THE PROFESSIONAL

Autumn 2011

Published by the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK

Message from our President



This is my first message to the Professional, since becoming APSL's President. APSL is a multi-faceted association, and my vision is to consolidate all of our good activities and move forward with the members and the Sri Lankan community in the UK. During our seven years of existence, we have progressed from a modest 20 members to a strength of over 400. Whilst this growth has been really impressive and is an endorsement of our professionalism, we must not forget that it is not the sheer numbers that make us really strong, but the quality and dedication of our individual members. I am therefore very grateful to our members and those who have been in the executive committee in the past years and to our current executive committee for their dedication and look forward to working together.

As APSL, we have made major in-roads in Sri Lanka on solar villages, transfer of technology to SL, an annual conference in Sri Lanka engaging our professional colleagues there, providing first hand help to the IDP's at Menik Farm within 7 days of it being opened, and more recently APSL's help to those displaced by the floods in Batticaloa and Polonnaruwa. In the UK, we launched "We Sri Lanka" to bring together the Sinhala and Tamil communities and made further progress with our very successful "Living in the UK" series in Birmingham and Manchester. There is more coverage later in this edition.

Finally we must not forget that our challenge will be to work towards bridging the gap between the Sinhala and Tamil communities in the UK, and I call upon all our members to work towards achieving this goal in the coming years. It must not be forgotten that our main communities have lived in distrust for almost 30 years so far, so rebuilding that broken trust will take a few more years to come, especially in the UK. We have to be patient and willing to work together to heal our wounds. I call upon all three political parties in the UK, not to look at Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslim communities in the UK as political voting blocks, but to genuinely encourage the Sri Lankans to become a "multi-ethnic, one community".

Rohan de Alwis, the President, APSL

3rd APSL Convention - APSL Research Symposium (APSL-RS) The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London, N7 6PA

The third APSL convention – **APSL-RS 2011** on 19th November 2011 in London provides an exciting opportunity for young academics, researchers and students to present and discuss their research findings within a wider Sri Lankan professional community in the UK. Currently many Sri Lankans engage in successful research and development projects in various parts of the UK. They are highly regarded among the local and international research communities. However there were very limited opportunities to network among the Sri Lankan researchers in the past. APSL-RS aims provide a platform for Sri Lankan researchers at all levels to meet, share knowledge and initiate effective collaborations.

This event is particularly targeted at young professionals who are actively engaged in research in the UK and encouraging more young people to pursue research and development careers. The Convention also provides an excellent opportunity for collaboration among UK and Sri Lankan research institutions which are closely associated with APSL activities. For delegates this is an exciting opportunity to network with leading Sri Lankan researchers in the UK and learn about cutting edge research and technologies. The inaugural event attracted significant interest from Sri Lankan researchers around the UK. Following a comprehensive review process 14 papers were selected giving particular attention to social and commercial benefits of the research projects.

The symposium will have 3 sessions. Prof. I.M. Dharmadasa, Sheffield Hallam University will chair session 1 which covers engineering, built environment and IT research followed by the poster session. Dr. Andrew Nayagam, Consultant in Genitourinary Medicine, Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust will chair session 3 which covers medical research. There will be oral presentations and posters on robotics, solar photo-voltaics, cancer research, mental health as well as studies and experiences in Sri Lanka related to Tsunami, reconciliation process and property development. Two leading UK based Sri Lankan researchers will deliver keynote speeches at the beginning of sessions 1 and 3. Prof. Terrence Fernando, Director of Think Lab, University of Salford, will deliver a keynote speech during session 1 while Prof. Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, Ex-President of the Royal College of obstetricians and gynaecologists will deliver a keynote speech during session 3.

APSL welcomes you all to APSL-RS 2011 and we believe this will be a truly intellectual and socially satisfying experience.

