



# International Peace Day

*Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP)*

## International Day of Peace - Message by President Mahinda Rajapaksha



**Once again Sri Lanka joins the international community in celebrating the International Day of Peace - September 21.**

In deference to the call of the United Nations, it will join the global ceasefire on September 21 and will call upon its peoples to observe the day with activities promoting peace and national harmony.

As a country plagued by terrorism, and internal conflict Sri Lanka appeals to all countries to join the United Nations in a quest for collective security to rid the world of the scourge of terrorism.

Problems facing humanity such as global warming, ecological disasters can only be solved through the concerted efforts of all nations and world peace is an essential prerequisite for such efforts to bear fruit. I appeal to all powers to settle all inter-state and intra-state conflicts through peaceful negotiations so that pressing problems such as poverty and underdevelopment could be solved rapidly.

On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, I also reiterate my call for negotiated settlement of the internal strife in our country and extend my hand of friendship to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that is conducting an armed struggle against the state to join in the search for a dignified and just peace for our motherland.

May the culture of peace prevail throughout the world.

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**The United Nations General Assembly, in resolution 55/282, of 7th September 2001 decided that beginning in 2002, the International Day of Peace should be observed on 21 September each year. Sri Lanka as a Member State of the United Nations system will observe the International Day of Peace today - - the 21st of September 2006.**

Peace for all our people is the clear goal of SCOPP. It is the essence and identity of our existence. September 21, the International Day of Peace, is the day on which we reaffirm our commitment to our goal, but let it not be confined to this day alone. Let this commemoration give us the space to reflect on how to strengthen our democratic framework and provide continuous meaning to our mission, and to look beyond the current obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the ultimate goal - Peace with dignity and security in Sri Lanka. Let it give us the courage and the strength to search for a peace that will lead us to enduring stability and prosperity.

H.E. the President, pledged, on being elected to power in November 2005, to give maximum priority to launching a new Peace Process, and to usher in a durable peace in our country.

Consistent with his commitment, while defending the Sovereignty of the State, he has launched a political process for devising a solution to the country's national question, to be based on a consensus arrived through dialogue among all parties linked to the problem. The political process is continuing with tremendous enthusiasm seeking to provide proposals to end decades of conflict, that have ravaged the very core of our nation, pitted brother against brother, divided families and stagnated our development. He has also sought the resumption of the peace talks, to lay the foundations on which to build a framework, that 'accommodates the rights and aspirations of all sections of our society'.

After two decades of conflict, the path to peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka will not be easy. It will be a long, complex and an arduous one, a task that will require limitless patience and the unswerving commitment of all our people. All our energies will be taxed to the maximum to overcome the current challenges and prevent further conflict situations in the future. We will need to look at everything afresh, transform attitudes and reassess perceptions.

We will need to re-direct tendencies of destructive violence to constructive engagement, recognise and rectify any mistakes of the past and grasp every new opportunity. Our children in particular- the future of our country - must be recognized as amongst the most precious beneficiaries of this mission. Our Children must have the opportunity to grow up in a climate of peace and look forward to a hopeful tomorrow in a peaceful and democratic Sri Lanka. If we fail on this vital mission, posterity will judge us harshly.

On this International Day of Peace, let us not forget those who have sacrificed their lives and endured untold suffering so that we who live shall strive for a dignified and sustainable peace.

## Sri Lanka Embassy in Washington Joins in Celebrating International Peace Day

The Sri Lanka Embassy together with the Sri Lankan community in the Greater Washington area celebrated International Peace Day at the Embassy in Washington DC, on September 21, 2006.

The event organized by the Embassy staff was attended by a cross section of Sri Lankans in the Greater Washington DC area and representatives of the Sri Lanka related associations and focused on multi-religious observances.

The Buddhist religious observances were led by Ven. Maharagama Dhammasiri Thera of the Washington Buddhist Vihara and Ven. Katugastota Uparatana Thera of the International Buddhist Center in Wheaton.

