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## **Sri Lankan Dances add luster to 'Salon des Vacances' Tourism Fair in Belgium**

Sri Lankan dances dazzled the Belgians who visited the 'Salon Des Vacances' tourism fair which was held from 03-07 February 2011. Dubbed as the 'largest B2C tourism fair' in Belgium, this year's 'Salon des Vacances' fair drew more than 150,000 Belgian visitors during the five day exhibition. Sri Lanka which was participating in this fair after a spell of four years, was part of the 'Asian Village' - which depicted the tourism industry and the rich culture of Asia. The Sri Lanka Embassy in Belgium, together with the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau represented Sri Lanka at the 'Asian Village' of the tourism fair, while the dancers of the '*Sarasavi Ranga Ayathanaya*' of Paris performed at this event.

The increased interest in Sri Lanka as a tourist destination was clearly reflected in the enthusiasm shown by Belgian travelers during the 'Salon Des Vacances' travel fair. In 2010 tourist arrivals from Belgium recorded a growth of 106%, compared to the 51% growth from Western Europe and overall growth of 46.1%. The 5398 Belgians who visited Sri Lanka, exceeded by a large margin Sri Lanka Tourism's estimate for tourist arrivals from Belgium for the year of 2010, and fell only marginally short of the highest tourist arrivals recorded from Belgium in 2006 of 6333. It is estimated that tourist arrivals from Belgium will reach 7000 in 2011.

This phenomenal growth has been helped by an ambitious marketing campaign undertaken by the Sri Lanka Embassy in Brussels, in collaboration with public and private sector stakeholders of the tourism industry both in Belgium and Sri Lanka. Besides Sri Lankan Airlines which offers special packages for Belgian tourists flying out of Paris, Frankfurt and London, connectivity between Belgium and Sri Lanka also expanded in the last quarter of 2010 with the introduction of weekly Brussels-Colombo direct flights by Thomas Cooke/Jetairfly and also with Qatar Airways which has daily connections from Colombo adding Brussels as a new destination.

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