙහෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙයන්ගේ අවශ්‍ය පෙරළ පැවතියේ නිසා මෙම පිළිගැටලුව අනූවහි. 

Minister - Now the matter is this. I think we have done up to our maximum capacity in conserving and protecting the coasts. Recently, we saw one of the most famous environmentalists in Sri Lanka, Ms Asha de Vos posted a web post, a clip, thanking our ministry for the efficient work done in conserving the coasts in just two to three weeks. We cannot completely control everything that happens out in the sea. There can be many accidents in these offseasons. Now, for example, I’m not an environmentalist, but I saw some environmentalists mentioned on social media and some even told me directly that animals face accidents in the offseason. So it’s not unusual to see a stranding during the offseason. But right now with the threats of the ship, everyone tries to directly connect these events to the ship. I don’t know whether it’s connected or not. But what’s best is to ask this from a knowledgeable environmentalist whether it is an abnormal incident or not.
Journalist 2 - Minister there aren’t any test reports of the animals available yet. Are you hoping to give them soon?

Minister - No. Those test reports should come to the Wildlife Department. My ministry doesn’t look over that. We have requested the Wildlife Department to make a statement regarding this as soon as possible.

The video played on the mobile phone is over. Following is the continuation of the original interview.

Minister - Now give me a second Sanka.

Journalist - Yes. Even though you didn’t mention the name, that tape had it, Ms Asha de Vos.

Minister - What I said was, Ms Asha de Vos praised us.

Journalist - So it wasn’t her who said the story about the offseason?
පුකගේ කතාකරණයකට යනුවෙන් යනුමකුණු විශේෂවරයක් යියා ලැබී යේ. භාෂිකයන්ට පැහැදිලි මෙහෙතම්, එන්ද අනතුරු සෙසුම් කරනුයේ මෙය පැහැදිලි ලබා ගොඩ වූ මුද්‍රාවලින් අයත් සිතියි. අතර ලියා නොමැතිය, විශේෂීය සෙසුම් පබා කිරීමට මෙහෙතම් අනතුරු සෙසුම්වලට අයත්වේ. එකින් සාමාන්‍ය පෙදේ සිතියි. එක්සත් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි පෙදේ සිතියි. එකින් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි පෙදේ සිතියි. එකින් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි පෙදේ සිතියි. එකින් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි පෙදේ සිතියි.

හොත්මුතුවක් කෙනෙක් හදාවෙන්ම සැම්ජුම් අතින් කරනුකොට අයත් අනතුරු සෙසුම්වලට අයත්වේ. එකින් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි පෙදේ සිතියි. එකින් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි. එකින් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි. එකින් විශේෂික පෙදේ සිතියි.

Minister - Uh.. she also. It wasn’t just me, she also stated on social media that she has the same opinion. So as an environmentalist, that means she has this opinion. But I don’t like to discuss any individuals particularly because she has also now become a target of mudslinging, because of this statement. People without even a drop of the knowledge she possesses are now attacking her continuously because she said this. Because she clearly stated this opinion. But Sanka I’m repeating this, this, right now there are a huge number of turtle, animal and dolphin deaths that have happened. We told this at the court. So the present situation and the situation when that question was asked from me, is totally different. I was asked this question after two, three days of the fire so I would like to remind you of a few things from that clip. First, we have fulfilled our duty, meaning we have done the task of cleaning the beach. The question asked was what measures have been taken
regarding the increasing deaths of the animals. To this, I said we can’t entirely control everything that happens out in the sea. We can control what’s happening on the coasts but not in the sea. In these off-seasons, many accidents may occur. I’m not talking about turtles, many accidents can happen in the off-season. For example, I’m not an environmentalist, but I saw some environmentalists mentioned on social media and some even told directly that accidents happen in the off-season. Therefore, I’m saying something which someone else said. But after that I said, because of the threat from the ship, everyone is trying to make connections between the ship and the deaths. I don’t know whether there is a connection or not.

Journalist - Mmm…

Minister - What I’m saying is that I don’t know whether it’s connected or not. What I think the most appropriate thing to do would be to ask a knowledgeable environmentalist whether this is an unusual thing or not. Now the media reported this without this part. So the first part and the last part are missing and only the part where I quoted the environmentalist is being broadcast. It then looked like I was telling the story. That was the mess that happened.