Promotion of Sri Lanka Cuisine in New Delhi

A ten day Sri Lanka Food Festival from 17th to 26th August 2018 was held at the Capital Kitchen of the Taj Palace Hotel in New Delhi, which was a great success. The food festival was organised by the Sri Lanka High Commission in partnership with the Taj Palace in New Delhi together with the Mount Lavinia Hotel in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka’s Master Chef Pablis was the centre of attraction who turned out an array of Sri Lankan cuisine bringing out the best flavours of Sri Lankan spices. The inauguration of the Sri Lanka Food Festival was held on 23rd of August 2018. The Chief Guests were Hon. Wijayadasa Rajapaksha, Minister of Higher Education and Culture and Hon. Ranjith Aluwihare, State Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs who graced the occasion in the sidelines of their participation at the Buddhist Conclave that took place in New Delhi simultaneously. The selected audience included Udith Raj MP, the former Secretary Foreign Affairs of India, S Jaishankar, Sanjay Verma, Chief of Protocol of the MEA, other officials, diplomats, personnel from the media and the tourism sectors.
A Sri Lanka Night was held at the Foreign Correspondents Club of South Asia (FCC) in New Delhi on 28th August 2018. The event was organized jointly with the FCC, and the Sri Lanka High Commission in New Delhi. At the inauguration, the President of the FCC, S. Venkat Narayan thanked the High Commissioner and the staff for organizing the event for the members of the FCC and spoke of the close relations maintained between the FCC and the High Commission. In her remarks, High Commissioner Wagaswara referred to the important role played by the media and the multifaceted links between India and Sri Lanka. She highlighted the different features of the Sri Lankan cuisine and referred to the increasing popularity of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination.

Speaker of the Parliament of India attends the South Asian Speakers’ Summit in Colombo

Speaker Sumitra Mahajan attended a two-day 3rd South Asian Speakers’ Summit in Colombo in Sri Lanka on July 11-12, 2018 which discussed ways to promoting regional parliamentary cooperation for sustainable and equitable economic growth. This year the theme was “promote regional parliamentary cooperation for sustainable, equitable and green economic growth”. The Indian Speaker underlined that, the region lags behind in terms of human development, the adverse effects of population pressure and over-exploitation of the limited natural resources which are clearly visible everywhere. Speaker Mahajan also participated in discussions on themes namely, ‘the role of Parliaments in promoting decent work and safe and secure working environment’ and ‘Parliaments as promoters of social and economic inclusion in South Asia’. Besides the Speaker Mahajan, representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka participated at the Summit. Speaker Mahajan was accompanied by Rajya Sabha MP Bhubaneswar Kalita and Lok Sabha Secretary-General Snehlata Shrivastava.

3rd Edition of the Indian Ocean Conference

The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka participated at the 3rd Edition of the Ocean Conference from 27-28 August 2018 held in Ha Noi, Vietnam. In his speech he emphasized, that the “Indian Ocean region defines the destiny of the 21st century and the regional linkages must envisage towards maintaining prosperity for all”. During the visit Prime Minister met with Indian Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj. She highlighted India’s continued commitment to investment into housing, ports and aviation in Sri Lanka. The two dignitaries agreed to continue to deliver on the plans to build and develop the regional relationships to develop Sri Lanka. The Conference highlighted Indian Ocean littoral states role within the evolving regional architectures.