This was followed by the Hindu religious observances led by Mrs. Kanagar Ranganathan, the Christian religious observances led by Dr. Hillary Codippily and the Muslim religious observances led by Mr. Nazeer Azeez. Deputy Chief of Mission Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha welcomed the guests.

Leader of the House, Health and Nutrition Minister and Sri Lanka Government Chief Negotiator Nimal Siripala de Silva and the Secretary General of the Peace Secretariat Dr. Palitha Kohona who were visiting Washington DC at the time also participated in the event.

Addressing the gathering at the Embassy, Minister de Silva said President Mahinda Rajapaksa has sent a very clear message to the international community by openly declaring that Sri Lanka is not pursuing a military option but is seeking an honorable peace where all communities can reap the benefit of a successful peace process. The Minister said the US government is very supportive of Sri Lanka's stand and has full confidence in the government.

Adding a colorful touch to the program was the participation of the young student Asanga Roshan who is on a Peace Walk since August 20, 2006, from Durham, North Carolina to the Statue of Liberty in New York who arrived at the Embassy to participate in the International Peace Day celebrations. Minister de Silva who commended Roshan said that the government is encouraged and strengthened by such individuals. "The second and third generations of Sri Lankans need to necessarily get involved too, to ensure a sustainable peace," said the Minister.



## Sri Lanka High Commission in UK

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This High Commission organized a ceremony on 21 September 2006 from 6-8 p.m. to commemorate International Peace Day. The main feature of the ceremony was multi-faith religious observances conducted by clergy of the Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic and Christian faiths.

Representatives of Sri Lankan community organizations, members of the recently formed umbrella organization Campaign for Peace & Unity in Sri Lanka (CPUSL) and other well wishers were also invited.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Brazil

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Since there is no Sri Lankan expatriate community in Brazil, the Embassy thought it appropriate to conduct a religious ceremony to commemorate International Peace Day on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006 incorporating the Brazilian community at the Templo Budista Tibecano in Brasilia.

H.E. the Ambassador and the staff of the Embassy together with the few Sri Lankans living in Brasilia and the invitees from the Brazilian community attended the function.

The chief Incumbent of the Tibetan Temple Venerable Lama Trinle started the proceedings and paid homage to Buddha in English and Portuguese languages and conducted the Buddha Puja and delivered a sermon. The Messages of H.E. the President of Sri Lanka and H.E. the Ambassador was read out both in English and Portuguese languages.

The event culminated by serving Dene to the two priests of the Tibetan Temple.

## High Commission of Sri Lanka in Australia

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The International Peace Day Commemoration meeting was held in the High Commission on 22/9/2006 with participation of Sri Lankan expatriates of all ethnic and major religions. About 50 community leaders participated. Religious Dignitaries, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islamic delivered short speeches on the importance of Commemorating International Peace Day, followed by religious sermons. High Commissioner welcomed the invitees and delivered a speech on the value of International Peace Day and how it applies to Sri Lanka. The message of His Excellency the President Mahinda Rajapaksa was read for the information of the participants.





## Consulate General of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Mumbai, India

This Mission organized a religious observation (Buddhist, Hindu, Christian & Islam) to mark International Peace Day on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006 at the office premises. More than 50 people from Sri Lankan expatriate community, members of Indo-Sri Lanka Society and Anam Prem, Charitable Peace Organization participated at this function.

## Sri Lanka Deputy High Commission, Chennai, India

### Visit by OfERR delegation

To commemorate World Peace Day, a delegation of Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu led by Mr. S.C. Chandrahasan, Treasurer of the Organisation for the Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) visited the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006.

The gathering which included the members of the Sri Lankan refugee community and the staff of the Mission, then proceeded to light candles to symbolize peace.

