

THE PROFESSIONAL

SPRING 2011

Published by the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK

APSL EVENTS

7th Annual General Meeting & Dinner Dance

02nd April 2011
Slough

Living in the UK & Eastern Values

15th May 2011
Birmingham

APSL Awards Event

July 2011
Kandy, Sri Lanka

APSL Autumn Event

TBA

Please visit APSL website
www.apsl.org.uk
for more details.

Message from the President



The APSL is stepping into its eighth year with steady growth and maturing into a highly professional Association. Reflecting back to February 2004, APSL was launched by about 20 Sri Lankans gathered in a small restaurant room in London. Like any other Institution, the APSL has successfully moved through the four key stages of forming, storming, norming and performing, and now firmly in its final phase.

The membership has exceeded beyond 400 and professionals are getting together to make positive contributions to the aims and objectives of the Association. The main aims of the Association is twofold; to become better professionals by learning from each other and perform well in their work places in order to enrich the United Kingdom, and effectively contribute towards the development of their native country, Sri Lanka, by working as a Team. Last two years have been very effective in introduction of APSL to Sri Lanka and other countries, establishment of a portfolio of development projects, initiations of the APSL Award scheme and reconciliation programme. Two major APSL events are taking place every year both in UK and Sri Lanka in order to take our projects forward. APSL annual convention, Newsletter series, "Ask the Expert" series, "Through the professional eye" series are some of the knowledge dissemination methods used at present. Majority of the members have deep knowledge about Sri Lanka and they have been exposed to the rest of the world for several decades. This is the main strength of APSL membership, in order to act as a "Knowledge Pool" and "Think Tank" for contributions to Sri Lanka for her rapid socio-economic and sustainable development. To this end, all sectors of professions are encouraged to initiate new activities together with counterparts in Sri Lanka for knowledge transfer. Recent establishment of international conference series, "Solar-Asia" (<http://www.solarasia2011.ifs.ac.lk/>) is a good example to bring all solar professionals in the country to work with world experts in the field. This is my pledge to all members to initiate similar activities in order to bring new knowledge to the country. I am also openly inviting all peace loving Sri Lankans to join APSL and contribute to this onerous task.

Prof I M Dharmadasa / President – APSL

APSL Flood Relief Appeal

APSL launched its flood relief appeal in January 2011 to help those affected by the floods in the Eastern and North Central Provinces of Sri Lanka. The affected areas require massive reconstruction and redevelopment effort. The first instalment of the generous donations from our members will be handed over to BUDS (a UK based charity working with the relief efforts in Batticaloa) in March. Given the scale of the relief effort required, the appeal is still open to receive contributions. The second instalment will be directed to the redevelopment of the Polonnaruwa area. Please visit our web site for more information and updates.

7th Annual General Meeting & Dinner Dance

The 7th Annual General Meeting of APSL and Dinner Dance will be held on **Saturday 02nd April 2011** at **Baylis House, Slough**. In addition to the official AGM proceedings, the evening will include a celebration of APSL's achievements, recognising the contribution of our members, welcoming of new members, followed by a Sri Lankan buffet dinner and live music by FUSION - a four piece Sri Lankan band for dance lovers! All net proceeds from the event will be directed to our recent Sri Lanka Flood Relief Appeal.

To reserve your tickets please contact:

Dharme: 01442256910; Andrew: 01273501894; Marc: 07940660055; Rohan: 07711590903; Mervyn: 07967688971; Ranjan: 07749801064.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Please contact Ranjan Perera (ranjanperera@blueyonder.co.uk) for more information.

APSL Hospital Needs Projects

1. Colombo South Teaching Hospital and Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital

Government hospitals in Sri Lanka work under severe financial constraints. While the government provides basic needs for these hospitals, there are many other needs which could improve the overall services to help save lives of patients. APSL's on-going appeals are to rectify some of these difficulties for the benefit of the patients, by facilitating the donation of needy items. A dedicated section of the APSL website is used for this purpose. This was started as a pilot project at Colombo South Teaching Hospital with the authorisation of the secretary to Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka in December 2007. Following the success of this initial project, the needs of Sri Lanka's premier children's hospital, the Lady Ridgeway Hospital, Colombo has been added to the website from October 2010.



For more information, contact **Dr. Uditha Jayatunga** (udithajayatunga@ntlworld.com) or please visit the following web site: <http://apsl.org.uk/slhn/default.aspx>

2. Molecular Medicine Unit - University of Kelaniya (Ragama) - New Building Project

In keeping with the need to expand and improve allied health care services in the country, the Molecular Medicine Unit was established by the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Kelaniya in March 2002, in two small laboratories in the Department of Parasitology. In June 2005, the Unit moved into its new David Weatherall Building which was built mainly from the funds from well wishers, the main donor being Prof. David Weatherall from the University of Oxford in the UK.

