

President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced significant strides in education, revealing that the government has initiated the recruitment of approximately 4,000 teachers in 2024. With the bolstering of the country's economy, he assured that more funds would be allocated to fill teaching vacancies by the following year.

Speaking at the Ceremony for Awarding Letters of Appointment to Graduate Teachers in Western Province held at the Temple Trees this evening (03), President Wickremesinghe emphasized the pivotal role of teachers in shaping the future generation. Symbolically participating in the awarding of the letters of appointment to 2,320 graduate teachers, he underscored the responsibility bestowed upon educators to instil character and virtue in their students.

President Wickremesinghe stressed the importance of preserving the respect associated with the teaching profession, labelling it as an honourable vocation. He urged teachers to continually update their subject knowledge, recognizing the dynamic nature of education in today's world.

The president further remarked, emphasizing the profound impact teachers have on their students' futures. He emphasized that teachers aren't just assuming control of a classroom; they're entrusted with shaping the destinies of the students within it. With students spending crucial formative years from ages 5 to 19 under their guidance, both the influence from home and that imparted at school are paramount.

President Wickremesinghe underscored the weighty responsibility of educators, stating that they are not merely tasked with imparting subject knowledge but also with moulding the lives of their students. He highlighted the irreplaceable role of teachers in character-building, noting that while subject knowledge can be acquired online, the same cannot be said for instilling values and virtues.

Acknowledging the invaluable contributions of both parents and teachers in shaping individuals' lives, the president emphasized the esteemed status of the teaching profession. He called upon all educators to uphold the honour associated with their vocation and to recognize the profound impact they have on the lives of their students.

The president emphasized the indispensable role of teachers' knowledge in today's rapidly evolving society. With knowledge continuously advancing, educators must ensure they keep pace with these developments. President Wickremesinghe noted that unlike in the past, where teachers could rely on existing knowledge, today's educators must constantly strive to enhance their subject expertise. He urged teachers to contemplate whether their current knowledge would suffice in the coming decades, emphasizing the importance of on-going professional development.

Regarding the recent teacher recruitments, President Wickremesinghe highlighted that while 2300 teachers have been appointed, there are still 700 vacancies to be filled. Plans are underway to hire approximately 1000 more teachers based on existing vacancies. This year alone, around 4000 teachers have been recruited, marking a significant milestone after a hiatus of three to four years. The president attributed the resumption of teacher recruitments to the country's economic recovery and the easing of constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had previously halted such initiatives.

President Wickremesinghe highlighted the positive economic trajectory achieved through prudent fiscal management by the government. Despite a previous period of economic decline, the Sri Lankan economy has witnessed a strengthening, leading to the appreciation of the rupee against the dollar. The President attributed this positive shift to effective economic policies implemented by the government, allowing for the current recruitment of teachers.

Last year, the rupee had depreciated to 370 against the dollar, but today, it stands at 300. The President expressed his optimism in further reducing this value to 280 in the future, which would bolster the purchasing power of the people. He emphasized the government's commitment to facilitating economic growth and providing financial resources for essential public services.

Despite facing challenges, President Wickremesinghe underscored the government's achievements in enhancing public sector salaries and benefits, tripling Aswesuma benefits and ensuring fair prices for agricultural produce, particularly during the Sinhala New Year season. Looking ahead, he affirmed the government's dedication to further bolstering economic development, with plans to allocate additional funds to the education sector for teacher recruitment by the following year.

Minister of Education, Dr. Susil Premjayantha, addressed the delay in teacher appointments, acknowledging that these appointments should have been made six months prior. He explained that, in response to President Wickremesinghe's directives, a memorandum was submitted to the Cabinet to address the teacher shortage existing at the end of the previous year. Consequently, the Western Provincial Council conducted examinations to expedite teacher recruitment. However, legal challenges arose during the interview process for teacher recruitment in other provinces, causing further delays.

Dr. Premjayantha highlighted the rigorous interview process, emphasizing that candidates are evaluated based on their subject knowledge and training to provide quality education to children. Despite these efforts, legal obstacles persist, with some individuals resorting to court actions even during the recruitment process. As a result, the permanent appointment of graduate development officers recruited in 2019 faces challenges.

The Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing the teacher shortage by continuing recruitment efforts. Despite the hurdles encountered, plans are underway to make further appointments in the future to meet the educational needs of the country.

Governor of the Western Province, Marshal of the Air Force Roshan Gunathilake, expressed joy on the occasion of addressing the teacher shortage in the Western Province. Recognizing the prolonged issue of teacher vacancies, the Governor emphasized the importance of conducting proper recruitments to address this critical need. Delays in past recruitment processes had exacerbated the problem, resulting in a gradual increase in teacher vacancies within schools. The Governor underscored the significance of adequate teacher presence for both the country and its education system, highlighting that a shortage of teachers is unsustainable. He extended gratitude to President Ranil Wickremesinghe for approving the recruitment of teachers and thanked Minister Susil Premajayantha for his role in the process.

Addressing the newly appointed teachers, the Governor emphasized that their role extends beyond mere employment; they are entrusted with serving the nation and guiding its children. He stressed the pivotal role teachers play as mentors and urged them to serve as role models for their students.

Minister Nalin Fernando, along with State Ministers Lasantha Alagiyawanna, Sisira Jayakody and Aravindha Kumar, as well as Members of Parliament were among the dignitaries present at the event. Also in attendance were Secretary to the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils, and Local Government Pradeep Yasarathne, Secretary to the Ministry of Education Thilaka Jayasundara and Chief Secretary of the Western Provincial Council Dhammika Wijayasinghe and other relevant government officials.