



**Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka  
Paris, France**



NEWS BULLETIN

May - 2017

## **President's Vesak Message**



The year 2561 B.C. dawns, marking the commencement of the golden era in the Buddhist history of Sri Lanka.

I believe it is an incomparable prestige that our Motherland, as a place where the Buddha visited on three occasions, receives the opportunity to hold the United Nations International Vesak Festival. This is the foremost gift bestowed on us since Sri Lanka was blessed with the greatest gift, the teachings of the Buddha.

Offering the pivotal role for us in the 14th UN International Vesak Festival certainly demonstrates the recent victories we have achieved in the international arena. All the citizens of Sri Lanka, who contributed for this accomplishment, will be added to the history as devotees, who benefitted from this meritorious deed.

**This year's theme for the International Vesak Festival is 'Buddhist Teachings for Social Justice and Sustainable Peace'. The key condition for the social justice is equality. The Buddhist teachings also give prominence to this universal concept of equality.** The equality, which is demanded by the contemporary world, had been taken into discussion during the period of the Buddha 2561 years ago. The Buddha said, the peace which is the key factor of the existence of human beings can only be built in a healthy society where equality has been established.

Our historical chronicle which starts with the Nibbana of the Buddha will enter a new path with Sri Lanka hosting the International Vesak Festival this year. With that pride let us determine to commit to rise in the global society by overcoming petty boundaries.

I wish the Buddhist population in the entire world a joyful and peaceful Vesak!

Maithripala Sirisena

President

## **Prime Minister's Vesak Message**



The thrice blessed day of Wesak dawns with spiritual significance for all Buddhists; in observing Wesak, we find the time to engage in activities of piety and sharing of alms with those in need.

Sri Lanka has been a country, home to the tenants of Theravada Buddhism for centuries; for us, it is indeed a blessed occasion to be able to host two significant events in the international Buddhist calendar. The 14th United Nations International Wesak celebrations and the Global Buddhist Forum are due to be held in Sri Lanka to coincide with the sacred period of Wesak.

The precepts of Buddhism based on the concept of universal compassion (maithri), should inspire us to include its philosophical application in everyday living, while also reviewing new ways of sharing it with a hurting world. This would indeed be one key opportunity presented to us during the International Wesak Celebrations.

May all being be happy and content as we come together to commemorate the blessed Day of Wesak.

Ranil Wickremesinghe

Prime Minister



## **Ammbassador's Vesak Day Speech**



Vesak, which celebrates the birth, enlightenment and the passing away of Lord Gautama Buddha, is one of the most important days in the Buddhist Calendar.

In 1999, pursuant to a decision taken at the 54th session of the UN General Assembly, which was supported by Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Ukraine, the UN recognized Vesak as an international day of observance.

Our former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lakshman Kadirgamar, played a key role in this regard.

I am happy to announce that Sri Lanka is hosting the international celebration of the 14th United Nations Day of Vesak which will be held in Sri Lanka from 12 to 14 May 2017.

**The theme for this year's celebration is 'Buddhist teachings for a sustainable world peace and social justice'.**

As a Centre for Theravada Buddhism, Sri Lanka has played an active role in promoting non-violence and peace through the teachings of Buddhism, both at UNESCO and other international fora.

In this context, the Government of Sri Lanka considers it an utmost privilege to be hosting the UN Vesak Day 2017 on our soil.

As we celebrate the 2606th Anniversary of the enlightenment of Gautama Buddha, it is timely that we reflect on the long-standing value of Buddha's Dharma which stands relevant to the modern day contemporary world.

Buddhism teaches peace, non-violence and the importance of treating everyone with compassion and kindness.

At a time when the world is segregated into different groups with much enmity and violence, the Vesak season is an opportune time to contemplate on the teachings of Buddha which reflect on the virtues of living in cohesion amongst the diversity of cultures and religions that define our common humanity as a means for achieving sustainable peace.

Gautama Buddha showed the path to free us from the four evil dispositions of desire, hatred, fear and ignorance.

The teachings of the Buddha help us to bring the world the means of resolving all disputes that arise from unbribed desire.

It teaches moderation in our understanding, thought, action, speech, livelihood, effort and concentration. In the context of the global issues today, it is paramount that we learn to live peacefully and moderately to achieve Sustainable Development and peace.