The religious dignitaries offered prayers and blessings for a lasting peace in Sri Lanka and in the world over, invitees included the representatives for the Bank of Ceylon and Sri Lankan Airlines in Chennai.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Japan

Peace Day observations arranged by the Embassy included religious observations by Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian representatives from the community, two minute silence to honour those who sacrificed their lives for peace and unity of Sri Lanka Ambassador's speech and reading of H.E. the president's message by the Ambassador.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Philippines

The Mission made arrangements to observe International Peace Day at the Embassy on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2006 with the participation of Sri Lankan Diaspora. Twenty Seven (27) member visiting Sri Lankan Delegation from eight Provincial Health Ministries headed by Mr. M K W Wickramaratne, Chief Secretary, Sabaragamuwa Province were also attended to grace the occasion.

The Mission made arrangements to give wide coverage for this event. The message of His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka was appeared in the "Manila Times" today (23.09.2006), one of the leading English Dailies titling " Sri Lanka President's Message of Peace.



## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Sultanate of Oman

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Sri Lankan Embassy in Muscat celebrated the International Peace Day 2006 at the Embassy premises on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006 with the patronage of H.E. Mr. Mahroof and Madam Jessima Mahroof with the members of staff and their families.

At the inception, H.E. the Ambassador and Madam Mahroof had been cordially received by the Head of Chancery and the staff Mr. Lalith Rodrigo, Third Secretary (Labour) made a short introductory speech on the importance and the validity of the Peace Day at the beginning of the programme.

Mrs. S. Karunaratne, Second Secretary made a speech on Peace according to the Buddhist belief while Mr. R. Ratheeparan, attaché (Administration) presented the opinion of Hinduism on Peace. Mr. I. Puthiyakath, Official Translating Officer made a speech on Peace according to the faith of Islam and Mr. Ivon Fernando, Embassy Official was able to submit the views of Christianity on Peace. Message of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka was read at the meeting.

H.E. the Ambassador covered in his speech all the aspects of Peace and the importance of Peace for the international community. He stressed that all of us have to follow the paths to achieve Peace through non-violence and friendly discussions.

All the participants observed one minute silence and uttered the motto "May Prevail Peace on Earth" in Sinhalese, Tamil, English and Arabic loudly.

In the evening on the same day, the Sri Lankan Community Club also arranged a programme on Peace Day with the participation of the large number of expatriates and well-wishers. Message of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka was read at the programme. H.E. Mr. Mahroof, Ambassador and Madam Jeseema Mahroof participated as Chief Guest while Damayanthi Darsha, Sprinter, popular Athlete of Sri Lanka was the Guest of Honour. Dinner was hosted by the Sri Lankan Community Club for the gathering.

In addition, the Embassy of Sri Lanka celebrated International Peace Day at a function held at the Sri Lankan School on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2006 too.

The importance and relevance of peace in the modern day strife ridden world was highlighted by the guests of honour in their speeches. The Sri Lankan school children expounded admirably about peace in the various activities presented by them during the three-hour programme.

A number of prominent Sri Lankans attended the programme along with Sri Lanka Ambassador M. Mahroof and June Kunugi, Representative of Unicef, Oman.

The programme began with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp by the dignitaries and a welcome speech by Mr. Nimal Fernando, Principal of Sri Lankan School. This was followed by recital of religious sayings which included Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity.

There were five programs presented by children interspersed by speeches by the dignitaries gathered on the occasion. The first of the speeches by a number of students was based on the war and its consequences and related issues. Then the students presented two songs on Lost Children and Heal the World

There were two musical programmes, one on Normal Happy Children and Children affected by war. Another song Land belongs to you was very apt on the subject of peace. Sri Lanka Ambassador Mr. M. Mahroof, and Miss June Kunugi, representative of Unicef, Oman delivered speeches. Others who also spoke on the occasion included Dr. Hemasiri, Chairman, Board of management, Sri Lankan School and Dr. S.A. Prathapar, Sultan, Qaboos University.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Iran

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### Asian Ambassador's Luncheon Meeting

A brief reference to mark the International Day of Peace was included in the programme of the pre-scheduled Asian Ambassadors Luncheon Meeting held at the H.E. the Sri Lanka Ambassador's residence on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2006.

