



**THE EMBASSY OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA
TO BELGIUM, LUXEMBOURG AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

27, RUE JULES LEJEUNE, 1050 BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

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Sri Lanka's 63rd Anniversary of Independence celebrated in Brussels

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Brussels together with Sri Lankans living in Belgium and Luxembourg celebrated the 63rd Anniversary of Independence of Sri Lanka on 06 February 2011, at the "La Fannel" auditorium in Brussels. The event attended by over 200 persons, showcased Sri Lanka at its best – its religious practices, cultural diversity and aspirations for the future.

The proceedings commenced with the recital of the National Anthem. Two minutes silence was observed honoring the heroes who sacrificed their lives for the country and remembering those who had lost their lives in natural disasters, including in the recent floods in Sri Lanka.

Following the lighting of the traditional oil lamp, Ven. Kimbulawala Rewatha thero, Chief Monk of the United Kingdom conducted the Buddhist religious observances, Rev. Harinath Sahrma performed the Hindu rites, Maulavi Kamal performed the Islamic prayers and Rev. Sister Marie Josephine conducted the Christian prayers.

The Independence Day messages of H.E the President, Hon. Prime Minister and Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs were read in all three languages by Embassy officials.

A special feature of the event was the signing by the Board of Directors of the Constitution of the Belgolux-Sri Lanka Business Council (BLSLBC), which is being incorporated as a non-profit organization in Belgium.

Addressing the gathering Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU Ravinatha Aryasinha observed, "the bond that binds us all is our passion for Sri Lanka – whether acquired from birth, through marriage, or by travel, cultural or business interaction with the country. Our common wish is to see Sri Lanka prosper. As we celebrate our freedom, let us not forget that these continue to be challenging times for Sri Lanka. Even as Sri Lanka takes tangible measures to bring about reconciliation and has embarked on a process of development and sustainable peace for all communities in Sri Lanka, there are some with vested interests, who continue to seek to distort the image of Sri Lanka particularly in the West. As a result, the Sri Lanka which is projected out here, is very different from the Sri Lanka that is over there. This is not a moment for any Sri Lankan or lover of Sri Lanka to be mere spectators. It is a time for all those who are genuinely interested in Sri Lanka's future, to join in shaping Sri Lanka's destiny. Sri Lanka has a better story to tell, and I urge that each and every one of you, in your own ways, rise to meet this challenge".

A colourful cultural programme followed. Dances from the Sarasavi Ranga Ayathanaya in Paris performed '*A melody of Sri Lankan Drums*', '*Hansa Vannama*', traditional '*Ves*' dance and a modern *fusion* dance. A veteran Baratha Natyam exponent from Luxembourg, Ms. K. Gunaratnam performed a Baratha Natyam dance. Two child performers, Miss Aarthi Aryasinha and Master Shawn de Silva performed Volin and Piano recitals respectively. The

grand finale to the programme was the coming together of Sri Lankans to sing '*Lowe Sema Ekamadeye*'.

The cultural programme was followed by a lunch hosted by the Embassy of Sri Lanka.

Embassy of Sri Lanka
Brussels

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