



News Bulletin

Issued by the High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
13, Hyde Park Gardens, London W2 2LU

ISSUE - 02

February 2010

HE the President's Independence Day Message 2010



The 62nd Anniversary of independence we mark today has special significance being the first such celebration of our freedom since the defeat of terrorism in our country last year, and also as it takes place soon after our people have expressed their firm and resounding commitment to democracy.

The freedom from colonial rule that we gained 62 years ago is now more meaningful, because we have been liberated from the forces of separatist terror that marred our freedom for nearly half the period since independence, and also gravely threatened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country.

As much as we recall with gratitude the great contributions made by our patriots of the past in the struggle for independence, it is also fitting that we pay a tribute in full measure to all our heroic troops and their families for the sacrifices made in the battle against terrorism, as well as all sections of our people for the patriotism they showed in putting up with the hardships during this battle to restore freedom and democracy to our entire country. We are particularly grateful for the courage shown by the people as we were confronted with the armed might of the forces of terror from within, as well as forces from outside who sought to pressure us into conceding to the aims of those who used terror as a political weapon,

We are also grateful to all friendly nations, from East and West, those near and afar, who understood the true nature of the struggle we were engaged in, and extended to us all support to achieve our objective of true freedom for our country and people.

As we move into the new era of peace in our country, we are ready to face the challenges of the future. It is necessary that we give equal priority to the tasks of national reconciliation and the building of trust among all sections of our people, as well as to development that will take us to our rightful place in the community of nations. The fruits of peace and the aspects of development that were not neglected despite our major occupation with the battle against terror, are already seen in the many projects initiated and completed in the power and energy sectors and in infrastructure development.

As our forefathers did in the glorious days of our past, and the more recent leaders in the struggle for freedom showed us, we remain committed to a single, unitary Sri Lanka, where all our people, irrespective of differences of ethnicity, religion or political persuasion, can enjoy the full benefits of freedom, development, and equal rights in a democratic society.

The new and even stronger mandate you have given us, gives greater confidence to move ahead in building the New Sri Lanka, which we envisage as the hub of economic activity and a beacon of progress in our region; together with a full commitment to the Rights of Man which are integral to the heritage bestowed on us from the past.

On this historic and significant anniversary of freedom, let us re-dedicate our nation to the ideals of peace, tolerance, mutual trust and progress, in the democratic tradition our people have cherished and protected as the oldest democracy in Asia.

I wish you a Prosperous Future.

May our nation be blessed by the Noble Triple Gem.

Resounding Victory For Stability, Democracy & National Unity!

The people of Sri Lanka re-elected President Mahinda Rajapakse as the sixth Executive President of this island republic with a huge majority of 1.8 million votes on 26 January. He polled a total of 6,015,934 votes as against 4,173,185 votes received by his closest rival General Sarath Fonseka. The clear victory confirms that majority of Sri Lankans preferred a politically-mature veteran over a retired General who made a

name for himself in the recent war against terror, to lead one of the oldest democracies in Asia.

President Rajapakse led in 17 out of 22 electoral districts gaining 57.88 percent of the votes polled. His rival General Sarath Fonseka led only in five districts, mostly in the North and East of the country. *Source: news.lk*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Sri Lanka, fastest growing IT market in the region - Business Monitor Inter-

The fourth Galle Literary Festival 3

Sri Lanka denouement 3

Sri Lanka ranks World's Eighth Fastest Economy 3

Two Export Promotions Zones in Northern Sri Lanka 4

Sri Lanka The No: 1 Place to Go in 2010

The New York Times news paper has selected Sri Lanka as the number one holiday destination of 2010
Excerpt from NYT:

[Sri Lanka](#)

For a quarter century, Sri Lanka seems to have been plagued by misfortune, including a brutal civil war between the Sinhalese-dominated government and a separatist Tamil group. But the conflict finally ended last May, ushering in a more peaceful era for this teardrop-shaped island off [India's](#) coast, rich in natural beauty and cultural splendors.P2 →



Rehabilitated ex-LTTE cadres handed over to parents

Another batch of rehabilitated ex-LTTE members, totaling 56, has been handed over to their parents.

Many of them had quit the terrorist organization at the height of the humanitarian operation to liberate the Wanni and surrendered to the security forces. The government launched a programme to rehabilitate them so that they have better prospects for their future. They were rehabilitated at the Nawasenapura Rehabilitation Centre at Welikande.

