



News & Views



ISSUE NO 01

NEWS LETTER OF THE SRI LANKA HIGH COMMISSION IN OTTAWA, CANADA. January 2012

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SRI LANKA HIGH COMMISSION IN OTTAWA CELEBRATES THAI PONGAL

The event was held on Saturday 21st January 2012 at the High Commissioner's Residence. The invitees included Sri Lankan Pensioners living in Ottawa.

The Kurakkal Purohith Dawalkumar conducted the religious observances and invoked blessings on all those who attended the function. During the ceremony High Commissioner Chitranganee Wagiswara spoke of the multi cultural fabric of the Sri Lankan society and the importance of celebrating each others festivals which brings the communities together. She also noted the deeper message of Thai Pongal and stressed on the need for all Sri Lankans living in Canada to join together in further promoting friendship, goodwill and peace and to join hands as Sri Lankans to carry the same message and help in consolidating peace and prosperity in Sri Lanka.

Following the religious ceremony traditional sweetmeats associated with Thai Pongal were served.



The Sri Lanka High Commission in Ottawa celebrated Thai Pongal which is the harvest festival generally celebrated by Hindus all over the world.



VISIT OF CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO SRI LANKA



On the invitation of the Acting Minister of External Affairs Hon. Neomal Perera, a Parliamentary delegation from Canada comprising Hon. Chungen Leung (M.P.), Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multiculturalism and Deputy Minister of the Government of Canada, Hon. Joe Daniel (M.P.), and Marlene Gallyot, Member of the Conservative Party visited Sri Lanka from 8th to 11th January, 2012. The delegation paid a courtesy call on the Acting Minister at the Ministry of External Affairs.

The delegation visited the Northern Province on 9th and 10th January 2012. During their tour, they met with the Governor of the Northern Province, the Government Agents of Jaffna and Killinochchi, the Bishop of Jaffna and the Chairman of the Jaffna Chamber of Commerce. The team also visited the Jaffna and Chavakachcheri hospitals, and the Killinochchi resettlement villages, schools and the agricultural areas in the Northern Province. The delegation also explored prospects for trade and investment in the Northern Province.

The delegation, having made observations during their visits, stated that they appreciated the government's role in the reconciliation, reconstruction and the infrastructure development programmes implemented in the Northern Province. Education, health and employment opportunities being provided by the government of Sri Lanka to the people of the

North and East to open a window of opportunity to engage in their normal life after three decades of conflict was commended by the delegates.

In a media interview on 10th January, the delegation stated that Sri Lanka should be given time and space to effectively implement the



recommendations made by the LLRC that would give an opportunity to create a peaceful and prosperous Sri Lanka. The delegation was of the view that normalcy has returned to all areas including the North and East and that there is no discrimination against the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. The Canadian Parliamentarians admitted that funds are collected in Canada by the Tamil Diaspora with the promise that the monies will be expended productively for the welfare and wellbeing of the people in the North and East of Sri Lanka. However, they have observed in the course of their interactions with the people in the North that the latter do not receive such financial assistance from the Diaspora in Canada.

The Parliamentary members thanked the Acting Minister of External Affairs for inviting them to visit Sri Lanka and for giving them the opportunity to experience first hand, the ground situation in the North, and the post conflict developments in these areas.

They were optimistic that Sri Lanka will be able to move forward and achieve prosperity for all Sri Lankans. The Acting Minister thanked the Canadian Parliamentarians for visiting Sri Lanka and for the encouraging sentiments expressed by them. The Acting Minister also requested the delegates to brief their fellow parliamentarians on the progress taking place in Sri Lanka since the end of the conflict which they witnessed themselves during the visit.



ISSUE OF A PERSONALISED STAMP IN CANADA

Following reports in the LTTE affiliated websites and media on the alleged issue of a personalised stamp by Canada Post Corporation promoting the LTTE's separatist agenda which also includes a reference to "genocide", the High Commission of Sri Lanka in Canada on 3rd January 2012 sent two letters, one to Mr. Denis Lebel, MP, Minister responsible for Canada Post Corporation and the other to Mr. Deepak Chopra, President and CEO of Canada post to register Sri Lanka's protest and expressing the deep concern of the High Commission on this matter. This issue was also brought to the notice of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada.

In the said letter, the High Commission while drawing attention to the LTTE affiliated organisations and their activities in Canada, requested Canada Post to take immediate steps to withdraw the stamp in question from circulation and to initiate an inquiry on how such a stamp came to be issued by Canada Post. The letter also drew attention to the propaganda activities carried out by the front organizations of the LTTE.

Mr. Deepak Chopra, President and Chief Executive Officer of Canada Post Corporation in his letter dated 9th January 2012 addressed to the High Commissioner Chitranganee Wagiswara states "I had this matter reviewed immediately upon receipt of your letter. Please be assured that the image has never been printed by Canada Post; it is a false representation of our picture postage programme and is being fully investigated by our Security Department". The letter further states that the postage stamp "was not printed by our picture postage programme and is in no way part of our official philatelic programme which goes through a very careful selection process including approval by our Board of Director".