### Vesak Day 2017



## Message of Peace through Buddhism spread through Vesak celebrations at UNESCO

The Embassy of Sri Lanka and the Permanent Delegation of Sri Lanka to UNESCO organized a one-day Symposium on the theme 'Buddhism and the Promotion of Sustainable Peace' at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 10 May 2017 to commemorate Vesak festival which is also a UN international day of observance.



The programme commenced with Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian religious observances to encourage interfaith harmony followed by presentations on the main theme by eminent Buddhist scholars Ven. Professor Mahinda Deegalle, Professor of Religions, Philosophies and Ethics, Bath Spa University, UK and Dr. Elizabeth Harris, Senior Honorary Research Fellow at The Cadbury Institute for the Public Understanding of Religion at Birmingham University, UK. In addition, Master Jun Hong Lu, President of Australia Oriental Radio and Television and Chairman of 2OR Buddhist Charity Association, who is a philanthropist actively involved in promoting Buddhism throughout the world, also took part in the event as a speaker.





## Minister Akila Viraj Kariyawasam at the 201 Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO



**Minister of Education and Sri Lanka's Representative to the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, led Sri Lanka's Delegation to the 201th session of the Executive Board from 24-25 April 2017, assisted by the Ambassador Tilak Ranaviraja, Permanent Delegate of Sri Lanka to UNESCO, Secretary General of the National Commission of UNESCO in Sri Lanka Dhammika Wijayasinghe, and other officials of the Embassy.**

**Minister Kariyawasam, delivering Sri Lanka's national statement to the Members of the Board, reiterated numerous initiatives launched by the Government to reform the educational system in order to better align itself with the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to alleviate poverty which is key for long-term development. He also emphasized the establishment of a special Division for National Unity and Reconciliation which is entrusted with coordinating efforts among different stakeholders to introduce necessary changes to the curriculum, in order to build and promote trust between different ethnic groups of the country from a very young age.**

The 201th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO took place from 19 April to 5 May 2017 at the UNESCO Headquarters. One of the main highlights of this session was the conducting of interviews by the Executive Board for candidates who have put forward their nominations for the post of Director General of UNESCO, scheduled to



be appointed in November 2017 at the 39th General Conference of the Organization. Nine candidates representing Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, France, Guatemala, Iraq, Lebanon, Qatar and Vietnam took part in the interviews which were conducted publicly for the first time to encourage transparency.



## අලුතින් පත්වූ අමාත්‍ය මණ්ඩලය



- 01- මංගල සමරවීර මහතා - මුදල් සහ ජනමාධ්‍ය අමාත්‍ය
- 02- එස්.බී. දිසානායක මහතා- සමාජ සවිබල ගැන්වීම් සුබසාධන සහ කන්ද උඩරට සංවර්ධන කටයුතු අමාත්‍ය
- 03- ඩබ්.ඩී.ජේ. සෙනෙවිරත්න මහතා - කම්කරු, වෘත්තීය සබ්දතා සහ සබරගමුව සංවර්ධන අමාත්‍ය
- 04- රවී කරුණානායක මහතා - විදේශ කටයුතු අමාත්‍ය
- 05- මහින්ද සමරසිංහ මහතා - වරාය සහ නාවික කටයුතු අමාත්‍ය
- 06- ගයන්ත කරුණාතිලක මහතා - ඉඩම් හා පාලනිකමය ප්‍රතිසංස්කරණ කටයුතු අමාත්‍ය
- 07- අප්‍රේන්ත රණතුංග මහතා - බනිජ තෙල් සම්පත් සංවර්ධන අමාත්‍ය
- 08- වන්දිම වීරක්කොඩි මහතා - නිපුණතා සංවර්ධන හා වෘත්තීය පුහුණු අමාත්‍ය
- 09- තිලක් මාරපන මහතා - සංවර්ධන කායර්යන් පිළිබඳ අමාත්‍ය රාජ්‍ය අමාත්‍ය ධුර
- 10 - මහින්ද අමරවීර මහතා - මහවැලි සංවර්ධන රාජ්‍ය අමාත්‍ය( පවතින ධීවර අමාත්‍ය ධුරය ද ඇතුළුව)

## Ambassador Tilak Ranaviraja presents credentials as the first Ambassador of Sri Lanka accredited to the Principality of Andorra



Ambassador Tilak Ranaviraja of France concurrently accredited to the Principality of Andorra presented his letter of credence to President François Hollande as the Co-Prince of Andorra on 3rd March 2017 at the Élysée Palace in Paris. He was accompanied to the credential ceremony by his spouse, Mrs Suneethra Ranaviraja.