They were handed over to their parents after a period of one year in a ceremony presided over by Major Gen. R.M.D. Ratnayake, the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation. Source: www.info.gov.lk

Sri Lanka stock exchange to open branch in Jaffna

Sri Lanka's Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) is planning to open a branch in Jaffna next month to cater the vast demand from the business community in Jaffna.

According to the CSE the per capita income of the Jaffna people is very high and they are self-sufficient in every aspect. They also receive foreign remittances from their relatives abroad and want to invest in stocks.

The official said they are negotiating to secure a building to set up the exchange by the end of the month.

CSE presently operates four branches in the Southern (Matara), Central (Kandy), North Western (Kurunegala) and the Western (Negombo) provinces.

Source: lankapuwath

Jaffna Education Fair 2010



Pico Events, have scheduled Jaffna Education Fair 2010 for September.

Jaffna Education Fair 2009 (JEF '09) was the first

ever large-scale education exhibition in Jaffna which saw over 50 local and foreign participants and over 4,000 visitors during the two exhibition days.

The students of Jaffna have opened up to the rest of the country and education and higher education remain among their high-priority. Source: Lankapuwath

... from P1 The 31 Place to Go in 2010

The island, with a population of just 20 million, feels like one big tropical zoo: elephants roam freely, water buffaloes idle in paddy fields and monkeys swing from trees. And then there's the pristine coastline. The miles of sugary white sand flanked by bamboo groves that were off-limits to most visitors until recently are a happy, if unintended byproduct of the war.

Among the most scenic, if difficult stretches to reach, is Nilaveli Beach in the Tamil north. While a few military checkpoints remain, vacationers can lounge on poolside hammocks under palm trees or [snorkel](#) in its crystal-clear waters. Or they can order cocktails at the Nilaveli Beach Hotel (www.tangerinehotels.com/nilavelibeach), a collection of recently renovated bungalows with private terraces.

An international airport in Matara, on the island's southern shore, is under construction, which will make the gorgeous [beaches](#) near the seaside village of Galle easier to get to. Decimated by the tsunami in 2004, the surrounding coastline is now teeming with stylish guesthouses and boutique hotels.

Unawatuna, a crescent-shaped beach a few miles south of Galle, may be furthest along. Higher-end hotels there include Thambapanni Retreat (www.thambapanni.biz), which features four-poster beds, [yoga](#) and an ayurvedic [spa](#). The Sun House (www.thesunhouse.com), in Galle, looks like a place where the Queen of England might stay, with its mango courtyard and colonial décor. One stylish place tucked within Galle's city walls is the Galle Fort Hotel (www.galleforhotel.com), a refurbished gem merchant's house run by a couple of Aussies. — Lionel Behner

Source: www.nytimes.com

Sri Lanka, fastest growing IT market in the region - Business Monitor International

Sri Lanka's Information Technology Market will be among the best potential growth prospects in South Asia, states the Business Monitor International (BMI) of UK.

Total IT spending is seen as nearly doubling to US\$494mn by 2013, with considerable upside. This projected CAGR of 15% would make Sri Lanka one of the fastest-growing markets in the region, states BMI in its IT market report. The BMI further states that the progress is a consequence of the end to Sri Lanka's long-running war in mid-2009.

Earlier the total size of the legal IT market was estimated at US\$254mn in 2008, just 2% the size of India's with the effects over the years of the country's political and economic instability, disruption of distribution channels, the negative impact on incomes growth, and underdevelopment of the country's telecoms infrastructure, BMI points out. By the same token, however, the market has considerable growth potential, BMI states.

"Indeed the computer market has comfortably been growing at a double-digit CAGR for the past several years, yet penetration remains below 5%. Computerisation has only just got started in the government service and major public and private sector organisations remain largely un-penetrated in terms of ERP systems and other enterprise software", the BMI further illustrated. Despite the government's financial weakness, a focus on restructuring government through the application of ICT has achieved some results, BMI points out and explains the nature of Sri Lanka's ICT growth and government strategies to promote ICT.

The BMI report further explains, Sri Lanka's computer hardware sales were estimated at US\$196mn in 2008, and are projected to reach around US\$368mn in 2013. An estimated 350,000 computers were sold in Sri Lanka in 2008, despite a slowdown in the second half of the year. This annual total could increase over 650,000 by the end of BMI's forecast period. The domestic software market is expected to grow at a CAGR of around 17% over the forecast period until 2013.

Progress is expected over BMI's five-year forecast period, with internet penetration reaching 20%, and broadband penetration 14.5%, the BMI report states further. courtesy: President Media. Source: www.news.lk



Lahugala and Kumana re-open to the public



The Lahugala National Park and the Kumana Birds Sanctuary are being reopened for the public following the end of the war and return to normalcy.

