

# Women prisoners commemorate International Women's Day

BY CHANUKA  
MANNAPPERUMA

Welikade Prison Women's Compound in collaboration with the Sri Lanka United Nation Friendship Organisation (SUNFO) last Thursday organised a ceremony to mark the International Women's Day, bringing light to women inmates of the prison.

Shiranthi Rajapakse, wife of Premier Mahinda Rajapakse graced the occasion as the Chief Guest while a number of other SUNFO distinguished guests were also present.

Director, Women's and Children (section) of the SUNFO, Manel Illeperuma said, their objective was to give a helping

hand to women in prison to rebuild their lives. "In the society women are helpless most of the time and these women are here due to economic problems and poor education," she said.

While emphasising that more assistance should be given to these women, she added that last year they had successfully launched several programs to uplift mental status of these women.

Besides, they have launched several training programs for them covering the fields such as handicrafts, sawing, drawing, meditation programs, etc.

"These women are skilled and they have their own talents.

The handicraft products produced by them are sold in several stalls and the income generated by selling those items goes to their bank accounts."

According to the Chief Jailer of Welikade female Prison, Kumari Ratnaweera, at present there are 466 women in Welikade female section. Out of them, 288 are in remand prison while 158 are serving jail terms, 15 appeals are still pending, only one woman is serving life sentence for capital punishment. There are also four women believed to be LTTE cadres.

Apart from that, there are 24 kids of women in prison due to their parents' faults, she added.