

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **APPEAL AGAINST DEATH SENTENCE ON RIZANA NAFEEK - SRI LANKA EMBASSY IN RIYADH CLARIFIES**

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Riyadh has noted that several news reports have been recently published in the media, both locally and internationally, some of which are inaccurate and misleading, regarding the death sentence imposed on a Sri Lankan housemaid Miss Rizana Nafeek.

This media release is being issued to set forth and clarify the factual position regarding the circumstances of this case. Miss Rizana Nafeek, holder of passport No. N 0331835, arrived in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2005 to work as a housemaid in the household of her sponsor, Mr. Naif Jiziyan Khalaf Al Otaibi. A few days after her arrival in Riyadh, Miss Nafeek had been transferred by her sponsor to work in his family household in Dawadami, about 390 km west of Riyadh. Apart from performing the daily household chores of cleaning, cooking, washing and ironing clothes etc, Miss Nafeek had also been entrusted with the onerous responsibility of looking after the sponsor's four month old infant son, which she was not trained to do.

The incident in which the infant died, had occurred around 12.30 p.m. on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2005, while Miss Nafeek was bottle feeding the infant. She had been arrested by the Dawadami Police on the same day, and had allegedly confessed to killing the child. The Sri Lanka Embassy in Riyadh had received first information about the incident on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2005 and officials of the Mission had visited Dawadami on the 12<sup>th</sup> instant and met the police and jail authorities there, who had confirmed the incident. The Embassy officials had attended all subsequent court hearings.

Miss Nafeek had repeated her confession in open court. However, at the court hearing on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007, Miss Nafeek had retracted her confession and informed the court that her original confession admitting to killing the child, had been obtained by the Police under duress. In her statement to the court, Miss Nafeek also claimed that at the time of her arrival in Saudi Arabia, she was 17 years old and that a recruitment agent had falsified her documents and obtained her passport by over-stating her true age by 6 years. According to Miss Nafeek's passport, her date of birth is stated as 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1982, whilst the certified copy of her birth certificate indicates her actual date of birth as 4<sup>th</sup> February 1988.

A three member panel of judges of the Dawadami High Court had found Miss Nafeek guilty of murder of the 4 month old infant son of Mr. Al Otaibi and sentenced her to death on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2007. The court had informed that Miss Nafeek could file an appeal against her death sentence, within 1 month of the delivery of the judgement.

Since the certified copy of the judgement, as well as copies of the forensic medical report, criminal investigation report and the statements of Miss Nafeek given to the Police and the Court have not yet been made available to the Embassy, **an urgent request has been made to the Saudi authorities, to grant a one month period for filing the appeal against the death sentence on behalf of Miss Nafeek, commencing from the date on which these documents are furnished to the Embassy.**

The Embassy has been able to negotiate a reduction in the fee demanded by the law firm in Riyadh, which has agreed to handle the appeal, from Saudi Riyal 250,000/- (SL Rs. 7.5 million) to Saudi Riyal 150,000/- (SL Rs. 4.5 million).

The Embassy of Sri Lanka, which is looking after the interests of Miss Nafeek, is actively pursuing all possible avenues, including the judicial appeal against the death sentence, to save her life.

**Embassy of Sri Lanka  
Riyadh.  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.**

8<sup>th</sup> July 2007