

# THE PROFESSIONAL

SUMMER 2010

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## APSL EVENTS

**Ask the Diplomat**  
10<sup>th</sup> July 2010

**APSL Stall @  
Festival of Cricket**  
11<sup>th</sup> July 2010

**Colombo Events**  
July 2010

**2<sup>nd</sup> APSL  
Convention**  
November 2010

**Ask the expert  
event**  
January 2011

**7<sup>th</sup> Annual General  
Meeting**  
April 2011

Please visit APSL  
website  
[www.apsl.org.uk](http://www.apsl.org.uk)  
for more details.

## **Message from the General Secretary**



It has been an exciting and eventful year for APSL with a growth in membership to over 400 and over subscribed events in London and Birmingham. The highlight of the year was an invitation to the executive of APSL in July 2009 to meet His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapakse. The purpose was to discuss knowledge transfer, specifically focussed on the use of solar energy strategy for Sri Lanka spearheaded by world class research from the APSL President Professor Dharmadasa who leads a team of researchers at Sheffield Hallam University. The solar energy work highlights the collaborative approach taken by the Association to establish links with Sri Lankan professional associations and has been featured at events held by the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA) in Colombo.

The meeting with the President and policy makers was followed by an invitation to APSL to attend the Expatriates Forum held in Colombo in November 2009 to share the government's vision for post-conflict future development of the country.

APSL continues to promote a programme of events in the UK with its 2009 AGM being held in Brentford Lock and an excellent presentation from the key note speaker, Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy, on the economic recession and implications for the UK and Sri Lanka. This topical theme was developed via the "Ask the Expert" series with an "Ask the Accountant" event at which several leading professionals guided the participative audience through details of the credit crunch implications for individuals and running businesses in the present challenging economic climate. The First APSL Annual Convention, held in Birmingham in December showcased the work of members running successful charitable projects in Sri Lanka and was used as a forum to discuss and formulate ideas from the wider membership on Road safety later published in for wider circulation in the document series

The Association has taken an active decision to promote events and projects both in the UK and Sri Lanka. Its success draws on its talented and committed membership that includes a growing number of young professionals starting their chosen career pathways. There has been considerable investment in developing the APSL web site to keep members up to date with initiatives with three newsletter and several social events. The emphasis on publications for wider circulation including Sri Lanka continues with articles published in Gaveshana in Sinhalese, English and Tamil on a regular basis. APSL continues to enjoy support from the Sri Lankan High Commission with attendance from His Excellency the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the UK, Justice Mr Nihal Jayasinghe and the Deputy High Commissioner Mr Amza, at many APSL events. We were very pleased to nominate two of our young members of APSL to represent Sri Lanka at the Commonwealth Day in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen.

Our 6th AGM was held at the Holiday Inn, Kingston on the 24 April 2010, another successful event and the introduction of several new young members to serve on the executive committee bringing new ideas and projects. The keynote speaker at this years AGM was Sir Professor Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, the current President of the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, who gave an inspirational presentation on the "Millennium development goals with some reflections of Sri Lanka." We have an exciting programme of events planned for this year starting with "Eastern Values" in June which was held at the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara to be followed by the continuing ever popular "Ask the Expert" series, this time a panel of four Sri Lankan Diplomats engaging with the audience at the High Commission, London, on the 10 July followed by APSL participation at the "Festival of Cricket" the following day. The Association has recently published its development plan on the web site and invites comments from its membership. This document articulates its key objectives which are underpinned by its commitment to its core principles of promoting unity and professionalism amongst Sri Lankans in the UK, and harnessing their knowledge and skills for the development of Sri Lanka and the enrichment of the United Kingdom. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Mohan Siriwardena for his effort in managing the membership database, membership communications, in addition to assisting me.

**Mr. Ranjan Perera**  
**General Secretary APSL**

## **“Listen to What I Can’t Say”**

The Rehabilitation Centre for the Communication Impaired (RCCI) proudly celebrates 17 years of service to the community. The primary objective of The Rehabilitation Centre for the Communication Impaired is to bring about an improvement in the quality of life of the communication impaired in Sri Lanka with an emphasis on children with a speech disorder. The main focus is on children, mothers and families of the middle and lower socio-economic groups in the urban and rural societies.

From its inception the RCCI has provided therapy to over 5000 patients. Of this number 75% are children, and 50% are children below the age of 7 years. The majority of these children are slow learners who have learning difficulties, hearing impairment or on the autistic spectrum.

Over the last 30 years the impact of large scale civil strife in the north and the east has exposed a great number of children to emotional trauma, displacement and deprivation. This has resulted in many children developing behaviour and speech / language disorders which are associated with poor learning conditions. The RCCI plans to extend its services to a wider community which would include the former conflict areas. The RCCI has also been instrumental in providing hearing aids to needy children of the North.

