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PRESS RELEASE - BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION, COLOMBO

Be aware of unscrupulous visa agents

The UK Border Agency wishes to advise prospective UK visa applicants of the dangers of being misled by unscrupulous agents. It also warns those same agents that it will take action against them.

UK Border Agency's Regional Director, Thomas Greig said:

"We welcome genuine visitors, students and workers to the UK and are committed to ensuring the quality and availability of visa services for genuine applicants. We will, however, not tolerate abuse of the UK visa system and we have a zero tolerance of fraud. I strongly advise anyone who wants a visa for the UK not to listen to agents who offer to sell forged documents or say that they can guarantee a visa.

"We have very effective processes for detecting fraud and work with our international partners and Sri Lankan authorities to do so. When we uncover fraud, including false bank statements, education and language certificates, we will refuse the visa and the applicant will face a ten year ban on travelling to the UK, as well as possible action by the Sri Lankan authorities. We will report agents

involved in fraud to the police."

Unscrupulous agents make promises to applicants that they cannot keep. To avoid being duped, applicants should bear in mind the following:

You do not need to use an agent to make a UK visa application. All the information you require, and the UK visa application form, are available free of charge on the following official UK Border Agency and VFS Global websites:

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk and www.vfs-uk-lk.com.

The UK Border Agency does not endorse any agents in Sri Lanka, nor does it have a list of preferred agents. If you wish to use an agent, choose one carefully and get the right advice. An agent should charge a reasonable fee. If you are cheated, report this to the police.

Do not be misled by unscrupulous agents into thinking that it is acceptable to submit forged documents with your visa application. It is not. The UK Border Agency has sophisticated document verification procedures. Your application will be refused, you face a 10 year ban on travel to the UK and also further investigation by the Sri Lankan

authorities.

It is important that you complete your visa application fully and honestly. The UK Border Agency collects biometric data (finger scans and digital photographs) as part of the visa application process. We know if you have applied for a UK visa anywhere in the world and in any identity. The UK Border Agency also works closely with other countries to detect and take action against fraud in visa processes. Do not believe agents who say that they can, in exchange for money, influence how fast applications are processed or the final decision. They cannot. Visa decisions are made only by visa officers who work for the UK Border Agency. Do not believe agents who say that they have a contact in the UK Border Agency or its commercial partner, VFS Global, and can influence the speed and outcome of the decision. They cannot.

Since 10 October 2012, agents are no longer permitted to collect your documents at the end of the visa process. You can track the progress of your application to know when your documents are ready for collection. You may also pay a small fee to receive an automated SMS on the progress of your application. Further information is available at www.vfs-uk-lk.com.

Do not be fooled by imposters pretending to be officers from the UK Border Agency or the British High Commission in Colombo. Legitimate visa officers do not meet applicants outside their offices nor do they contact you to ask for money. Do not be fooled by fake websites designed to look like official government or VFS websites. Always obtain your visa information from official websites www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk and www.vfs-uk-lk.com.

If you have information that someone has abused the UK visa process or intends to do so, or has helped someone else to do this, please contact the UK Border Agency at the following email address: Ralon.Colombo2@fco.gov.uk. Please provide as much information as possible, including the contact details for the person concerned. The UK Border Agency will treat the information you provide in confidence and not disclose your details. Guidance about UK visa requirements is available at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk. Information about applying for a UK visa in Sri Lanka is available at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/countries/srilanka and www.vfs-uk-lk.com.



Indo-Lanka civil nuclear cooperation talks held

(DailyNews.lk) - The first round of talks between India and Sri Lanka on comprehensive civil nuclear cooperation was held on October 12 in New Delhi.

The Indian delegation was led by Indian External Affairs Ministry Joint Secretary Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla and included representatives from the Department of Atomic Energy of India. The Sri Lankan delegation was led by Sri Lankan External Affairs Ministry Additional Secretary I. Ansar and included representatives from the Atomic Energy Authority and the Power and Energy Ministry of Sri Lanka.

Discussions were held in a warm, friendly and cordial manner. Both sides exchanged views on all aspects of civil nuclear cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the uses of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes to mutual benefit of the people of the two countries. It was agreed that the two sides would work towards a comprehensive Agreement on Bilateral Civil Nuclear Cooperation. Discussions included, inter alia, training of officials, nuclear safety and response to nuclear accidents. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in Sri Lanka in the first half of next year.

First test flight in Mattala

Dharma Sri Abeyratne

(DailyNews.lk) - A test flight successfully landed at the country's second international airport in Mattala yesterday a Civil Aviation Ministry official said. This was the first test flight to land in Mattala. Work attached to the Mattala airport is in full swing now under two phases. The first phase is nearing completion. Under the first phase, 98 percent of the construction of the runway has been completed.

Besides, the construction of the passenger terminal is in progress and it has been scheduled to be completed by year end, the official said.

The project was launched by President Mahinda Rajapaksa on November 27, 2009. The new airport will be a boon to the local aviation industry while being a catalyst for the economic development of the southern province through the enabling of international trade, tourism, vocational training and

employment.

The new airport will be geared to support both international and domestic travel, air-sea cargo transshipment in conjunction with the Hambanthota sea port and will be the alternative to BIA.

The entire project will cost 200 million US dollars.

Under the first phase basic aerodrome facilities, runway, apron, taxi way, passenger and cargo terminals are constructed. Besides, infrastructure facilities including access roads, accommodation for officials, fuel farm, sewerage treatment plant, water supply facilities, meteorological building, fire building, catering facility and car park are in progress. Under the second phase of development a full length parallel taxi way, a flying school, an airport hotel and recreational facilities are to be constructed.



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By Reggie Fernando - OUR MAN IN COLOMBO
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