Local as well as foreign tourists who had been deprived of visiting places of religious and historic interest in the past are now able to

visit every corner of the country.

These parks were shut down in the past due to terrorist activities and totally barred for the public. However, with the elimination of terrorism, the government has decided to reopen these National Parks for local as well as foreign tourists.

All necessary facilities will be accorded to the visitors.

Source www.news.lk

IMF categorizes Sri Lanka as a middle-income country

The International Monetary Fund has classed Sri Lanka as a middle-income country, after considering several parameters including reduction of poverty and provision of funds for economic development. Special attention has also been focused on Sri Lanka's ability to maintain per capita income above the minimum level for several years and not having to face short term high risk situations. Source: www.news.lk

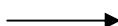
Sri Lanka denouement

THE HINDU Mahinda Rajapaksa's victory in Sri Lanka's presidential election has exceeded all expectations, including the most optimistic projections made within the President's camp on the basis of hard-nosed pre-election opinion polls. The 17.73 percentage point margin of win is a reaffirmation of the maturity and good sense of ordinary voters who, given a choice between an experienced political leader in the saddle and an unpredictable adventurer sponsored by an unnatural combination of political irreconcilables, made it a virtual no-contest at the national level.

The divergence in the voting behaviour of the Tamil minority and the Sinhala majority was as striking as it was expected; in turnout as well as choice of candidate, they behaved as polar opposites. This gives us a measure of the trust gap in the polity that needs to be bridged if Sri Lanka is to do well in future. Unfortunately, the election was also unusually bitter, with unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, and conspiracy theories flying thick and fast and the challenger, retired General Sarath Fonseka, introducing a paranoid note into the campaigning.

Everybody knew in advance that it was the successful ending of the 26-year-old civil war and the elimination of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as a politico-military formation that had pre-determined the character of a presidential election brought forward by two years. Everybody also knew that Army Commander Fonseka commanded the respect of his men and had a reputation for professionalism — as long as he stayed a soldier.

.....P4



Sri Lanka ranks World's Eighth Fastest Economy

Sri Lanka ranked among the Top Ten Fastest Economies, being eighth in the world according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) of United States.

As the global economy would emerge in the recession, it is envisaged that Sri Lanka would record a 6.3 percent GDP growth rate that is second only to China, which will record a 8.6 percent in the Asian region. The improvement in 2010 is that the world will emerge from recession and post crisis economic landscape will become clearer. This will pave the way to achieve a higher growth of about seven to nine percent in the medium term, said the Ministry of Finance and Planning, quoting the EIU. Source: info.gov.lk

The fourth Galle Literary Festival



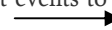
Gradually, the Galle Literary Festival is becoming known as a major event for book lovers. Writers gladly accept an invitation to speak about their work in this historical fort city. And Sri Lankans and foreigners flock to Galle for the four-day festival. Established by Geoffrey Dobbs in 2006 as a means to give this tsunami-hit country a boost in terms of tourist appeal, the event is now a regular fixture on the literary calendar.

This year, Pakistan's Mohammed Hanif was one of the major draws. While I had read his remarkable first novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, when it first appeared to international acclaim a couple of years ago, I had never met the author. In various sessions at the Lit Fest, he came across as witty and incisive, poking gentle fun at the Sri Lankan elections, as well as the Indian propensity to play the big brother in the region.

Another Pakistani at the event was Imran Mir, the well-known Karachi-based artist who had come to Sri Lanka for an exhibition of his work in Colombo. He and his wife Nighat are frequent visitors to the country, and are fortunate enough to have had their stunning home designed by Anjalendran, one of Sri Lanka's (and South Asia's) most innovative architects. Anjalendran was interviewed by David Robson, the author of a series of books about Sri Lankan architecture and architects, and spoke about his design philosophy. Having visited Karachi often to speak at the Indus Valley School, he was well qualified to dismiss much of the modern designs in Pakistan as 'magazine architecture'.

For me, one of the stars of the event was Ian Rankin, author of the famous John Rebus detective stories. Set in Edinburgh, the books examine the Scottish city's dark underside. As the author said in his polished talk, he spends as much time writing now as he does in promoting his books around the world. The current book in the series, *Exit Music*, is an account of the popular detective's last case before he retires. I look forward to reading it soon.

