

Breakthrough in controversial Norochcholai coal case

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The CID Special Investigation Unit, has achieved a breakthrough in the controversial Norochcholai Lakvijaya coal case, attorney-at-law, Namal Rajapakshe said at a media brief at the CSR yesterday.

Rajapaksa said that the CID Special Investigation Unit has found evidence regarding the properties acquired by a former ministry secretary who is named as a suspect in the the investigations into the import of coal for the

Norochcholai Lakvijaya coal power plant.

"The CID Special Investigation Unit launched a thorough investigation on the properties acquired by this former ministry secretary, in Sri Lanka and overseas. They have found out that this ministry secretary has four properties purchased in Australia, the total worth exceeding AUD 13 million. The purchases were done during the same period the Norochcholai project commenced. How could a gov-

ernment employee purchase property worth this much?" Rajapaksa questioned.

There is a property in Kirulapone under the name of this former ministry secretary's wife, Rajapaksa said. There are some other properties purchased under the names of his children who are in Australia on student visa, Rajapaksa added.

Rajapaksa pointed out that the suspects to the Norochcholai case try to get away with their frauds by

hiding behind the Cabinet approvals taken by ex-president Mahinda Rajapaksa on the Norochcholai project.

"There was nothing remotely close to what one calls a Cabinet in the previous regime.

The former-president dominated the Cabinet and did what he fancied. No minister could question his wants. Some ministers did not know when and how a Cabinet paper would be presented to the

Cabinet regarding their ministries," Rajapakshe pointed out.

A court order was issued on December 16, 2016 to confiscate and or restrict the change of ownership of these identified properties since the owners were incapable of proving their income to purchase the properties, Rajapakshe said.

"This investigation is a warning for other investigations carried out by the law enforcement authorities. Many complain that they are not able

to carry out successful investigations on certain frauds due to the lack evidence. If the law enforcement authorities are empowered with provisions and resources, they can carry out investigations more efficiently," Rajapaksa added.

Some of the so-called anti-corruption organisations have their own political agendas as well, Rajapaksa pointed out.

Lawyers Rex Piyadasa and Ashoka Wijayawardane were present.