A DEVELOPMENT ORIENTED BUDGET FOR ALL CITIZENS IN 2015

President Mahinda Rajapaksa presented the tenth budget of his term on October 24, 2014. The 2015 budget is development oriented and focuses on the needs of all citizens alike.

Among its key components of the proposal;

* The president announced a salary increase of Rs. 3,000 and upwards is envisaged for government employees with low salaries enabling them to earn a minimum monthly salary of Rs 30,000.

* Nearly 50,000 persons were recruited to the health care sector. Including specialists, medical personnel, nurses and para-medical staff. Their emoluments and incentives were revised, and expenditure for pharmaceutical drugs, ambulances, and medical equipment to develop hospital facilities were increased.

* The income growth and living standards among low income persons had improved since 2012. The number of people living below the National Poverty Line has declined from 15.7 percent in 2006/07 to 8.7 percent in 2012/13.

* Unemployment among youth in the age group of 18-30 has declined from 15.8 percent to 13.1, while rural unemployment has also declined from 7.8 percent to 4.5 percent. Sustaining an employment level at 97 percent of the labor force remains the employment goal for 2020.

* Export industries have picked up showing a 12 percent growth. Export earnings are expected to generate US$. 11,500 million this year.

* The Government’s effort over the last 8 years to promote IT as a major industry is expected to raise foreign earnings to about US$ 1 billion by 2016, while creating around 100,000 employment opportunities.

* The Government is committed to gain a higher Investment Grade by reducing debt to GDP to below 60 percent, further strengthening country’s macroeconomic environment by 2020. The transformation process of the economy is evident considering Sri Lanka’s progress from a less developed country, with a per capita of US$ 1,200 in 2005, to a middle income country with US$ 4,000 per capita.

* Due to the measures taken by the government, the Budget deficit has been reduced to 5 percent of GDP in 2014 and will target 4.6 percent in 2015.

* The Government revenue in 2015 is likely to be around Rs. 1,600 billion, with current expenditure of Rs. 1,400 billion.

Please find complete article at: http://slembassyusa.org/?p=6225
UNIVERSAL STATES – SRI LANKA
TRADE AND INVESTMENT DIALOGUE

Senior officials of the Governments of the United States and Sri Lanka met in Colombo from the 14th to 16th October, 2014, to continue their dialogue on trade and investment issues and evaluate the progress under the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) between the two countries. The officials discussed a wide range of issues including market access, the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), labor, trade promotion efforts, intellectual property rights, agriculture, and sector-specific investment challenges. Two-way trade between both countries has now reached USD 3 billion.

The U.S.-Sri Lanka TIFA, signed in 2002, is the primary forum for bilateral trade and investment discussions between the two countries. The TIFA process has been the focal point of a sustained and multi-faceted high-level engagement between the United States and Sri Lanka on trade and investment issues. Delivering the inaugural Address at the 11th Joint Council Meeting of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in Colombo, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Rishad Bathiudeen noted that due to the visionary leadership of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka is now on a journey to achieve upper middle income country status in the near future.

The TIFA process encourages public and private sector dialogue, facilitates Private-Public Partnership discussions as well as business opportunities events being held simultaneously with TIFA official meetings. In this context, U.S.-Sri Lanka Business Forum was held under the patronage of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, hosted by the America Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), Colombo and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce. It was followed by business meetings with visiting US business delegates.

Addressing the Forum, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, Sri Lanka’s Envoy to the United States, said that being the most liberalized nation in South Asia, the World Bank has rated Sri Lanka as the best for business in the region. TIFA provides an important platform for Sri Lanka to address remaining challengers to get to the next level in economic development. Head of the U.S. delegation, Assistant United States Trade Representative for Central and South Asia, Michael Delaney said that United States is the largest “customer” of Sri Lanka, with U.S. importing $2.5 billion worth of Sri Lankan products ranging from apparel, precious stones, rubber, spices, and tea.

However, the trade and investment relationship between the two countries is still “far below potential” and there is a need for pragmatically “review all of the specific problems traders and investors are experiencing, with an eye toward easing barriers, and grow trade and investment to create more jobs”. Anura Siriwardena, Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce delivered the keynote address and Suresh Shah, President of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and Andrew Mann, Charge d’ Affaires of the US Embassy in Colombo also addressed the gathering.

Assistant USTR Delaney delivered a public lecture on “Role of Economic Development in Fostering Solidarity” at the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies. Later, he joined Industry and Commerce Minister Bathiudeen for the ceremonial launch of “Sri Lanka Peace Collection” handloom products designed by War Widows in Sri Lanka, a project assisted by the US Government.

During the visit, the US delegation paid courtesy calls on External Affairs Minister Prof. G.L Peiris, Economic Development Minister Basil Rajapaksa, Industry and Commerce Minister Rishad Bathiudeen and Labour Minister Gamini Lokuge.

Source: Embassy of Sri Lanka - Washington DC
SRI LANKA CELEBRATES TWO YEARS WITHOUT MALARIA

Sri Lanka has not reported a local case of malaria since October 2012. According to the Malaria Elimination Group (MEG), an international independent advisory group on malaria, should Sri Lanka remain malaria-free for one more year, the country will be eligible to apply to the World Health Organization for the malaria-free certification. This remarkable success was achieved largely due to the end of the protracted conflict in the country. As recently as year 2000, Sri Lanka reported over 100,000 cases of malaria.

