



THE EMBASSY OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA  
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## **Sri Lanka promotion accompanies Sitar Concert in Brussels**

To coincide with the Asia-Europe Summit Meeting (ASEM8) which took place in Brussels from 4-5 October, a multi-faceted “Sri Lanka evening” which centred around a Sitar recital by Pradeep Ratnayake and ensemble was held at the Palais des Beaux Arts (BOZAR) in Brussels on 2 October 2010. The Sri Lanka Embassy in Brussels in collaboration with Sri Lanka Tourism, Sri Lankan Airlines, and the Belgolux-Sri Lanka Business Council organized the event attended by over 400 persons. It comprised of a trade display focussing on tea and spices, providing an opportunity for the guests to taste a cup of Ceylon tea from the varieties of teas displayed. There was also a colourful projection of Sri Lanka as a tourist destination and of the National carrier Sri Lankan Airlines.

President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and Madam Van Rompuy participated as the Guests of Honor on this occasion. Reminiscing on his visit to the island in 2000 President Van Rompuy said “personally, I have the best memories of my trip to Sri Lanka”. The President characterized the relationship between Europe and Sri Lanka as “strong and a very old one”, and that between Belgium and Sri Lanka as “excellent”.

Sri Lanka’s Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU Ravinatha Aryasinha hoped that the event would serve as an appetizer, in encouraging those attending the concert to also explore Sri Lanka in greater depth – as policy makers, diplomats, scholars, traders, investors and tourists. He said “Pradeep Ratnayake and his music in many ways mirrors modern Sri Lanka; steeped in a historic tradition, but bold enough to experiment with the best, whether from the East or West. His melodies convey both the serenity and vibrancy of Sri Lanka 's polity. His constant quest to surpass himself, epitomizes the ambitions of a country, that seeks to become the pride of Asia ”.

Belgium represents the third largest market in the 27 countries of the European Union and also the fourth in terms of the investment from countries in Europe. Trade with Belgium has been growing steadily during the recent past years, with the exception of a marginal drop recorded in the year 2009 due to the effects of global economic downturn. Sri Lanka continues to enjoy a favourable balance of trade with Belgium and the value of total trade has increased by around 24% between 2005 and 2009 reaching US\$ 625 Million in 2009. The major products that Sri Lanka exports to the Belgium market are: cut and polished diamonds, apparel and clothing, rubber tyres, semi-precious stones, fish products, tea, coconut products and tobacco products.

Embassy of Sri Lanka  
Brussels

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