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Los Angeles expatriate celebrates Lanka's 59th Independence Day

(By Walter JAYAWARDHANA)



Deputy Chief of Protocol Los Angeles County presenting a congratulatory plaque to Consul General Jaliya Wickramasuriya

The official independence Day Celebration of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in Los Angeles which was celebrating the 59th anniversary of the island nation's receipt of freedom from Britain was turned into a lively cultural pageant by Southern California's expatriate young artists who danced in joy in front of hundreds of invited guests and the consular diplomatic corps of the great metropolis.

Fittingly held in the Asian sector of America's second largest city's Japanese American Museum the houseful ceremony was started by hoisting the Lion flag of the nation by the newly appointed Consul General Jaliya Wickramasuriya in the midst of ceremonial beatings of the drums and blowing of the conch, symbols of good prosperity according to ancient customs. The six foot tall ceremonial coconut oil brass lamp on the top of which rested the sculpture of the Crowing Cock depicting dawn was lit by a bevy of children representing varied ethnic groups representing the country. They were helped by the head of mission. The crowds were mesmerized by the melodious chanting of the pali stanzas, jayamangala gatha, taken from the sutras of the Buddha's ancient path after the crowd stood to salute the nation's anthem, Sri Lanka Matha.

In a special message sent to the event and read by the Consul General the President of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa said, "On this important day it is our pledge to defeat terrorism both nationally and internationally thus paving the way for our people to live freely and work according to their wishes in any part of our country." President Rajapaksa said, that the nation is fully resolved to overcome the challenges fully. The Prime Minister joined him in another message by declaring, 'Let us move forward by eradicating terrorism. Participants said they were thrilled by the entertainment by varied groups of artists of the local talent like Arunie Boteju Dancing School, Melanie Ranasinghe Dancing Class and Saptha Bhumi Theatre Group who provided one of the most entertaining evenings who were also joined by the Mudra Academy of Dance who presented South Indian classical dances in addition to the Sri Lankan performers.

Mrs. Lourdes Saab, Deputy Chief of Protocol of the Los Angeles County and Roy G. Young Dean of the Los Angeles Consular Corps and

Consul General of Belize read congratulatory messages and presented plaques.



From left to right Sonali Samarasena, Ruwani Horanage, and Tharanga Mohotti perform at the Sri Lankan independence day celebrations at the Japanese American Museum



Bevy of children lighting a traditional lamp helped by the Consul General (Photos by Rashantha de Silva)