

The APSL's Current Activities and its Readiness to Assist Sri Lanka in Nation Building.

Rohan de Alwis & Mervyn Silva

(APSL's Founding and Immediate Past General Secretaries)

The APSL (Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK) is a young organisation as it embarks upon its sixth year now. The primary aim of APSL was to bring together a diverse group of Sri Lankan professionals living in the UK to work for the common good of Sri Lanka. The Lawyers and Doctors in the UK have had their own associations for sometime, but many other professionals such as Surveyors, Accountants, Scientists, Lecturers, Teachers, Journalists, MBA holders in business, Economists etc did not have a focal point to get together and work as a 'broad church', both for the benefit of the Sri Lankan community in the UK, as well as for the development of Sri Lanka.

The Patron of APSL is, ex-officio, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in the United Kingdom.

APSL's first President was Mr Leslie Gunaratne, supported by Dr Ranjith Dissanayake, Mr Sarath Wijesinghe, Prof I M Dharmadasa, Mr Piyatissa Liyanage, Dr Keerthi Devendra, and the Late Mr I L Ariyasena. Mr Rohan de Alwis functioned as the first General Secretary. These were the formative years for us, but the first real test of a multi-disciplinary group of professionals working together was ably demonstrated when the Tsunami struck Sri Lanka and we were able to mobilise ourselves within 24 hours of the 26th December and APSL provided immediate relief in the South of Sri Lanka, as well as some parts of the East, working with and co-ordinating through various parties on the ground. APSL, through its Charity, Visionlanka, built homes for those displaced in Thalpe', off Galle. During the initial years, APSL held a number of events to raise its profile and also to enrol new members not just in London but also out of London, so that representation was not just "London-centric".

APSL moved to the next stage, "from infancy to adulthood" under the Presidency of Dr Andrew Nayagam, where we had two very stable years consolidating our position with membership nearing 400 professionals in the UK and also improving our links to professionals in Sri Lanka, especially with Dr Athula Sumathipala being involved at both ends. With a dynamic General Secretary in the form of Mr Mervyn Silva, APSL was able to have many high profile public events not just in London but also in places such as Nottingham, Wakefield, Salford where many Sri Lankans were present. Equally, to show that we were not "serious/boring" professionals all the time, we held Dinner Dances, as well as Charity fund raising events for our Charity, Visionlanka.

We also "showcased" many of 'our own' Sri Lanka talent, well known in the international arena, but little seen within the Sri Lankan community in the U.K. For example, Sir Desmond de Silva QC, Dr Ossie Fernando, Prof Chandra Wickramasinghe, Prof I.M. Dharmadasa, Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy were a few of the Sri Lankans of international repute and fame. At the same time, we were able to encourage, recognise and promote many other speakers of Sri Lankan

origin including Dr Terence Fernando, Dr Nihal Kulatilake, Dr Elmo Thambapillai, Dr Chandra Weerasinghe, Mr Lasantha de Alwis, Dr Anura Perera, Rev Tony de Alwis, Rev Dr Prem Fernando, Prof Shervanthi Homer-Vanniasinkam, Mr Kalinga Indiatissa, Dr Tush Wickramanayake to name a few. It would be wrong for me not to mention some of our talent within the executive committee such as Dr Andrew Nayagam, Dr Ruwani Gunaratne, Mr Ranjan Perera, Dr Anya Perera, Mr Mervyn Silva, Mr Leslie Gunaratne, Dr Ranjith Dissanayake, Mr Leslie Dep, Mr Mohan Siriwardena, Mrs Lushani Kodituwakku, Mr Piyatissa Liyanage, who have been very active in reaching out to the Sri Lankan Diaspora at APSL events since our inception.

April 2009 saw the induction of Prof I.M. Dharmadasa as the new President of APSL, ably supported by the dynamic Engineer and Bio-Diesel Expert Mr Ranjan Perera as the General Secretary. We see APSL consolidating its pre-eminence as the apex body amongst the Sri Lankans in the UK, and working 'hand in hand' with the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority to broad base the green energy applications in Sri Lanka.

At the same time, APSL is launching a Business mentoring and 'match making' program to help introduce Sri Lankan entrepreneurs and businessmen with interested parties in Sri Lanka for joint venture projects, especially in the agrarian based industry sector. We believe that Sri Lanka can be the trailblazer for green energy based, agricultural industrialisation and as such we are encouraging and promoting foreign direct investment ("FDI") by Sri Lankans living abroad.

APSL is currently linking with high calibre professionals and organisations in Sri Lanka, so that this organisation can act as the "Think Tank" for solving important issues relevant to the country. Numerous Sri Lankans are silently carrying out various development projects in Sri Lanka. This Association is formed to get all these personal together, activate others, learn from each others' experiences and enhance our contribution to the country.

Our website is www.apsl.org.uk



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