Visit of Indian Foreign Secretary to Sri Lanka

The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe met the Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale on 13th July 2018 and discussed issues concerning fishermen and India-funded projects in the island nation. During the meeting the strong regional relationship which is integral to India and Sri Lanka to enhance the economies and strengthen each other’s position as Indian Ocean economic hub was discussed. Both sides had talks on the Indian-funded housing project in the North for war displaced families. Prime Minister further reiterated that several India-funded projects in Sri Lanka will be implemented this year. Discussion also shifted to the proposed Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) between the two nations and the issue of Indian fishermen allegedly fishing in Sri Lankan waters. During the visit to Colombo Indian Foreign Secretary also met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka Thilak Marapana and held discussions on important bilateral issues.
Multicity Road shows launched in India to boost outbound tourism to Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau in association with the Sri Lanka High Commission in New Delhi organized destination promotion Road shows in Chandigarh and Jaipur from 10th to 11th July 2018 under the Multi-city promotional campaign in India. The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion bureau together with 15 travel and tour companies took part in the programmes held in Chandigarh and Jaipur. This two day events included one to one meetings, presentation and workshop offering a great networking opportunity for Indian outbound travel professionals and understanding of the unique product offerings for Indian travelers to Sri Lanka. Over 150 invitees from the travel and tour segment attended the events. The Sri Lanka Tourism road shows aim at strengthening the tourism relations between travel partners of Sri Lanka and India and are part of SLTPB strategic efforts to promote Sri Lanka as the most preferred short-haul holiday destinations for Indian travelers. India is the leading country that sends the highest number of tourists to Sri Lanka with a total number of 385 lakh arrivals; around 18% per cent of the total traffic. Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau has set a target of 440,000 for 2018 from India.

Expansion of Suwaseriya emergency ambulance service

The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined Prime Minister of Ranil Wickremesinghe through a live video conference from New Delhi to launch of the island-wide expansion of the 1990 Suwaseriya Emergency Ambulance Service in Jaffna on 21st July 2018. High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, Taranjit Singh Sandhu was also present at the ceremony in Sri Lanka. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed happiness that the promise he had made, for expansion of the ambulance service island wide in Sri Lanka during his visit last year, was now fulfilled. He noted that the event marks another major achievement in the development partnership of India and Sri Lanka. He underlined that India sees Sri Lanka not just as a neighbour but as a very special and trusted partner in the South Asian and Indian Ocean family. The Emergency Ambulance Service was first launched in 2016 in Western and Southern Provinces of Sri Lanka under an Indian grant of USD 7.5 million. This grant included purchase of 88 ambulances, operational expenditure of the service for one year and setting up of an emergency response centre. This service is now being expanded to the remaining seven provinces with an additional grant of USD 15.02 million, covering the cost of 209 ambulances, training costs and operational expenditure for one year in all seven provinces.

Sri Lankan food festival at the Hilton Chennai

The Hilton Chennai brought out the best in flavors of Sri Lanka through the Food Festival that was organised from 13th to 24th July 2018 with myriad colours on the menu. Chef Thukitha Neranjana, the travelling Chef de Cuisine from Hilton Colombo Residences brought the taste of authentic Sri Lankan food with its unique aromatic spices used in the right proportions.

Odisha bags XIVth Asian Schools Chess Championships in Colombo

Arushi Srichandan of Odisha bagged four medals, including a gold, a silver and two bronze in the XIVth Asian Schools Chess Championship from 7th – 15th July 2018 held in Kaluthara, Sri Lanka, organised by the Chess Federation of Sri Lanka. Arushi, a student of a reputed English medium school in Chandrasekharaparl locality, in Bhubaneswar, secured an individual bronze in the rapid chess event scoring 5.5 points from a possible seven.