During the brief discussion which followed, Ambassador Ranaviraja expressed the importance of strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries, particularly in the fields of culture, trade, investment and tourism. He further referred to the robust trade and tourism industries in Andorra and the need to explore pos-

sibilities for knowledge sharing for mutual benefit.

### Andorra

The Principality of Andorra is located in a valley in the mid-Pyrenees, bordered by Spain and France. It is the sixth smallest nation in Europe, having an area of 468km<sup>2</sup> and a population of approximately 85000. Andorra is a parliamentary co-principality with the President of France and the Bishop of Urgell (Catalonia, Spain) as Co-Princes. The friendly relations existing between Sri Lanka and the Principality of Andorra were formalized recently on 30 November 2016.



## Ambassador Tilak Ranaviraja presents credentials to the Principality of Monaco



HE Tilak Ranaviraja, Ambassador of France with concurrent accreditation to the Principality of Monaco presented his letter of Credence to His Serene Highness, Prince Albert II of the Principality of Monaco on 25th April 2017 at the Palais Princier de Monaco. He was accompanied to the credentials ceremony by Mr Marc Pauli.

During the private discussion that ensued, Ambassador Ranaviraja extended greetings of His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka to His Serene Highness Prince Albert II and apprised him of the progress made in the political and economic development process of the country and the prospects of receiving GSP + concessions from the EU which would place Sri Lanka in an added advantage to boost exports.

### Monaco

The principality of Monaco is located on the French Riviera and it is the second smallest independent state in the world. It has a 4.4-kilometre land border with France and a coastline of just over 4 kilometres. The Principality has a population of approximately 36,370, most of whom are non-native citizens. Monaco became a full voting member of the United Nations in 1993.





## Sinhala & Tamil new year celebrations 2017



### Ambassador Ranaviraja receives a copy of a Book on "Good Governance"



Ambassador Tilak Ranaviraja met with Rev. Dr. T. Dhammaratana of the Institut d'Études Bouddhiques de Paris at the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Paris

## *Knowledge*

### 10 youngest serving state leaders in the World

Vanessa D'Ambrosio (Captain Regent of San Marino since 2017), born 25 April 1988 (age 29)

Kim Jong-un (Supreme Leader of North Korea since 2011), born 8 January 1983 (age 34)

Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani (Emir of Qatar since 2013), born 3 June 1980 (age 36)

Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (King of Bhutan since 2006), born 21 February 1980 (age 37)

Emil Dimitriev (Interim Prime Minister of Macedonia since 2016), born 19 March 1979 (age 38)

Saleh Ali al-Sammad (President of the Supreme Political Council of Yemen since 2016), born 1 January 1979 (age 38)

Jüri Ratas (Prime Minister of Estonia since 2016), born 2 July 1978 (age 38)

Volodymyr Groysman (Prime Minister of Ukraine since 2016), born 20 January 1978 (age 39)

Emmanuel Macron (President of France since 2017), born 21 December 1977 (age 39)

Charles Michel (Prime Minister of Belgium since 2014), born 21 December 1975 (age 41)

Source: Wikipedia

## Things You Didn't Know About the Mona Lisa

**Knowledge**



"Mona Lisa" is not her name.

**The painting's subject is Lisa Gherardini, whose wealthy**—and presumably adoring—husband Francesco Del Giocondo commissioned the work. This explains the less prevalent title for this painting, La Gioconda. The name Mona Lisa (or Monna Lisa, as the Italians prefer) roughly translates to "My Lady Lisa."

She's smaller than you might think.

Mona Lisa's influence in culture is massive, but the oil-on-wood panel painting measures just 30 by 21 inches and weighs 18 pounds.

Men have died from loving her.