Many adolescents too, receive therapy, mainly in the areas of stammering and voice disorders. In the adult category, the main area of concern is the rehabilitation of the adult stroke patient and the young head injury patients. The RCCI also provides therapy to many young people suffering from communication difficulties due to head injuries.



The care and the rehabilitation of the communication handicapped person, be it a child or adult, is mainly undertaken by women. The majority receiving training and counselling are care givers i.e. wives, mothers, sisters and grandmothers in the extended family set-up. To celebrate the pioneering efforts of establishing Speech Therapy in Sri Lanka 30 years ago and the birth of the RCCI in 1993 a DISCO was held recently at the RCCI Special Needs School following a request by the older children to be in step with their mainstream peers. The parents and teachers along with the children enjoyed the occasion immensely. One of the significant events this year was the series of specialist clinics held at the RCCI where the children were screened and treated for medical/paediatric/ dermatological and psychiatric disorders.

APSL has recently collaborated with the RCCI to sponsor the education of 3 children attending the RCCI Special Needs School. The vision of the RCCI is to establish a state of the art centre for children and adults with speech disorders and associated special needs and also to provide residential placements for the needy.

**Mrs. Shiranee Joseph - de Saram / APSL**  
**Specialist Speech and Language Therapist / Founder Director – RCCI**

**“APSL Awards” - An Island-wide Essay Competition**

### **How to Develop Sri Lanka as Seen Through the Eyes of the Younger Generation**

APSL in collaboration with the Institute of Research and Development (IRD) Sri Lanka, are holding an island-wide essay competition open to all school children in the age group of (16-19) yrs. The aim is to actively engage the country's younger generation and seek their ideas and stimulate the rapid development of Sri Lanka. The competition is to write a well-structured essay elaborating the most important 5 issues to be addressed urgently in their district for sustainable development. The pupils need to identify issues and propose possible solutions including how everybody can contribute as an individual and as a family. Selection criteria will be based on well-researched ideas relevant to the district, leading to sustainable development improving the environment, making use of indigenous resources, and contributing to improve standard of living conditions. The essays must be politically independent, carry a positive message to the nation, well structured and well written, ready for publication. Ten winning essays will receive Rs 10,000 each from APSL (Rs 5,000 for the pupil and Rs 5,000 for the pupil's school library) together with an APSL certificate and a trophy. The prizes will be awarded during an event in Sri Lanka and the winning articles will be widely publicised in the local press, magazines and on websites. The essays should be submitted to "Island-wide essay competition", IRD, 393/3, Lily Avenue, Robert Gunawardane Mawatha, Battaramulla. Deadline for submission is 01<sup>st</sup> October 2010. For more information including submission requirements and assessment procedure. Please visit APSL website for details in all three languages.

**Prof. I. M. Dharmadasa / APSL**



## WE SRI LANKA

For over 30 years, our 'resplendent' land was torn apart by ethnic strife that wrought death, destruction and despair upon a generation of Sri Lankans. Now, a year on from the end of hostilities, we look forward to a new era – an era of peace, stability and prosperity denied to us for far too long. The absence of war, however, is not the guarantor of a long lasting peace. Deep seated mistrust and racial animosity resulting from the wounds of war remain within the psyche of our people.

For a durable and long lasting peace there needs to be a healing of wounds. There needs to be a coming together of the hearts and minds of all Sri Lankans – irrespective of ethnicity or religion – united by a single purpose of taking the country forward. Of course, this is easier said than done. Historic prejudices and the last 30 years of gratuitous violence are not going to be forgotten easily.

How can we build a common identity, a shared identity, an equal identity accessible to all our people? Martin Luther King, Jr. once dreamed of a day when his children would be judged by the content of their character, and not by the colour of their skin. Today that dream has been realised with the election of America's first black President, Barack Obama. How about Sri Lanka? How can we ensure that the children of Sri Lanka are recognised for the content of their character, the contribution to their community and the nobility of their values – rather than be sidelined for the language they speak? This is why APSL has initiated 'WE SRI LANKA.'

The aim of 'WE SRI LANKA' is to foster development of a 'SRI LANKAN' consciousness with a view to support reconciliation and nation building among the different ethnic and religious communities in Sri Lanka. We will launch our effort, beginning with the Sri Lankan Diaspora in the UK. Events will be organised to build understanding, goodwill and a sense of shared purpose through dialogue, learning, community work and a celebration of our cultural diversity. A Council, operating as a sub-committee of APSL, drawing from within the membership and the Sri Lankan Diaspora at large will be set-up to lead and drive the agenda of 'WE SRI LANKA'. A Statement of Purpose enshrining key principles such as equality, fairness, non-violence, peaceful co-existence, sense of shared destiny etc., will then form the bedrock for the creation of an annual programme of activity.

The time has come! – the time to unite all Sri Lankans one and all for the shared good and rapid progress of our beloved country, our resplendent land, our Paradise on Earth, our common homeland.