Another writer who packed the lecture hall was Antony Beevor, the famous historian who has written a number of best-selling accounts of the Second World War, including *Stalingrad*, *Berlin*, and *D-Day: The Downfall*. He spoke about the need for historical accuracy, and how journalists, especially on TV chat shows, play fast and loose with past events to suit their own argument. He made theP5





Biggest passenger vessel built by CDP



The first ocean going passenger vessel of the 250 passenger built by the Colombo Dockyard PLC (CDP) for Union Territories of Lakshadweep, Government of India was handed over at the flagging off ceremony, on Friday 15, January.

CDP sources said that this was the first time and was a historic occasion in the maritime industry of Sri Lanka where a mega project of this magnitude has been awarded by the government of India to the Colombo Dockyard.

The successful completion of this mega project would also mark the biggest vessel to be built by the CDL in its 35 years of ship building and the company has also worked out synergies to develop regional capabilities bringing with it the latest technology to the country.

Sri Lanka is poised to capture the market from India as the Colombo Dockyard PLC (CDP) is one of the most efficient dockyards in the region today. *Source: Lankapuwath.*

Yacht sail plant opens in Sri Lanka

A \$10.5m yacht sail manufacturing plant has just been opened in Sri Lanka by Dimension-Polyant Lanka (Pvt) Ltd. The plant was established following a deal with the Sri Lankan Board of Investment involving setting up the plant for sails and textiles with its output going for export.

With a workforce of up to 200, the new facility will make

One of main projects under Uthuru Vasanthaya: Mannar bridge causeway nearing completion

The Construction work on new Mannar bridge and the causeway connecting the Mannar Island with the mainland are now nearing completion and will be opened for the public soon.

Approximately 41,000 people living in Mannar Island will be directly benefited by this project which will vastly improve the market approachability and facilitating transportation at a low cost.

A Highways and Road Development Ministry spokesman said the Japanese Government has funded the construction of the new bridge and causeway which is one of the most important projects in the country.

The new bridge spanning 157.1 metre length and 10.4 m width has been constructed with two lanes of carriageway and sidewalks on the Medawachchiya-Mannar-Thalaimannar (A 14) Road.

The causeway has been extended up to 3.14 km in length and 11.0 m width comprising 2 lanes of carriageway.

The existing bridge and causeway which connect the Mannar Island and the mainland were constructed in 1930s with a single lane which is narrow in width. It was the only access road to the Mannar Island from the mainland.

Source: Daily News.

sails to European standards with high-tech equipment and machinery having been imported from Germany to support this. This will give Dimension-Polyant of Germany its fourth manufacturing plant, adding to those in Europe, the US and Australia. These all make sail cloth and membranes.

Dimension-Polyant is one of the world's leading sailcloth makers with its product range including laminated and woven sail material for sports yachts up to and including superyacht-sized craft. It is the German parent that has supported the investment in the Sri Lankan plant. *Source: www.ibinews.com*

From P 3 .Sri Lanka denouement

The problem was that, from time to time, he crossed the lines and betrayed vaingloriousness, chauvinism, foot-in-the-mouth disease symptoms, and hints of political ambition. The last thing Sri Lanka needed at this juncture was yet another South Asian variant of Bonapartism, or any more politicisation of the military that we have witnessed in recent months. Instead of waging a good political and ideological fight, the combined forces of the Opposition – the centre-right United National Party, the ultra-left Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, the minor league Sri Lanka Freedom Party (Mahajana wing), and the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance — showed appalling political judgment in lining up behind a candidate whose agenda for change was so vague, so empty-headed, and so self-contradictory that it made no political sense and, in fact, damaged the credibility of his sponsors. It is by no means clear that a serious UNP candidate like Ranil Wickramasinghe would have fared worse than General Fonseka, who is not even a registered voter, in a presidential contest. After this drama, politics in the island can return to a more normal state ahead of parliamentary elections, which are due in April 2010. The hope is that the campaigning will be on real issues, most importantly, a just and sustainable political solution to the Tamil question based on genuine devolution of power within a united Sri Lanka, and revitalisation and development of the war-ravaged areas of the North.

Courtesy: THE HINDU editorial of JANUARY 28, 2010
Source:www.news.lk

Two Export Promotions Zones in Northern Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka's Board of Investment (BOI) has identified two more areas in the North Lanka to establish two more Export Promotions Zones.

According to the BOI sources it has identified locations in Omanthai and Mankulam to set up the EPZs to facilitate

industry and investment. These lands are expected to be surveyed shortly.

With the return of peace, business activity is heightened and foreign investors have expressed their desire to invest in the war-battered region, especially in the Jaffna Peninsula, the sources said.

The BOI held its first investment forum in Jaffna recently

Source:lankapuwath



A TICKET TO HEART Shall we board Yaal Devi to worship Nallur Kovil ?