The Molecular Medicine Unit is one of the unique service centres in the country, where it is the only government establishment which provides DNA typing services to the whole country. Since its establishment in 2002, the Unit has provided DNA typing services for over 300 court/legal cases. The provision of these services has helped the public of Sri Lanka to resolve paternity disputes within just a month or two, the alternative for which is a court case that would have taken many years, in most cases around 5 years. Further, the Unit also provides DNA typing services for many forensic cases; and with the increase in burglary and crime in the country, the demand for this type of service is increasing. The Unit also provides services in molecular diagnosis of tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, dengue, chikungunya, leptospirosis, malaria and filariasis.

The Molecular Medicine Unit is planning to further expand its portfolio of diagnostic services, post graduate research and teaching work. Especially, the Unit is working towards offering molecular diagnostic services free of charge during epidemics, to detect dengue and other emerging viral infections to those who are in need. We believe this is of national importance in the present context, for early diagnosis of infection so that appropriate intervention and patient management could be achieved to prevent the development of fatal conditions. In addition, the Unit wishes to strengthen its molecular diagnostic capabilities to detect drug resistant tuberculosis infections in Sri Lanka and also to develop molecular based diagnostics for a variety of cancers.

Space for these activities is to be available in the first floor of the present David Weatherall Building. The building cost of the first floor is estimated to be approximately SLR. 35,000,000.00 (Ref: Bill of Quantities prepared by Architects Co-Partnership (Pvt.) Ltd.). As a partner agency for research projects that are jointly conducted with the Molecular Medicine Unit, the Tropical and Environmental Diseases and Health Associates - TEDHA- (Pvt.) Ltd., Colombo 05, has granted SLR. 10,000,000.00 for these activities. The balance required to successfully complete the building will have to be raised through other sources.

Therefore, the members of the Molecular Medicine Unit kindly request donations from Sri Lankan expatriate community around the world for this activity from which the entire nation would benefit.

For more information, please contact Dr. Aresha Manamperi (areshamanamperi@gmail.com), Senior Lecturer in Molecular Medicine, Molecular Medicine Unit, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

Dr. Aresha Manamperi, University of Kelaniya

APSL Awards: All Island Essay Competition in Sri Lanka

"APSL Awards" scheme was launched in June 2010 with an island-wide essay competition for 16-19 year old school children. The title of the competition is "How to develop Sri Lanka as seen through the Eyes of Younger Generation". The objective behind this competition is to get young people to discuss and debate with their teachers and parents and produce an essay on sustainable development of the country. Also the main aim is to engage the general public to work with the government's efforts in the development projects throughout the country. The competition was widely published in the local press and through electronic media, and the submissions of essays closed on 31st December 2010. There was a very positive response with 105 essays submitted in all three languages from 19 Districts. Currently the assessments of these essays are carried out in Sri Lanka by the teachers of NIE (National Institute of Education) co-ordinated by the IRD (Institute of Research & Development). Initially 20 essays will be selected in Sri Lanka and the final ten essays will be selected by the APSL in the United Kingdom. The winning essays will be given wide publicity for information and also for possible implementation in the country. Each winner will receive Rs 10,000 and an APSL Trophy with a certificate at a special award ceremony in July 2011. The award ceremony will take place during the "Solar Asia - 2011" conference to be held during 28-30 July at IFS (Institute of Fundamental Studies) in Kandy. Website at: <http://www.solarasia2011.ifs.ac.lk/>

Living in the UK & Eastern Values

Final part of the series "Living in the UK & Eastern Values" for 2010 was held at Kethumathi Buddhist Vihara, Manchester. Using the concept of Solar Villages as an example, Prof I M Dharmadasa explained how Buddhist teachings can be put into practice through use of technological advancements to help the needy. Next event is on Sunday 15th May 2011 at Jethawana Buddhist Vihara, Birmingham. The Speaker for this event is Shirani Joseph de Saram, where the series was started by Rohan de Alwis on Eastern Values and followed by Ranjan Perera on Western Values.

Thushara Madurasinghe / APSL

WE SRI LANKA - Towards Reconciliation

Reconciliation among Sri Lankans needs a healing of wounds, a coming together of hearts and minds irrespective of ethnic/religious differences, and the will to build a shared destiny. In this context, the aim of 'WE SRI LANKA' is to encourage dialogue, understanding and friendship among our Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim brethren. We wish to remove barriers that divide us, build mutual trust, and encourage a stronger 'Sri Lankan' consciousness.



