

Hate Speech and minority rights

Mr. Vice President,

In response to concerns and questions regarding **hate speech**, I would like to state the following:

-In addition to the provisions of the Penal Code, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act of 2007 **prohibits advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.**

-The Government maintains **zero tolerance on hate speech and religious violence, and this position was reiterated in a statement issued by the Cabinet of Ministers on 13 June 2017**, urging strictest action without delay, in accordance with the law, against all persons or groups who act to incite violence, and engage in acts of violence.

-The NHRAP 2017-2021 contains a firm commitment to enforce section 3(1) of the ICCPR Act, which criminalizes hate speech.

-While there have been instances of violations of the right by individuals in recent times, these are being fully investigated and action is being taken irrespective of the status or background of the persons involved.

-On 4 June 2017, the IGP issued a circular instructing stern action against hate speech, requiring all police officers to take immediate action whenever hate speech is reported or occurred. Failure to do so would make them liable to sanctions.

-Inter-Religious dialogue continues to take place to ensure interfaith harmony and understanding among the various groups to prevent any violations, and foster reconciliation.

-The Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages, the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, and the Ministry of National Integration and Reconciliation have launched several programmes for inter-community and inter-religious dialogue to create greater understanding and interaction among communities in all parts of the country.