

## **Online Sinhala Language Course is commenced for Native Russian Speakers**

The Embassy of Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the University of Ruhuna, on 17 October 2020, held an online ceremony to mark the commencement of a Sinhala Language Certificate Course for the native speakers of Russian Language.

The Chief Guest of the Ceremony was Admiral Professor J. Colombage, Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka. The Ceremony was graced by Prof. M. D. Lamawansa, H. E. the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Russia; Prof. Sujeewa Amarasena, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna and academic staff of the University, including the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Deans; Prof Boris Volkhonsky, Professor of the Moscow State University, and the Embassy staff.

About 100 students from different parts of Russia participated in the opening ceremony. In his opening remarks Prof. M. D. Lamawansa highlighted that this is the first time in the history that Sinhala language will be taught to such a large number of Russians. The Ambassador also expressed his gratitude to the Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka for his unconditional assistance to initiate this program, the University of Ruhuna for developing the programme, as well as to all others who have contributed to the course. Prof Lamawansa highlighted that it is only one of the many initiatives implemented by the Embassy to contribute to the cultural and educational development of relations of Sri Lanka and Russia.

Admiral Jayanath Colombage, the Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka, stressed that Sri Lanka and Russia have a long history of cordial relationship, which started when the first travelers from Russia arrived to Ceylon in the XIX century. Relations were further strengthened by the visit of crown prince Nicholas to the Island in 1891, and the good traditions continued by the USSR and now by the Russian Federation. Admiral J. Colombage warmly welcomed all the students and assured the gathering that the Foreign Ministry of Sri Lanka would continue to support the initiative.

Prof. Sujeewa Amarasena, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna, in his speech mentioned that he is proud to be able to offer such a course to the Russian public within a short period. Prof. Amarasena paid special attention to the Russian culture which has made a substantial influence on Sri Lankans for more than 70 years and this course would be yet another milestone in promoting friendship between the two countries.

Prof Boris Volkhonsky, who is a Sinhala Language Teacher of Moscow State University gave an inspiring lecture to the students on the history of Sri Lanka, its traditions and culture, on Sinhala language and its peculiarities, and provided valuable advice to the students on the methods to learn Sinhala language.

The Embassy would like to express its gratitude to all the speakers, including the two representatives of the Department of Sinhala, University of Ruhuna: Ms. Lokeshwari S. Karunarathna, Lead Lecturer, described the delivery method of the course and Dr. Darshana Liyanage too contributed on the format of the course, assessment..etc

The Embassy also extends special gratitude to the Russian Medium Teachers Panel, mainly Sri Lankan community living in Russia, for their tremendous efforts for contribution to the course.

Mr. N. M. M. Anas, Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy and Ms. Nirosha K. Herath, First Secretary of the Cultural and Educational Section, who is the Embassy coordinator too spoke at the Ceremony.

The classes will be held on every Sunday from 12:00 – 14:00 and Wednesdays from 19:00 – 20:00, Moscow time. Apart from lectures, the course includes practical sessions and buddy programme. The first lecture will be delivered on 25 October 2020; the University of Ruhuna will use its online Platform to deliver the course. The course will run over four months and successful participants will be issued with a certificate by the University.