H.E. the Ambassador of Sri Lanka at the outset of the meeting drew to the attention of the Asian Ambassadors the importance of International Day of Peace declared by the UN General Assembly Resolution 55/282 of 2001. He also referred to the Sri Lankan situation and the efforts of His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa to achieve a peaceful settlement to Sri Lanka's current problems from the LTTE. This was followed by a minute's silence for peace.

The meeting hosted by the Sri Lanka Ambassador was also attended by Ambassador of Peoples Republic of China H.E. Mr. Liu Zhentang, Ambassador of Thailand and H.E. Mr. Suwit Saicheua.

### Special events at the Mission

A special ceremony was held at the Chancery premises in Tehran with the participation of nearly 125 guests including a large number of resident Sri Lankans in Tehran, Iranian well wishers as well as other friends of Sri Lanka. An 18 member Sri Lankan Junior Volley ball team then in Tehran also participated in the event.

The Program commenced with the rendering of the National Anthem followed by the Lighting of the Traditional Oil Lamp. The welcome speech was thereafter delivered by the Second Secretary Mr. B. Vidyarthna.

Thereafter the message of His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka issued for the International Day of Peace was read out by the Ambassador.

H.E. Mr. M.M. Zuhair P.C. delivered a speech on the importance of the International Day of Peace with special reference to the Sri Lankan situation.

The next event was the participation of all the guests in Prayer for Peace with blessings of all four religions in Sri Lanka namely Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

After the Buddhist blessings a 5 minute meditation programme (Maitree Bawana) was also conducted.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Jordan

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The International Peace Day was observed by the mission on 21/9/2006 with the participation of Sri Lankan expatriates. The program commenced with lighting the traditional oil lamp and prayers. Pansil was observed and Hindu (Tamil) prayers, Christian (Sinhala) prayers, Islamic (Arabic) prayers were observed. Two minutes silence was observed for all who died due to war and conflicts. H.E. the Ambassador Dr. A.W. Mohottala delivered the key note address in Sinhala (translated into Tamil & English).

The International Peace Day message of H.E. the President was also read out by H.E. the Ambassador, 200 Sri Lankans were present.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in France

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Eminent Sri Lankan Judge and former Vice President of the International Court of Justice Mr. Christopher Gregory Weeramantry was awarded the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education 2006 on 21 September at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The Sri Lanka Embassy was associated with the Round Table Conference on the "Culture of Peace today" and the awards ceremony.

About 800 guests were invited for this function which included among others the diplomatic community, UNESCO staff and Sri Lankan expatriates.

The Embassy also organized a piano recital by world renowned Sri Lankan pianist Shani Diluka at the awards ceremony.

The Embassy also organized a reception in honour of Mr. Weeramantry at the UNESCO on 22 September. The message from H.E. the President was also read out at the beginning of the event.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Thailand

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A simple ceremony was held at the Chancery in the morning with the participation of some members of the Sri Lankan community and the staff of the Embassy.

At the outset, the International Peace Day message of H.E. the President was read out. Thereafter, a short speech highlighting the importance of the International Day of Peace was made by the Ambassador. Thereafter all of lit candles and prayed for peace in Sri Lanka

## High Commission of Sri Lanka in Singapore

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A ceremony encompassing multi-religious prayers and sermons were conducted at the High Commissioner's residence.

Invitees included the High Commissioner of Singapore to Sri Lanka and members of Sri Lankan expatriate, religious and business organizations.

## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Myanmar

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The International Peace Day was duly celebrated by the Sri Lanka Embassy in Yangon. It was held at the Sri Lanka Embassy premises with the participation of the entire Embassy staff and their families. The Sri Lankan expatriate community were also invited to join in the programme and despite the fact that it was a working day and the monsoon rains were on a fair number of Sri Lankans joined the programme.