Indian Railway to run a Special Train for pilgrimage

The Indian Govt. has arranged to run a special train for pilgrimage at the places related to Rama's story as mentioned in epic Ramayana which includes Sri Lanka. The train is scheduled to flag off in November 14, on the birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister and the prominent leader of the Congress in post-Independent India. The train has been named Shri Ramayana Express. The Indian Railways has laid an elaborate plan to connect the religious places from Ayodhya to Rameshwaram in India and four sites in Sri Lanka. The entire trip will be for 16 days starting from the Safdarjung railway station in Delhi. Named as Shri Ramayana Yatra-Sri Lanka, the pilgrimage circuit will have two travel components - one each in India and Sri Lanka. After leaving Delhi, the train will make its first stop
in Ayodhya followed by Hanuman Garhi Ramkot and Kanak Bhawan temple. The train will then stop at Nandigram, Sitamarhi, Janakpur, Varanasi, Prayag, Shringverpur, Chitrakoot, Nasik, Hampi and Rameshwaram along the circuit. If any of these sites are not directly linked with the Indian Railways, the Ramayana Express will stop at the nearest railway stations. The Ramayana Express train will have a capacity for 800 passengers. The cost of pilgrimage by the Ramayana Express has been fixed at INR Rs 15,120 per person. The Sri Lanka leg of the tour will be charged separately. The passengers opting for Sri Lanka leg of the Ramayana Yatra package can take a flight to Colombo from Chennai. The IRCTC offers 5-night/6-day Sri Lanka tour package at a cost starting from INR Rs 47,600 per person. The tour package will cover destinations such as Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Colombo and Negombo. The passengers will be offered food in the train. While making stops at various tourist destinations, the pilgrims will be provided accommodation in dhammasalas by the IRCTC, which will also make arrangements for their sight-seeing. Depending on the success and feedback of the passengers, its frequency will be decided by the Indian Railways next year. ‘Ramayana Express’: Railways will launch trains to locations connected with the epic.

Indian Naval Ship “Trikand” Arrives On 3-Day Visit To Colombo

The Indian Naval Ship “Trikand” arrived at the port of Colombo on 07th July on a goodwill visit. The ship was ceremonially welcomed by the Sri Lanka Navy in accordance with naval traditions, upon arrival. The Commanding Officer of the ship Captain Upal Kundu called on the Commander Western Naval Area, Rear Admiral Nishantha Ulugetenne at the Western Naval Command Headquarters. They held cordial discussions on matters of mutual interest and exchanged mementos to mark the occasion. The Assistant Defence Adviser of the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka, Lieutenant Colonel Ravi Shekhar Mishra was also present on this occasion.

A delegation from the Mahabodhi meets Prime Minister

A delegation of Buddhists from the Maha Bodhi Society of India (MBSI) visited Sri Lanka for the Poson season at the invitation of the Anagarika Dharmapala Trust from 01st July 2018. The delegation of more than fifty governing body members and their families was led by MBSI President Passang Dorji, a former Speaker of the Bhutan Parliament and General Secretary the Ven. P. Seewali Thera. The delegation was hosted two receptions by Indian High Commissioner Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Speaker Karu Jayasuriya. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Buddha Sasana Minister Gamini Jayawardena Perera met with members of the Mahabodhi Society including Society President and Bhutan’s former Speaker, Dasho Passang Dorji. The Premier, addressing members of the society who were visiting from India and Bhutan, affirmed the importance of Sri Lanka’s links with Mahabodhi, which was founded by Sri Lankan Buddhist leader, Anagarika Dharmapala in 1891 in an effort to revive Buddhism in India. Since then, the Society has opened offices around the world. He expressed the hope that the life and services by The Blessed One will continue to cement the strong relationship between Sri Lanka and India.
Sri Lanka movie ‘The Frozen Fire’ to enter mainstream category of Oscars 2019

“The Frozen Fire”, becomes the first Sri Lankan movie to enter the mainstream category of the Oscars 2019 awards, produced by Chamathka Pieris, under the banner of Cinepro Lanka International. The film is directed by Anuruddha Jayasinghe. All Lights Film Services, a film consultancy firm based in Kerala, India is handling the Oscar contention of the movie for Oscars 2019. The maiden screening of the film took place National Film Corporation of Sri Lanka on 3rd July 2018.

Visit of Hon Malik Samarawickrama, Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade to New Delhi

Minister of Development Strategies and International Trade, Hon Malik Samawickrama visited New Delhi from 25th to 26th July 2018. During the visit Hon Minister called on the Minister of Industry and Commerce and Aviation Minister of India, Hon Suresh Prabhu and discussed the progress of the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement and ways to increase trade between the two countries. High Commissioner Chaitranganee Wagiswara and Chief Negotiator K.J Weerasinghe participated at the luncheon meeting hosted by Minister Suresh Prabhu.