ETA COMES INTO OPERATION



The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) came into effect from 1st January 2012. All Canadian passport holders expecting to travel to Sri Lanka for less than 30 days as tourists / business / transit have to apply for visa online through the ETA system on www.eta.gov.lk

All travellers are encouraged to obtain their visas online prior to arrival to avoid any inconvenience at the airport. Visas can also be obtained on arrival from ETA processing gates at Bandaranayke International Airport.

Those who are unable to access the internet may apply for tourist /business visa for less than 30 days through the High Commission in Ottawa or the Consulate in Toronto.

Tourists and businessmen visiting the country for more than 30 days and less than 90 days are required to obtain a visa and are requested to apply for visas at the Sri Lanka High Commission or the Consulate in Toronto. Please visit the High Commission website for information :www.srilankahcottawa.org.



SAMURDHI SCHEME TO KILINCHCHI

The Samurdhi scheme has been introduced in the Kilinochchi District. In the first phase, 30 percent of the people are expected to be provided with Samurdhi assistance on a priority basis. The Samurdhi Banks would be temporarily functioning in Pachilapalli, Pooneryn, Kandavalai and Karaichchi area, located within the Assistant Government Agent Divisions.



THE OPENING OF 4TH GOLF COURSE IN SRI LANKA

The 04th Golf Course in Sri Lanka “Eagles’ Golf Links” was declared opened on 7 January 2012 at Sri Lanka Air Force Academy Chinabay. The golf Course is owned and maintained by the Sri Lanka Air Force.

The Eagles’ Golf Links Golf Course offers golfers in Sri Lanka a unique opportunity to experience the country and its beauty in style.



PRAWN FARMING PROJECT IN KILINCHCHI

A natural prawn farming project was launched under the guidance and assistance of NAQDA in the Chundikulam reservoir in the Kilinochchi district. The reservoir extends over 32,500 acres and holds a massive volume of brackish water. Rs 15 million has been allocated to start the project. NAQDA is to purchase the entire catch from the fishermen at a fair price and export the harvest to foreign markets together with the assistance of the business community.



COLOMBO-JAFFNA DOMESTIC FLIGHTS



ExpoAir, an domestic aviation Company in Sri Lanka is in the process of resuming regular flights between Jaffna and

Colombo. According to ExpoAir, With a brand new aircraft and new flight plan, it aims to fly to Jaffna in just over 1 hour, with twice-daily scheduled flights; Ratmalana Airport at 07:00 hrs. and 16:15 hrs. and return flights from Jaffna at 08:45 hrs. and 16:45 hrs.



CONFERENCE ON THE ROLE OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN RECONCILIATION

The second session of the National Reconciliation Conference was held on 24 January 2012 at the main auditorium of the Laxman Kadirgamar Institute for International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKIIRSS), under the theme 'The Role of the Business Community in Reconciliation'.



2012 DECLARES AS THE YEAR FOR TRILINGUAL SRI LANKA

President Mahinda Rajapaksa has declared 2012 as the Year for a Trilingual Sri Lanka at the launch of 10-year National Action Plan for Sri Lanka at the Temple Trees during the visit of former Indian President Dr Abdul Kalam to Sri Lanka.

A co-coordinating unit has been established at the Presidential Secretariat to implement the action plan.



SL AMONG KUONI'S TOP FIVE DESTINATIONS



Sri Lanka was named among the top five destinations in Kuoni's annual poll of where UK customers want to spend their holidays.

Sri Lanka retained the number one destination for weddings according to the report and was named as winner of the Top 10 adventure holiday- a 11-day tour of culture-rich Sri Lanka on the Ceylon Tour, while Kenya won the best Planet Friendly Holiday for Governors Main Camp.

The 20-page report also tracks latest travel trends and the top destinations for weddings and honeymoons, for families, for solo travellers, for pampering spa holidays, for the most exciting adventures and authentic experiences as well as the best destinations for those that care about the planet.

The Report's 2012 figures are based on holiday bookings made as at December 2011.

Recently National Geographic and Cond, Nast Traveller also named Sri Lanka among 'Best Trips for 2012.



2012, ANOTHER POSITIVE YEAR FOR SRI LANKAN TOURISM - BMI



Business Monitor International (BMI) believes the outlook is still bright for Sri Lanka tourism and forecast a 55% rise in tourist arrivals to 1.42mn tourists over BMI's newly extended forecast period to 2016.

The BMI, a London-based company, publishes specialist business information on global emerging markets for senior executives in more than 125 countries worldwide.

In 2010, Sri Lanka welcomed 654,477 tourists, an increase of 46% and very much in line with BMI's forecast of a 50% increase for the year. July was the high watermark for monthly arrivals, when Sri Lanka welcomed 83,786 tourists - up by 32.3%. Other months with strong increases were March and April, when there was 43.5% and 66.7% growth respectively, according to the BMI 'Sri Lanka Tourism Report Q1 2012'.

Following a strong 2010, 2011 has been another positive year for Sri Lankan tourism. Arrivals over the first nine months of the year stand at 598,006, up by 34.3%. With November and December historically being strong months for inbound tourism, BMI forecast 40% growth in tourist arrival numbers for 2011 as a whole. This should take tourist arrivals to about 914,000, the report adds.

It is clear that 2012 will be another boon year for hotel construction and renovation, the BMI stated in its report.

