



National Safety Day Programme at Galle

[Tuesday, December 26, 2006]



The first National Safety Day was celebrated at **Hall de Galle** in Galle on 26th December 2006. This occasion was held with the patronage of Hon. Rathnasiri Wickramanayake, the Prime Minister and Hon. Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister for Disaster Management & Human Rights. The ceremony began with a parade by the forces and balloons were released as a symbol of commencing the activities of the 2nd commemoration of December 2004 Tsunami. The welcome speech was made by Mr. P.D. Amarasinghe, Secretary to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights. In his speech he stated that 26th of December was declared as the National Safety Day with a cabinet decision to be commemorated every year. National safety day will reflect the need for prevention of disasters when ever possible and reduction of impacts of disasters. Two minutes silence was observed in remembrance of those killed in the Tsunami.

This was followed by a ceremony for awarding plaques in appreciation of services rendered by the government officials, officers of the military forces as well as the police by the Hon. Prime Minister. There were awards for journalists selected from those who had responded to the request to send in nominations with details of media reporting during the Tsunami. The winners of school essay and art competitions were presented with their awards by other distinguished guests.

Ms. Chiho Ochiai, Representative of International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) regional office of Bangkok handed over some books to Hon. Minister as a symbol of the field library project on disaster reduction and made her speech by emphasizing the importance of the information dissemination in disaster management. Dr. Vishaka Hidellage, Country Director of Practical Action handed over to the Hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. Minister in his speech thanked UN agencies, other agencies and all countries which helped the government to regain from the Tsunami disaster. He also emphasised that Sri Lanka is concerned on preparedness for both natural and manmade hazards and in order to do that there will be more awareness programmes on disaster management implemented in 2007. The Hon. Prime Minister mentioned that disaster management is not only the government's responsibility but that the general public also should get involved and tender their support to the government. H.E. the President's message was read out by Mr. P.D. Amarasinghe and it focused on the unity and the need to change attitudes of the society to establish peace in the country. The ceremony was concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. Ashoka Jayasekara, the District Secretary of Galle district.