Dr. Mahesh de Silva, Chair, APSL-RS

APSL Research Symposium 2011 - Programme 3rd APSL Convention

Time	Session	
2.00-2.30pm	Registration and Welcome refreshments	
2.30-2.40pm	Welcome Speech	Mr. Rohan de Alwis, President APSL
2.40-2.50pm	Address by HE the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to the UK	
Session 1 – Engineering, Built Environment and IT Research Chair - Prof. I. M. Dharmadasa, Sheffield Hallam University		
2.50-3.15pm	Keynote Speech	Prof. Terrence Fernando, Director, Think Lab, University of Salford
3.15-3.30pm	Presentation 01	Challenges for Field Robots in Humanitarian demining – a case study Dr. Thrishantha Nanayakkara, King's College, London
3.30-3.45pm	Presentation 02	The role of higher education institutes in facilitating lifelong learning to improve disaster resilience of the built environment Mr. Mohan Siriwardena, University of Salford
3.45-4.00pm	Presentation 03	Single step growth of ZnxSn1-xOy composite electrodes: Influence of composition on Optical, PEC and ETA solar cell performance Dr. Ruvini Dharmadasa, Loughborough University
4.00-4.15pm	Presentation 04	Electrodeposited ZnS thin films using ZnSO4 and (NH4)2S2O3 to be used in thin film solar cells Mr. Ajith Weerasinghe, Sheffield Hallam University
4.15-4.30pm	Presentation 05	Reducing project delays in Sri Lankan condominium properties Ms. Sayani Vivekanandarajah, University of Salford
4.30-4.50pm	Session 2 – Poster Session & Coffee Break	
Poster 01	Skin cancer molecular biology and genetics: Identification of human CIC (capicúa) as an oncogenic tumor suppressor Dr. Kumara Dissanayake, University of Dundee	
Poster 02	Ethical dilemmas in mental health research among internally displaced people Dr. Chesmal Siriwardhana, King's College, London	
Poster 03	Prevalence of common mental disorders and the association with resilience among Internally displaced people (IDP) in Puttalam district of Sri Lanka. (THE COMRAID STUDY) Dr. Chesmal Siriwardhana, King's College, London	
Poster 04	Development of a Java2HTML Plugin for the Netbeans IDE Mr. Pasindu Kariyawasam Jalath Thanthree, University of Greenwich, London	
Session 3 – Medical Research Chair - Dr. Andrew Nayagam, Consultant in Genitourinary Medicine, Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust		
4.50-5.15pm	Keynote Speech	Prof. Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, Ex. President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)
5.15-5.30pm	Presentation 01	Diagnostic tests to detect oral potentially malignant disorders Prof. Saman Warnakulasuriya, King's College, London
5.30-5.45pm	Presentation 02	Associations between exposure to conflict, tsunami and mental disorders and school absenteeism among Sri Lankan children Dr. Chesmal Siriwardhana, King's College, London
5.45-6.00pm	Presentation 03	Working with Médecins Sans Frontières – a Personal Experience Dr. Shevanthi Nayagam, Gastroenterology Registrar, NW London
6.00-6.15pm	Presentation 04	Haemodynamics, Toll-like Receptors and Macrophage Activation in Atherosclerosis Ms. Anusha N. Seneviratne, Imperial College, London
6.15-6.30pm	Presentation 05	Function and regulation of the microtubule organising centre component during meiosis in Fission Yeast, <i>S.pombe</i> ; Lessons learned from the small ones Dr. Shivanthi Samarasinghe, University of Leicester
6.30-7.00pm	Awards Ceremony and Closing Remarks	

Contact: Dr Mahesh de Silva, Chair, APSL-RS (rs@apsl.org.uk)

APSL Essay Competition

The APSL island-wide Essay Competition was launched in September 2010 in order to engage the students and the general public with the Government in order to assist the rapid development of the country. The submission of essays was closed on 31st December 2010, and 106 essays were received from 19 districts. After the first round of assessments by the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Sri Lanka, 20 selected essays were sent to APSL-UK for second stage assessment. Each essay was marked by at least three examiners and the winners were selected by a professional examination board. The names of the final 8 winners are set out in the table below according to alphabetical order.

Each winner was awarded price money of Rs10,000, a trophy and a certificate, during the special APSL-Award Ceremony on 30th July at the Institute of Fundamental Studies (IFS) in Kandy. This Ceremony was held in conjunction with the "Solar-Asia 2011" international conference.

All essays selected for the final stage were of very high quality and revealed the most valuable ideas from our younger generation. In these essays, the young minds had researched, analysed and presented the issues and the possible solutions for the rapid development of their districts. The experienced professional examiners highly commended the efforts taken by our young people and the way these ideas were presented for implementation in the country. A collation of all these important issues presented and the possible solutions will be published in a separate article under the APSL Professional Publication series: "Through the Professional Eye", for wide dissemination, and to initiate new projects.



APSL Essay Competition - Final Winners

English:

Shehan Mohammed

Tamil:

Thamodhiram Ghaanaroobini M H Fatima Hasna V. Kobishanth

Sinhalese:

E M T Eshani Ekanayake H A K Eshani Hettiarachchi T H Maduranga Talakotuna R D E Muthumali Wijendra St. Sylvester's College, Kandy

Sri Ganesha Tamil Maha Vidyalayam, Koslanda St. Joseph Balika Maha Vidyalaya, Kegalle St. Sylvester's College, Kandy

Ibbagamuwa Central College, Kurunegala D S Senanayake Jathika Pasela, Meerigama, Gampaha Vijitha Madya Maha Vidyalaya, Pulasthigama, Pollonnaruwa Ibbagamuwa Central College, Kurunegala



To encourage and appreciate the efforts made by all finalists, each runner-up was also awarded the APSL "Motivation Certificate" and a consolation cash prize of Rs 2,500 through Institute of Research and Development (IRD) office in Colombo.

Prof. I M Dharmadasa, the Immediate Past President, APSL Dr. Athula Sumathipala (Director) - On behalf of IRD

WE SRI LANKA 2011

Re-connecting & Rebuilding for Reconciliation

On 1st October 2011, a capacity audience of 150 packed the MI Centre, Euston, London for WE SRI LANKA 2011. The event commenced to the sound of 'Magul' drums, lighting of traditional oil lamps, and readings from the holy scriptures of Sri Lanka's four main religions.