The Government of Sri Lanka has launched Uthuru Mithuru Project to re-establish the rail connectivity between the Northern province with the existing railway grid. This will create the connectivity between the North and the South revisiting our common heritage. At the end of the project involving the laying down of rail track from Vavuniya to Kankasanturai and reconstruction of twenty seven railway stations, the Yaal Devi train will start its journey again.

The estimated cost for this friendship project is around US\$ 140 million.

You could help return Sri Lanka to those magical days gone by and lend a hand towards restoring the path to Jaffna by purchasing a rail ticket for just Rs.1000/- (£ 6/-).Your ticket could be utilized on the Yaal Devi once the rail track is restored in the near future.



Those who wish to purchase tickets, please contact the High commission on 0207 262 1841 or email: mail@slhc-london.co.uk
You could also contribute via www.uthurumithuru.org

...from P3 *The fourth Galle Literary Festival*

case that when people did not believe their governments, rumour replaced reality, and conspiracy theories thrived.

Michael Frayn first made his name as a playwright with *Noises Off*, and has gone on from strength to strength, recently writing *Copenhagen* and *Democracy*. He has also written a number of novels, including *Headlong*, the fascinating novel based on the work of Breughel, the famous Dutch artist. He spoke in Galle about *Copenhagen*, a play about the 1941 meeting between Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist, and Heisenberg, the German pioneer of quantum mechanics. Although the meeting did take place, the discussions he dramatises are based on Frayn's own interpolation of what transpired. Seemingly, this is a dry, scarcely-relevant bit of history, and hardly the subject of great drama. Nevertheless, the London production was riveting, and the play is now being performed in New York to packed houses.

For me, perhaps the most gripping event was not a talk, but a one-woman play in the courtyard of the Sun House, a local hotel. Based on her own mental condition, Sophie Pelham mesmerised the audience with a frank, horrifying monologue about how those suffering from Bi-polar disorder cope with life. Or, more accurately, don't cope. Her performance won rave reviews at last year's Edinburgh Festival, and it was easy to see why. This mental condition is often misdiagnosed, and causes acute disorientation and social maladjustment.

Apart from the literary sessions, the festival also showcases a number of cultural

events. There was a concert by the Chamber Music Society of Colombo at the Dutch Reformed Church. This splendid 17th century building was recently restored with Dutch assistance, and is a reminder of Holland's colonial presence in the island. Before them came the Portuguese until they were defeated in 1640. The Dutch ceded the colony to the British in 1696. Much of Galle Fort is as the Dutch left it, and the town is now a Unesco World heritage Site.

Long before the Europeans, Arabs had established trading posts along the coast, and their dhows moved goods between the Gulf and the Far East. Today, Muslims continue to live in the coastal areas, and play a major role in the island's economy. They are typically engaged in the gemstone industry around Galle.

Other cultural events included a wonderful evening featuring Sri Lankan drummers dressed in traditional costumes. The range and complexity of the performance was a revelation to me. The following evening, we were treated to a spectacular performance by a dance ensemble who gave us an exhilarating exhibition of classical dancing.

I have always been intrigued by how few Pakistanis visit the Festival. Even Pakistanis who read, and can easily afford the trip, prefer to travel West, rather than explore the delights of a neighbouring country only three hours away by air. But I hear that we are going to have a literary festival in Karachi in March. I hope it is the first of many.

In the background of the Galle Festival hovered the recently concluded presidential election. While most observers (including this one) had forecast a very close fight, in the event Mahinda Rajapakse won by a huge margin. With around six million votes to four million for his rival Sarath Fonseka, the President secured a margin of victory that has left even his staunchest supporters unable to explain the numbers. The opposition has complained of electoral fraud, but without any evidence, their claims are being dismissed as sour grapes. Many people here are muttering darkly about 'computerised fraud', but so far, there is no smoking gun.

The very fact that a highly successful international event was held days after the acrimonious election is an indication of the country's appeal. In a recent article in the New York Times, the island was named as the number one destination for tourism in 2010. This year, hotels are packed with tourists as the memories of a bitter civil war fade.

Source: www.dawn.com

Services by the Sri Lanka High Commission in London

Consular Services (Visa, Passport, Dual Citizenship, Registration of Births / Marriages / Deaths, etc)

Tel. 020 7262 1841-6, Fax. 020 7262 7970, Email: consulardivision@slhc-london.co.uk

Consular Hours: Mon-Fri : 0930—1300 hrs

Please visit our website www.slhclondon.org for more information.