"WE SRI LANKA" was launched on 27th November 2010 at the 2nd APSL Convention held at Bromley Civic Centre, London. The sessions commenced with readings from the Holy Scriptures. Mr. Dennis Godfrey, CBE delivered the keynote address inspiring the 175+ strong gathering with experiences from the reconciliation process in Northern Ireland. Sri Lankan High Commissioner, HE Nihal Jayasinghe, and Acting High Commissioner, Mr P.M. Amza also addressed the audience. Following presentations on initiatives across spheres of education, health, enterprise and sports in Sri Lanka, participants were treated to a fine spread celebrating the island's multi-ethnic tapestry.

Next, a panel discussion drawing from eminent members of the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher communities in the UK addressed the question, 'The conflict is over – how do we secure the peace?' The panel comprising Sir Prof Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, Dr. Marc Ranjith Dissanayake, Mr. Abul Hasan and Ms. Rochelle Mortier, was moderated by Mr. Rohan de Alwis. The floor was then opened to the audience and several actions to foster reconciliation were discussed during the lively exchange that ensued. They included: **[In Sri Lanka]** a group of eminent Sri Lankans to visit the North & East and recommend a development programme; meet basic needs such as nutrition, health, shelter & employment; revive defunct industries in the North & East; promote professional education; increase broadband width; teach Sinhala & Tamil to Tamil & Sinhala students; **[In the UK]** improve greater connectivity among Sinhala, Tamil & Muslim communities; engage OBA/OGAs, community leaders, like minded people, youth, family dinners etc., for this purpose; produce a report of outreach work carried out by UK based Sri Lankans to encourage greater co-operation. Participants also enjoyed several beautiful performances such as Pooja, Ves, Bharatha Natyam, Mayura Wannama, Giri Devi, Krishna & Gopis, and Goyam dances. Details and photographs are available on our website.

If you wish to contribute to aims of WE SRI LANKA, contact Gihantha Jayasinghe (don.jayasinghe@yahoo.co.uk).

Don Gihantha Jayasinghe - APSL

Employability of Sri Lankans

It is with a sense of pride that we note that Sri Lankans in UK possess a wide range and depth of skills that is valued and in demand in UK. However all too often Sri Lankans' success rate in the employment market is not commensurate with these skills. As the Association of Professional Sri Lankans, we have decided to launch an initiative to improve the employability of Sri Lankans.

The initiative has a number of facets:

- As a start APSL has created a page on our website at <http://apsl.org.uk/jobs/default.aspx> where we have posted and will post employment opportunities. Please keep visiting the page for more information.
- We invite Sri Lankan businesses who plan to recruit, to place their notices on the APSL Employment Page, free of charge.
- Success in the job market depends on formal qualifications, professionally written CVs, eminent referees and performances during the interviews. APSL plans to help Sri Lankans by holding a number of events where attendees could listen to experts on critical topics such as CV writing. The speakers will be people involved in the recruitment business who would be able to share practical experiences.

Needless to say, this project could assist a large number of Sri Lankans to find employment and begin to realise their full potential. However, it requires the help of all Sri Lankans particularly Business owners and Executives in the Public Sector, Private Sector and Third Sector. You can help fellow Sri Lankans by informing APSL of any employment opportunities. Please e-mail either Lasantha at lasanthadealwis@blueyonder.co.uk or Mervyn at mervyn.silva@blueyonder.co.uk.

Lasantha de Alwis - APSL

APSL events planned for July/August 2011 in Sri Lanka

As in previous years, several senior APSL members will be visiting Sri Lanka during the summer of 2011. They will be taking part in numerous on-going activities and initiating new projects to support sustainable development of the country. The followings are some of the events planned to date:

- Contribution to the first conference: "Solar Asia - 2011" and the APSL Awards ceremony for winners of the Island-wide essay competition will take place during this conference (28-30 July).
- Attending the "Global Expatriates Forum" organised by the NSF (National Science Foundation) in Colombo (2-5 August).
- Taking part in meetings to monitor progress of the pilot "Solar Village", to distribute at least 20 APSL motivation certificates and prizes to bright school children in remote areas, and to discuss solar energy scientific research taking place in University of Kelaniya.
- Renewable energy promotional activities around the country; meetings at government ministries, Jaffna University, etc. for introduction of applications such as solar roofs, solar villages and solar farms for sustainable development.



The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK

The General Secretary
APSL Secretariat
18, Bishopscourt Gardens
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 6AZ

www.apsl.org.uk