



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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Ambassador Aryasinha calls on Sri Lankans abroad to help moderate negative narratives propagated against Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha has called on Sri Lankans living abroad "to contribute towards moderating the negative narratives propagated against Sri Lanka – by clarifying genuine concerns and debunking the falsehoods".

The Ambassador made these observations when he addressed the 35th Independence Day celebrations attended by Sri Lankans living in Geneva and surrounding cities, held last week at the 'ILO Headquarters in Geneva'. The event organized by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka in Geneva, and attended by around 250 members of the Sri Lankan community, showcased Sri Lanka's religious & cultural diversity.

Ambassador Aryasinha who noted that "these continue to be challenging times for Sri Lanka, as some, particularly living abroad, either mis-guided or with vested interests, continue to seek to distort the image of Sri Lanka", emphasized the need to "evolve a consensus and desist from seeking to exploit domestic issues as foreign policy issues". He said, "recognizing that there may be differences of opinion amongst Sri Lankans on some issues, it is important for us to identify and 'bracket' issues we disagree on, as ones where we need to work harder to reconcile our disagreements internally, but at the same time not allow them to adversely affect the image of our country abroad". Reminding that "such bracketing is something we constantly do in our daily lives - within our homes, offices and communities, where we close ranks on issues, for a higher purpose", he noted that "great nations that have succeeded in forging ahead against many odds, are those that have been able to leave domestic issues at the water's edge".

The proceedings commenced with the recital of the National Anthem and the hoisting of the National Flag. Two minutes silence was later observed in honour of all those who sacrificed their lives to preserve and protect the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

Following the lighting of the traditional oil lamp, Ven. Thawalama Dhammika Thero, Ven. Uyanwaththe Saddarama Thero, Halyale Wimalarathana Thero and Ven. Kaluarachchiyagama Sumanarathana Thero conducted the Buddhist religious observances. Uma Shankar Kurukkal and Karthik Ragavan Kurukkal performed the Hindu prayers. Imam A.M. Zawahir performed the Islamic prayers, while Rev. Richard Lord conducted the Christian prayers.

The 65th Independence Day Message of the President was read by Ambassador Nimal Karunatilake, Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization, while Mr. Hasan Ali, Management Assistant read the Message of the Prime Minister and Ms. Manisha Gunasekera, Deputy Permanent Representative read the Message of the Minister of External Affairs.

In a colourful programme that followed, Sri Lankan children living in Geneva performed traditional Sri Lankan dance items. Miss. Binara Silva danced to the tune of "Rathnadeepa Janma Boomi", while Miss. Bithuthsa Sellaiah, Miss. Rageetha Sellaiah and Miss. Sinidu Welikala, performed a 'Bharatha Natyam'.

Mr. Chatura Perera, Second Secretary delivered the Vote of Thanks.

Ms. Priyanga Wickramasinghe, Counsellor in Sinhala, Mr. Hasan Ali, Management Assistant in Tamil and Ms. Natasha Goonaratne, Second Secretary in English, were the hosts of the evening.

The programme was followed by a dinner hosted by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka.

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