The main item of celebration was the lighting of oil lamps around of the Embassy premises on both sides of the drive way inside the premises and up to and around the Bo Tree.

The days programme started with a speech of welcome by the Ambassador which also explained to the gathering the aims and objectives of the International Peace Day and how it came to be declared an international Peace Day. Thereafter the International Peace Day Message of His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka was read by the Counsellor in English and translation thereof in Burmese language was read by Ms. Samad. Thereafter a Bodhi Pooja was conducted by the Attache, Mr. Jayasinghe with the participation of everyone present. This included the offering of pots of water to the Bodhi Tree, lighting of candles, joss sticks for the Bodhi Tree.



**Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO:**  
with various partners organized the following activities:

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**Countrywide, with the Ministry of Education:**

- Observances of a minutes silence in schools, to remember those who have died of violence in the past decades.
- Talks and addresses at schools assemblies, by the schools' principals and teachers to convey messages about peace.
- Art and photo exhibitions done by school children, to depict struggles of ordinary Sri Lankans, in the face of both natural and man made disasters.
- Expressions by school children, or, collectively as a school, about their perception on how to achieve peace.

**In cultural centers and selected street locations including Trincomalee, Mannar, Hill Country and Galle with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs:**

- Joint Cultural and Musical performances, street theatre, involving different communities.
- Art & photo exhibitions by different communities, depicting struggles of ordinary Sri Lankans, in the face of natural and man made disasters.
- Voice recordings of statements made by the members of the public attending the Cultural programmes, about their perceptions on the way forward for peace.

**In Galle with the Associated Schools Project in the Ministry of Education:**

"Childrens Camp" involving 25 schools, comprising Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim students, to focus on peace values on 21 September 2006, under theme of "Child and Society." A

televised cultural show, involving children from all communities will also be held at the same venue.

**In Jaffna with the Municipal Corporation of Jaffna:**

Art Exhibition on the theme of Peace at the Jaffna Library  
Cultural show at the Jaffna Open Air Theatre.

**In Colombo with the Ministry of Mass Media and Information:**

Televised forums - commencing on 21 September 2006, under the theme of "Peace Building - The Way forward", followed by six forums one for each month based on the following themes;

- Education for Peace in Schools
- Implementation of the Language Policy
- Development of the North and East.
- Role of media in peacebuilding.
- Role of women in peacebuilding.
- Role of Culture/Artists.

## A day of celebrating peace for Sri Lankan children caught in conflict - UNICEF Report

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COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, 26 September 2006 - It was a day of hope for Sri Lanka's children. On 21 September, thou-

sands of children celebrated the UN International Day of Peace amid an escalating conflict that has displaced hundreds of thousands of people across the country. . According to a children's poll taken last year, an overwhelming number of young people here believe that Sri Lanka needs peace. "Peace should take place not only in the mind, but also in reality," said Dilani, 13. "We want permanent peace," added Nushka, 15. "Children want peace!"



On the International Day of Peace this year, children from many Sri Lankan communities started off by

lighting traditional oil lamps, then participated in a variety of activities supported by the Ministry of Education and a group of non-governmental organizations and UN agencies, including UNICEF.

### A day of celebration

At many schools, children flew kites carrying messages on 'what peace means for me'. In Batticaloa on the country's east coast, hundreds gathered to open a Children's Parliament.



In Vavuniya, a town in the north, schoolchildren marked the day by releasing doves and balloons. In southern

Sri Lanka, 500 children marched into Galle town for a day of celebration dedicated to peace "We are debating and talking about peace with everyone. It helps children just by discussing peace," said the head of UNICEF's Batticaloa Zone Office, Christina de Bruin. "Children have lots of ideas about peace, and how we can reach peace. One day a year to celebrate peace is not enough. It should be peace day every day."

For Sri Lanka's children, the International Day of Peace was a chance to celebrate together and forget about the conflict that has become part of their daily lives. "Peace is very important in the world today," said Sachith, 15. "I wish peace will come soon."