Sri Lanka delegation participates at a Regional Meeting

A delegation from Sri Lanka participated at the High Level Preparatory Meeting for the 71st Session of WHO Regional Committee for South East Asia and the 11th Meeting of the Sub Committee on Policy and programme Development Management (SPPDM) 30th July to 3rd August 2018 New Delhi India. The delegation was led by Faizal Cassim, Deputy Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indeginous Medicine, Dr. H S R P de Silva, Deputy Director General (Public Health Services), Dr. H Munasinghe, Consultant Community Physician.

Sri Lanka MICE Event in Kolkata

Sri Lanka Convention Bureau in association with the Sri Lanka High Commission in New Delhi organized a MICE promotion in Kolkata, capital of India's West Bengal state, from 30th – 31st July 2018, to promote Sri Lanka as a MICE destination. The promotional event included B2B meetings with leading corporates and business interactive sessions with travel and tour industry to project new MICE offers of Sri Lanka i.e Colombo, Kandy, Galle & Bentota. For the first six month in 2018, arrivals from India registered at 206,337.

10th Round of ETCA Negotiations in New Delhi

The 10th Round of negotiations of proposed Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement between India and Sri Lanka was held in New Delhi from 2nd to 4th August 2018. The Sri Lanka delegation was led by the Chief Negotiator of the National Trade Negotiation Committee of Sri Lanka and the Indian delegation was led by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry of India. The discussions were centered on the progress on the action points arising out of the 9th Round of Negotiations, NTM's, technology cooperation etc.

BIMSTEC Ambassadors Panel Discussion at the Federation of Chamber of Commerce & Industry in New Delhi

The Federation of Chamber of Commerce & Industry in New Delhi organised a "BIMSTEC Ambassadors Panel discussion on Expectations, Challenges and Opportunities" on 20th August at the premises of FICCI. During the panel discussion, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka Mrs Chitranganee Wagiswara, highlighted the importance of greater visibility of BIMSTEC and to fast-track the priority areas identified by the BIMSTEC member States. She emphasized the importance of identifying areas for cooperation that are of more importance to member countries. She cited that Tourism on the Buddhist Trail as an area for collaboration among the BIMSTEC member states. Senior Government Officials, members of the Diplomatic Corp, representatives from business enterprises, research organization and media were present at the event.

Scholarships offered for Indian Nationals for study of Information Technology in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) is offering scholarships to students from SAARC countries
to the degree courses in the fields of Informational Technology, Business, Engineering, Architecture and Quality Surveying. Duly filled applications should reach before 05 October 2018. Please refer to the Sri Lanka High Commission Official website for further details and application.

SLIIT was established in 1999. They have opened doors to 400 students in Metro Campus in Colombo. Currently, SLIIT offers both undergraduate and postgraduate courses and accommodate over 7000 students, including international students from world over. More than 9000 alumni have graduated from the three faculties: Business, Computer, and Engineering. SLIIT is a leading non-state degree awarding institute approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC) under the Universities Act. They are members of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), as well as the International Association of Universities (IAU). They are also the first Sri Lankan institute to be accredited by the Intuition of Engineering & Technology, UK.

Sri Lankan Artist Anoli Perera at the Indian Contemporary Art Week

The second edition of the Contemporary Art Week in Delhi was held on 31st August in New Delhi. A painter, sculptor and installation artist Anoli Perera from Sri Lanka also participated at the Exhibition with her art work highlighting her exploration of immigrant issues and urbanscapes. Larger participation from the South Asian neighbourhood, included countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

Sri Lanka delegation participates at the International Buddhist Conclave

The three day “International Buddhist Conclave” was inaugurated by the President of India, in the presence of delegates from over 29 countries on 23rd August 2018. A delegation comprising of Wijayadasa Rajapaksha, Minister of Higher Education and Cultural Affairs and Ranjith Aluwihare, State Minister of Tourism Development and Christian Religious Affairs were present among the invited delegates from Sri Lanka. President Kovind noted that Buddhist Circuit in India is an important and revered set of destinations for the approximately 500 million-strong community of Buddhists that lives across Asia and other parts of the world. The delegates also visited Rajgir, Nalanda, Gaya and Sarnath.

