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## Ambassador Aryasinha calls on Sri Lankans abroad to h negative narratives propogated against Sri Lan

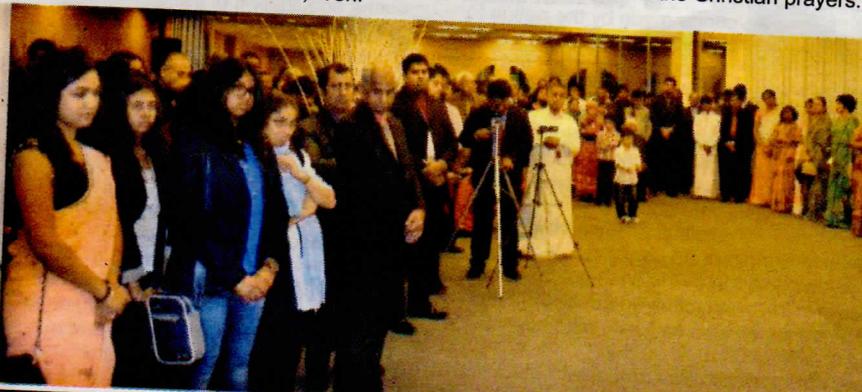
Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha has called on Sri Lankans living abroad "to contribute towards moderating the negative narratives propogated against Sri Lanka by clarifying genuine concerns and debunking the falsehoods". The Ambassador made these 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. Thawalam 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 Zawahir performed the Islamic prayers, while R Richard Lord conducted the Christian prayers.



## Improving Daily Life in the Tea Plantations in Kandy District

"a small charity making big changes to the lives of impoverished children in Sri Lanka" Shining Life Children's Trust (SLCT) has been changing the lives of children in Sri Lanka for over fifteen years by addressing key areas of deprivation, equipping women and children with the skills to help themselves, their families and their community. By working with local grassroots organisations SLCT ensures their community development projects are continued and fully sustainable. SLCT withdraws from projects only when they are demonstrably self-sustaining. 'At 4am, the tea pluckers are up to get their children ready for school, before they start the long trek to the tea estates. The women drop the youngest children off at the SLCT repaired crèche and pre-school facilities, where the day begins with formal lessons and finishes with games, singing and outdoor activities. During the day, the children receive nutritional guidance and a healthy meal. At the end of the day, they



**Shining Life**  
Children's Trust  
Working to improve the lives of children disadvantaged by war and poverty in Sri Lanka



attend an SLCT sponsored Children's Club meeting for fun and games, as well as important instruction in child rights and nutrition. The women of the community face the gruelling task of tea plucking from 7am to 4pm. This used to be a full day with no breaks and only rotti (made from just flour and water) to keep hunger at bay. After intervention by SLCT, tea pluckers in the area now follow a different routine, following the "plucking trail" they work towards the newly build Workers Rest Room (funded by SLCT supporters). This is a safe place to eat a nutritious meal of curried vegetables and rice, and a place where they can find out more about their rights and how to improve their health. At the end of the day they attend Women's Societies meetings, monitored by the Women's Development Trust (the local implementation partner) and funded by SLCT. These meetings are an opportunity for them to

voice their concerns, as well as a forum for specific activities and programmes funded by SLCT. These have included savings schemes programmes and health education. At the end of these meetings, women return to their homes to prepare dinner and get ready for the next day of tea plucking. As a result of SLCT projects there are now similar heartening stories of improved livelihoods for children across Sri Lanka. In Telwatta, SLCT provided life changing assistance after the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004. In Kalpitiya, local women have been empowered and have become small business owners after SLCT helped develop women's societies. Like so many other UK based charities, SLCT has seen donations fall over the last few years and are now actively appealing for funds to ensure that new projects can be started in three villages in the Galewala area. To find out more about SLCT's plans and how you can help visit [www.shininglife.org](http://www.shininglife.org) or follow SLCT on Twitter or Facebook.



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