MEG gathered in Colombo for its ninth annual meeting in Sri Lanka. The meeting brought together representatives from Ministries of Health from countries in Asia and Africa who are plagued by the malaria-endemic, representatives of the World Health Organization, and international health donors, including, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the US President’s Malaria Initiative.

At the meeting, MEG signed the Colombo Declaration on Eliminating Malaria to affirm continued assistance to Sri Lanka and to call upon the Government of Sri Lanka to sustain financial and human resources needed to maintain the gains.

The participants were briefed on Sri Lanka’s progress since the 1960s when the country nearly eliminated malaria, but then suffered a catastrophic resurgence. Sri Lanka, today, is at cross roads. Determining whether to maintain adequate resources and vigilance to achieve and sustain malaria freedom, or to risk a second resurgence by losing focus on the benefits of the prevention of malaria re-introduction.

Today, the threat of re-emergence of malaria in Sri Lanka is driven by travelers, both Sri Lankan nationals and foreigners, who carry the disease from other malaria-ridden countries, mainly in the region. Strong surveillance systems, multi-sector engagement, and rapid follow-up and response on every imported case will be critical to ensure that these isolated infections do not spread.

Source: Daily Financial Times

RISING GLOBAL DEMAND FOR “CEYLON CINNAMON”

The Ceylon Cinnamon belongs to the family of Lauraceae. Cassia, which is similar to Cinnamon but with different characteristics, has become an acute competitor to true cinnamon.

Sri Lanka is the largest producer of Ceylon Cinnamon with an annual production of 15,000 metric tons. The unique method of processing and curing of cinnamon entices the unique characteristic and flavor over Cassia. The preparation of cinnamon quills involved a combination of art and skills only unique to Sri Lanka and has been handed down from generation to generation over centuries.

At present, Sri Lanka is the world’s largest exporter of true cinnamon with 97% of the global market. Ceylon Cinnamon renowned for its quality and medicinal values and the product is widely used as a food ingredient, in the pharmaceuticals preparation and the cosmetic industry worldwide. Being high in antioxidants, the Ceylon Cinnamon is good for overall health as proven by medical researches.

Sri Lanka Cinnamon industry is faced with a serious challenge from Cassia which is low in quality and different from Cinnamon is marketed as true cinnamon.

To arrest this situation, Sri Lankan authorities, with the assistance of cinnamon industry of Sri Lanka, are in the process of obtaining Geographical Indication, commonly known as GI certification from the World
The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee released a postage stamp to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Bodhisatva Anagarika Dharmapala, at Rashtrapathi Bhavan on October 25, 2014.

Speaking on the occasion, the Indian President expressed hope “that this gesture by India will contribute towards further strengthening the bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka and bring the two nations closer”. While reminding that “historically, India and Sri Lanka have remained natural allies”, the President added that “the relations between the two countries have withstood the test of time and social cultural exchanges for centuries have fostered further close co-operation in various fields”.

Recalling the contribution made by Anagarika Dharmapala in his pioneering role in the Buddhist revival movement through a “protracted struggle to protect and conserve the foundations of Buddhism in its place of birth”. The President went on to pay his “humble homage” to Anagarika Dharmapala who worked “selflessly all his life with a missionary zeal to propagate Buddhist ideals and to restore the glory of Buddhism”.

Addressing the gathering, Minister of Communication, Information Technology, and Law & Justice of India, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad also made reference to the tireless contribution of Anagarika Dharmapala towards the revival of Buddhism in India. He also recalled Anagarika Dharmapala’s role at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, representing Buddhism.

The stamp release today is a part of a series of events organized both in India and Sri Lanka to commemorate Anagarika Dharmapala, who founded the Maha Bodhi Society in 1891, and dedicated his life for the resuscitation of Buddhist Heritage sites in India including Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinara. He also established a slew of charitable institutions, hospitals and schools.

Source: Sri Lanka High Commission New Delhi

Intellectual Property Organization, for the Ceylon Cinnamon highlighting special characteristics of the Ceylon Cinnamon produced in Sri Lanka. The main aim is to differentiate the true cinnamon supplied by Sri Lanka from Cassia to provide the consumer with the unique and authentic product and fair value.

The Sri Lanka Export Development Board has also taken measures to register “Pure Ceylon Cinnamon” as a certification mark in EU, USA, Colombia and Peru. Currently, USA is the second largest market for Ceylon Cinnamon with an annual export turnover of over US$ 16 Million. Due to enhanced awareness among US consumers on the value of Ceylon Cinnamon, Sri Lanka has been able to increase its exports on Cinnamon to USA by 14% in 2013 compared to 2012 and similar growth momentum is witnessed for 2014 as well.
The Teardrop of India or Pearl of the Indian Ocean are among many nicknames for Sri Lanka.

But a more accurate description of the gorgeous nation might be the Island of Rice and Curry.

Making liberal use of local fruit, such as coconut and jackfruit, seafood and an arsenal of spices, Sri Lankan cooking delivers an abundance of incredible dishes.

Please find the complete article at:

Sri Lanka, the teardrop-shaped island that in 2009 emerged from more than a quarter century of war, has staked claim as one of Asia’s most exciting new destinations.

With the beaches of Negombo and Galle on the West Coast and World Heritage-listed ancient cities, Sri Lanka is experiencing a tourism boom. As the country’s tourism offerings have grown more sophisticated, so have its hotels. Here are a selection of the best:

Please find the complete article at:

We wish you a very happy Thanksgiving filled with friendship and harmony!

Ambassador and the Staff of the Embassy of Sri Lanka to the United States of America, Washington DC