In 1852, an artist named Luc Maspero threw himself from the fourth floor of a Parisian hotel, leaving a suicide note that read: "For years I have grappled desperately with her smile. I prefer to die." Then in 1910, one enamoured fan came before her solely to shoot himself as he looked upon her.

It's literally priceless.

In the 1960s, the painting went on a tour where it was given an insurance valuation of \$100 million. But the policy was never taken out because the premiums were more than the cost of the best security.

She's been attacked!

If you look closely at the subject's left elbow, you might notice the damage done by Ugo Ungaza Villegas, a Bolivian who chucked a rock at the portrait in 1956. A few months before, another art attacker pitched acid at the painting, which hit the lower section. These attacks inspired the bulletproof glass, which in 2009 successfully rebuffed a souvenir mug hurled by an enraged Russian tourist who'd been denied French citizenship.

France mourned en masse when she went missing.

In 1911, Mona Lisa was stolen from the Louvre.

Pablo Picasso was a suspect in the caper.

Because he'd been caught buying stolen Louvre pieces before, Picasso was brought in for questioning. But the true thief would not be caught until 1913. Louvre employee Vincenzo Perugia was a proud Italian nationalist who smuggled the painting out under his smock because he felt it belonged to his and da Vinci's homeland, not France. After hiding it for two years, Perugia was busted trying to sell Mona Lisa to a Florence art dealer. However, he did briefly get his wish. Upon her recovery, Mona Lisa toured Italy before returning to Paris.

Her smile doesn't change, but your mindset does.

That is-she-or-isn't-she smile has long fascinated artists and historians. But in 2000, Harvard neuroscientist Dr Margaret Livingstone applied a scientific method to why Mona Lisa's smile seems to shift. It's all about where your focus is, and how your brain responds.

Source: [mentalfloss.com](http://mentalfloss.com)



## Embassy of Sri Lanka in Paris celebrates the 69 Anniversary of Independence



Embassy of Sri Lanka in Paris celebrates the 69th Anniversary of Independence on the theme of national unity and reconciliation

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Paris celebrated the 69th Anniversary of Independence on 4th February 2017 at Espace Saint Pierre in Paris with the participation of over 550 invitees from the Sri Lankan community representing all ethnicities.

Staying true to the spirit of reconciliation, the national anthem was sung in both Sinhala and Tamil by two groups of students followed by a two-minute silence for all Sri Lankans who have sacrificed their lives on behalf of the country. The traditional oil lamp was lit by Ambassador Tilak Ranaviraja and a group of children representing the four main ethnicities in Sri Lanka: Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher. Religious dignitaries from all faiths invoked blessings on the President, Government and all Sri Lankans living all over the world and for durable peace in the country. As customary, the national day messages of President Maithripala Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera were read out by Ambassador Tilak Ranaviraja and members of the staff.



### කොන්සියුලර් ජංගම සේවය

### 2017 ජූනි 24 - 25 දින වල Nice හිදී (Monaco ද ආවරණය වන පරිදි) සහ 2017 ජූනි 26 දින Lyon හිදී

පැරිස් නගරයෙන් පිටත වෙසෙන සේවාලාභී ඔබගේ පහසුව තකා කොන්සියුලර් ජංගම සේවයක් 2017 ජූනි 24 - 25 දින වල Nice හිදී (Monaco ද ආවරණය වන පරිදි) සහ 2017 ජූනි 26 දින Lyon හිදී දිගින් කිරීමට මෙම තානාපති කායරාලය කටයුතු සුදානම් කර ඇති අතර, එදින ඔබ වෙනුවෙන් පහත සඳහන් කොන්සියුලර් සේවා සැපයීමට බලාපොරොත්තු වන බව සතුටින් දැනුම් දෙමු.