Visit of Envoy to the Funeral of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, Lakshman Kiriella visited India for the funeral of the former Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The Minister recalled the contribution of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in ensuring peace & stability in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Film Festival in Pune

The Pune International Centre (PIC) and the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) screened a number of acclaimed films from Sri Lanka, as part of a film festival that is now in its eleventh year. The festival kicked off from 10th – 13th August 2018. The films were screened at the NFAI auditorium. Dharmasiri Bandaranayake, acclaimed Sri Lankan Director inaugurated the festival on 10th August. Bandaranayake’s film Hansa Vilak was also part of the festival’s official selection. Films made by acclaimed directors like Vimukthi Jayasundara, Asoka Handagama, Prassana Vithanage, and Bandaranayake were also screened at the festival.

Handing over ceremony of the Houses built by the Indian Grant Assistance

The houses built with the Indian grant assistance at Dunsinane estate, Nuwara Eliya were handed over to the estate workers. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was present at the ceremony at Nuwara Eliya, along with Ministers and Indian officials. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, through a video link, joining the handing over ceremony stated that the handing over of houses built by India in Sri Lanka for Indian-origin people marked a new high in relationship between the two neighbours. He further said that India has kept its promise made to the people of Sri Lanka.

University of Ruhuna signs and MoU with Indira Kala University

On July 30, 2018, the University of Ruhuna signed an MoU with Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya (IKSV],Khairagarh in Chhattisgarh State agreeing to work together on similar lines. GoI has contributed to building of a state of the art 1500 seater auditorium at UoR which is to be inaugurated soon. An MoU was signed on Aug. 1, 2018 between University of Ruhuna (UoR), Matara, Sri
Lanka and University of Calcutta by the respective Vice Chancellors at Kolkata to collaborate on Jt. Research, workshops, student & teacher exchange, training and study tours.

Regional Conference on Advancing BIMSTEC Cooperation

High Commissioner of India H.E. Sandhu delivered Key note address at 'Regional Conference on Advancing BIMSTEC Cooperation' organised by Delhi Policy Group. Governor of CBSL Dr. Coomaraswamy, State Secy, MoFA Mrs. Grace Asirwatham, Amb H.K Singh, Amb Biren Nanda, Amb Sumith Nakandala, Additional Secretary (Bilateral Affairs) was also present. Ambassador Hemanth K. Singh, Director General of Delhi Policy Group (DPG) accompanied by Ambassador Biren Nanda, Senior Fellow, paid a visit to The Pathfinder Foundation Head office located at 'Riverpoint', Peliyagoda. Director General Singh was welcomed by Bernard Goonetilleke, Chairman, and Luxman Siriwardena Executive Director of Pathfinder Foundation (PF) and Admiral Prof. Jayanath Colombage, Director, ‘Centre for Indo Lanka Initiatives’ and ‘Centre for the Law of the Sea’, of PF.

Both sides discussed Indo-Sri Lanka relations in general and political, economic and trade as well as security and strategic relations involving the two countries, in particular. Taking steps to improve people-to-people relations between the two countries was a subject that was discussed at length by the two sides. Both sides shared information on connectivity between the two countries during the colonial period. They noted that the steamer service between Tuticorin and Colombo Port dated back to the latter part of the 19th century, which continued until about 1949, and the Dhanushkodi/Rameshwaram ferry service with Talaimannar connecting the railway network of the two countries commenced in 1914 and lasted until the service was disrupted in mid-1980 due to the separatist conflict in Sri Lanka. They observed that these services that served the two countries should be re-established earliest so that pilgrims and tourists could visit the two countries with least cost.