May the tear drop of the Indian Ocean gleam once more as the Pearl of the Orient!

**Mr. Don Gihantha Jayasinghe / APSL**

### **"Living in the UK Series" – Sri Lankan Cultural Values**

The 20th of June this year marked a significant milestone in terms of APSL activities. It was the inaugural session of a new series of seminar sessions organised by the APSL in collaboration with the Jethawana Buddhist Vihara in Birmingham. This particular series is titled 'Living in the UK' and it focussed on 'Eastern Values'. The event was attended by President of APSL Prof I.M. Dharmadasa, Vice Presidents, Rohan de Alwis (speaker for the event) and Leslie Dep, Ranjan Perera (Secretary) and Thushara Madurasinghe (Deputy Treasurer / Chair of the Event) and many devotees and well wishers of the Sri Lankan community in the Midland.



Proceedings were ceremonially initiated by the Chair Thushara inviting key guests to light the oil lamp. Ven Gunawansa Thero subsequently observed the five precepts in line with Buddhist traditions. A brief introduction of the Association was first given by President Prof. I.M. Dharmadasa. Rohan de Alwis delivered an excellent presentation on 'Sri Lankan Cultural Values'. This was the inaugural session of the 'Living in the UK' seminar series. Rohan discussed aspects about "why we live in the UK" and "what we may be missing"...? "the differences between Sri Lankan and UK cultures"... "difference between friends, family and office friends"... "what are our obligations to society", and what kind of things individuals can do to enjoy Sri Lankan culture in the UK, and also what parents can do to introduce Sri Lankan culture to youngsters growing up in UK. No doubt the presentation was an eye opener to the parents, as well as the young Dhamma School pupils who were present. He also pointed out the importance of the parents' role in guiding and highlighting the value of our Sri Lankan traditions and cultures so that they will be passed on and not disregarded. For more information please visit our website.

**Mr. Thushara Madurasinghe / APSL**

## How to improve Safety on Sri Lankan Roads

Sri Lanka has begun a rapid phase of reconstruction and redevelopment, and one of its priorities is to rebuild the country's infrastructure, which has suffered through damage, neglect and under-investment during past three decades. *'Poor roads and chaotic traffic are the first thing that meets the eyes of a visitor entering an under developed country. Roads are a window into a nation's psyche, a public statement on its state of affairs and how it is governed.'* This article, the outcome of APSL workshop held in Birmingham, U.K., examines the causes and effects of accidents on the Sri Lankan roads, and recommends ways of making the roads safer; It also outlines a way of developing a multi-faceted integrated transport network that is safe, efficient, affordable and environmentally friendly, which could underpin the development strategy.

The following key issues need addressing:

- Improve the roads by making them wider, providing them with clearer road signs, lighting and maintain them regularly
- Change the driver behaviour through better training, stricter tests and better law enforcement. Make penalties steeper for traffic offences as well as retesting mandatory following an accident,
- Provide pavements and keep them clear for the pedestrians to use, increase their road sense and safety awareness through schools and media,
- Introduce stricter controls and checks on vehicles to ensure their roadworthiness and force unfit vehicles off the roads,
- Ensure the country's Highway Code and traffic laws are amended and fit for the purpose, enforce them rigorously, and consistently, free from fear and favouritism.
- Reduce the number of vehicles on the roads especially the private cars with a single occupant by making the public transport safer, punctual and more affordable.
- Introduce strict rules for use of mobile phones while driving and drink and drive habits.

Change of this scale needs the nation's buy-in, which can only be achieved by involving the key stakeholders:

- The victims of road accidents, i.e. those who have suffered injury, pain and/or disability, their affected families, bereaved parents, widows, orphans and the kith and kin who would be quite passionate and vocal in making the roads safer,
- Medical professionals, A&E, orthopaedic, physiotherapists, counsellors who see death and injury and deal with the aftermath of road accidents on a daily basis,
- Teachers, religious leaders and the media who have significant influence on the public and especially the children,
- National and regional authorities and regulators, police, ministry, highways agency, planners and politicians in designing, funding and implementing a national transport strategy,
- Other stakeholders such as the insurance companies and tourist industry who could benefit from improved safety on Sri Lankan roads.

Please visit our web site to download the full article in all three languages.

**Mr. Mervyn Silva / APSL**



### APSL Executive Committee 2010 / 2011

**Patron:** H. E. The Sri Lankan High Commissioner to UK

**President:** Prof. I. M. Dharmadasa

**Vice-Presidents:** Dr. Marc Dissanayake, Mr. Leslie Dep, Mr. Rohan de Alwis

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**Immediate Past President:** Dr. Andrew Nayagam

**Co-opted Members:** Mr. Gihantha Jayasinghe, Dr. Lara Jayatilake, Dr. Ananda Thevadasan

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