උප්පැන්න සහතික සඳහා ලියාපදිංචි කිරීම

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ලියවිලි භාෂා පරිවර්තනය කිරීම

දිවුරුම් පෙන්සම්/බලය පැවරීම් සඳහා අත්සන සහතික කිරීම

ඔබගේ කටයුතු වෙනුවෙන් අවශ්‍ය වන ලියකියවිලි පිළිබඳ විස්තර මෙම තානාපති කායරාලයේ නිල වෙබ් අඩවියෙන් ලබා ගන්නා මෙන් කාරුණිකව දැනුම් දෙමු. ජංගම සේවය සම්බන්ධව ඔබට අවශ්‍ය උපදෙස් සහ විස්තර පත්‍රිකා, Restaurant Aradhana, 04, Blv Lech Walesa, Nice 06300 යන ස්ථානයෙන් ලබාගත හැක. (දුරකථන අංක - 0492049417)

ගමන් බලපත් සහ උප්පැන්න ලියාපදිංචිය සඳහා ලියවිලි සහතික කිරීම, ඒ දිනයන්හිදී තානාපති කායරාල නිලධාරීන් විසින් සිදු කරන බැවින් ඔබ විසින් එම ලියවිලි පිටතින් සහතික කර රැගෙන පැමිණීම අවශ්‍ය නොවේ.

කොන්සියුලර් ගාස්තු ගෙවීම සඳහා මුදල් පමණක් රැගෙන එන මෙන් වැඩිදුරටත් දැනුම් දෙන අතර, ක්‍රෙඩිට් කාඩ් පත් හෝ වෙබ් පත් භාර නොගන්නා බව කාරුණිකව සලකන්න.

## Sri Lanka returns to Spanish market after a decade



Minister of Tourism Development John Amararatunga officially opening the Sri Lanka Pavilion



Official launch of the Spanish language tourism brochure by Minister Amararatunga



Minister Amararatunga with UNWTO Secretary General Dr. Taleb Rifai



Sri Lankan delegation at FITUR 2017

Sri Lanka made a significant impact at the 37th International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR) in Madrid, Spain from 18-22 January.

This event, organised by IFEMA, brought together 9,672 tourism companies, institutions and bodies from 165 countries and regions, making it the third-largest tourism fair in Europe. Sri Lanka participated in this fair after a lapse of nearly 10 years.

The Sri Lanka stall was ceremonially opened by Minister of Tourism Development, Christian Religious Affairs and Lands, John Amararatunga, senior officials of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Commercial Counsellor of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Paris, Alexi Gunasekera, officials of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB) and Honorary Consul of Sri Lanka in Barcelona, Agustin Llana.

The first Sri Lanka Tourism brochure in Spanish was launched by Minister Amararatunga at the Sri Lanka stand in order to strengthen the destination marketing efforts among Spanish travellers.

The Commercial Section of the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Paris also arranged for the Minister to meet with the Spanish Travel Agents Association (CEAV) in order to explore the feasibility of holding the Spanish Travel Agents Association Congress 2018 in Sri Lanka following the success of the French Travel Agents Congress in 2016.

Source: <http://www.ft.lk>

## Sri Lankan Cinema celebrated at the Vesoul Asian Film Festival 2017

Embassy of Sri Lanka in Paris participated in the 23 Edition of the Vesoul Asian Film Festival which was held from 07 – 14 February 2017 in Vesoul, France. This year's edition of the festival has placed a special emphasis on the Sri Lankan cinema with a retrospective segment on the theme 'Masters of the Sri Lankan Cinema' which featured 14 renowned films by veteran Sri Lankan artists.

Prominent Sri Lankan Directors, Mr. Prasanna Vithanage and Mr. Vimukthi Jayasundara as well as popular Sri Lanka actress Ms. Swarna Mallawarachchi took part in this year's festival. Ms. Mallawarachchi was also awarded a 'Cyclos d'Or d'Honneur' in recognition of her immense contribution to the Sri Lankan cinema.



## Open Government Partnership Summit



The Open Government Partnership Global Summit convened in Paris from 7th to 9th December 2016, with the participation of over 80 governments and hundreds of civil society organizations around the world. Mangala Samaraweera, Minister of Foreign Affairs representing Sri Lanka at the Summit and in the subsequent Ministerial round-tables highlighted the importance of building trust in Government – through advancing OGP values. Minister Samaraweera, commented on many of the far-reaching state reforms undertaken and the consultative processes underway on key policy initiatives of the government thereby capturing the diversity of various viewpoints and interests to uphold the vision of the transparent, inclusive and participatory governance.



ප්‍රංශයේ ජාත්‍යන්තර බෞද්ධ මධ්‍යස්ථානයේ අවුරුදු උත්සවය 2017



ධම්මවක්ක විහාරයේ අවුරුදු උත්සවය 2017



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