



Sri Lanka



Country Overview:

Location: Southern Asia, island in the Indian Ocean, south of India

Size: 65,610 sq km

Population: 21,675,648 (July 2013 est.)

Capital: Colombo

Exports-commodities: textiles and apparel, tea and spices; rubber manufactures; precious stones; coconut products, fish

Imports-commodities: petroleum, textiles, machinery and transportation equipment, building materials, mineral products, foodstuffs

Currency: Rupees (LKR)

Ethnic groups: Sinhalese 73.8%, Sri Lankan Moors 7.2%, Indian Tamil 4.6%, Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9%

Religion: Buddhist 69.1%, Muslim 7.6%, Hindu 7.1%, Christian 6.2%

Government type: republic

Chief of State: President Mahinda Percy RAJAPAKSA (since 19 November 2005)

Head of Government: same

Language: Sinhala (official and national language) 74%, Tamil (national language) 18%, other 8%

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka / Shri Lanka Prajatantrika Samajaya di Janarajaya

Meetings and Negotiations

-The older generation of Sri Lankans will use the common Hindu Greeting "**namaste**" (palms clasped together as if in prayer at chin level with a slight nod of the head).

-The Sinhalese may say "**ayubowan**." (may you be blessed with a long life) . Tamils would say "**vanakkam**." It is most appropriate to repeat these greetings in response

-Younger people generally shake hands.

-Sri Lankan women may not want to shake hands with men. **Wait** for a woman to extend her hand.

-As with most hierarchical cultures, Sri Lankans use titles. If someone does not have a professional title, use the honorific title "Sir" or "Madam" . Wait to

be invited to use first names.

-English is spoken competently by about 10% of the population. Inquiring about an interpreter may be a nice touch.

Business Attire

-Men will wear standard dark colored suits with a tie.

-It is rare to see women in business suits. Nice dresses with a blouse are usually worn.

Behavior

- Treat people's business cards with **respect** - so don't put them into pockets, draw on them or use them in any manner that may be disrespectful.

-Religion has both a direct and indirect impact on business. Most predominant is the shared acceptance of fatalism, i.e. that a higher force is in control. As a result people will turn to religion when making decisions, etc.

-Sri Lankans will always wash their hands before eating.

-It is considered rude to have your elbows on the table during meal times.

Gift Giving

- Give and receive gifts with **two** hands. To demonstrate graciousness, some Sri Lankans will touch their right forearm with their left hand while offering the gift with their right hand.

-Gifts are generally **not** opened when received.

-**Any** gift received should be reciprocated.

Appropriate Gifts: various office supplies or gadgets with your company logo. Books about your country.

Gifts to Avoid: flowers, (used in mourning), anything wrapped in white or black, alcohol, pork products, meat , items containing leather

Business Tips continued

Conversation

-Do not put people in awkward positions or under pressure. **Never** openly criticize people.

-Sri Lankans are non-confrontational in their communication style and it is important to try and read between the lines.

-Sri Lankans will not feel comfortable making decisions by themselves since this may lead to failure which then leads to "loss of face."

-As relationships are important for business it is wise to invest time in relationship-building conversations at the start of any meetings.

-Many Sri Lankans may be vegetarian . Stay sensitive to their beliefs.

Topics to Discuss: your home town, the weather, sports, Sri Lankan food

Topics to Avoid: the tsunami, poverty, confusing Sri Lankans and Indians, criticizing Hindu and Buddhist beliefs and customs