Speaking eloquently, Chief Guest, HE High Commissioner Dr. Chris Nonis, emphasised the vital role of the Sri Lankan Diaspora to **invest in Sri Lanka and address the thirst for education**, **jobs and trade**, especially in the North and East. Then, the group 'Voices for Reconciliation' (VFR), whose aim is to create a multi-ethnic, multi-religious network of British Sri Lankans to bring about **open communication**, **active engagement and constructive contribution to Sri Lanka**, addressed the gathering. Their insightful presentations detailed their trip to Sri Lanka in January this year, and their personal reactions to what they saw and heard during their week-long visit.

A **break for refreshments** showcasing the mouthwatering, multi-ethnic cuisine of Sri Lanka followed. Then, the diverse and lively audience was divided into six groups - each with a VFR facilitator - for a set of **interactive breakout discussions**. The stimuli for discussion were two questions prompting dialogue on the vision for Sri Lanka, and the potential contribution of the Sri Lankan Diaspora in the UK. The animated discussions that ensued were both engaging and thought-provoking. Key themes that ran through these discussions formed important 'bridging' values across the different ethnicities. For instance, it was broadly agreed that now is the moment to **encourage an inclusive national identity**, built on the foundations of mutual acceptance and forgiveness, and shared by Sri Lanka's different ethnic communities.



Economic development, to raise employment opportunities and living standards, was seen as an essential component of a longer-term vision of reconciliation. Many felt that the **media** could serve as a useful platform to broaden awareness of Sri Lanka's pluralist nature and promote cross-ethnic dialogue, and should be used more effectively to those ends. **Young people,** both in Sri Lanka and in the Sri Lankan diaspora, were seen as powerful agents of change. It was widely suggested that peace-building initiatives in conjunction with educational bodies such as schools and universities could do much to inform the youth about reconciliation, and inspire them to contribute tangibly and productively to the country's future. It was also felt that as members of the Sri Lankan community in the UK, **the Diaspora** could, and should engage constructively with Sri Lanka on a number of different levels.

It was heartening to hear a diverse range of opinions. However, the important lesson lay less in the many thoughtful individual contributions, and more in how all participants **respectfully interacted** with each other. The discussion highlighted the importance of **appreciating differences of opinion** in order to promote more tolerant communal relations. The **respectful tone** that dominated the discussion was encouraging and inspiring, and left plenty of scope for further activity of this kind, both within interested members of this group, and others within the wider community.



The 2nd half of WE SRI LANKA 2011 featured projects to assist in the **re-building of Sri Lanka's North & East.**These were namely, new computers for the Jaffna Library, scholarships for under-privileged children in Batticaloa, solar power for villages in the North & East, and uplifting war affected children in the Vanni. A £1,000 was raised in aid of these projects through a combination of ticket sales, donations, pledges and sponsorship.

The WE SRI LANKA team gratefully acknowledges our donors and sponsors – International Alert, Sri Lankan Airlines and the Bank of Ceylon – without whose generous support, this event would not have been possible.

Based on a summary report by the Voices for Reconciliation (VFR) team

WE SRI LANKA - Our Purpose

For over 30 years, Sri Lanka was torn apart by ethnic strife. Now, after the ceasing of hostilities, we look forward to a new era of peace, stability and prosperity. The **absence of war, however, does not guarantee long lasting peace.** Prejudice, mistrust, and racial animosity aggravated by wounds of war remain deep within the psyche of our people.

For a long lasting peace there needs to be a healing of wounds, **a coming together of the hearts and minds of all Sri Lankans**, irrespective of ethnicity or religion. Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the United States addressing the League of Nations said: **'Friendship must have a machinery.** If I cannot correspond with you, if I cannot learn your mind, if I cannot cooperate with you, I cannot be your friend, and if the world is to remain a body of friends, it must have the *means* of friendship, the *means* of constant friendly intercourse, the *means* of constant watchfulness over the common interest ..."

Likewise, reconciliation in Sri Lanka needs **strong engagement** between the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities especially here in the UK. **You and I** can do so much to encourage openness, good will, dialogue, and understanding among our Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim brethren. **We can help to build trust** and gradually remove the barriers that divide our communities. This is why 'WE SRI LANKA' was conceived.

WE SRI LANKA has two key dimensions. The first is 'Reconnecting', and I salute the VFR team for supporting WE SRI LANKA 2011 on this front with their path breaking work in promoting cross-ethnic dialogue. The second thrust is to support various partners on the ground in the on-going 'Rebuilding' effort in the North and East of Sri Lanka, hence the theme, 'Reconnecting & Rebuilding for Reconciliation.'

Just as Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed of a day when his children would be judged by the content of their character, and not by the colour of their skin, the **vision for WE SRI LANKA** is a nation where all her children would be judged by the content of their character and contribution, and not by the *language* they speak. I close with the last 3 verses from 'The Call of Lanka,' the soul stirring ode to Mother Lanka by Rev. W S Senior, Vice Principal, Trinity College, Kandy, 1906-16.

"But most shall he sing of Lanka In the bright new days that come. When the races all have blended And the voice of strife is dumb When we leap to a single bugle, March to a single drum.

March to a mighty purpose, One man from shore to shore; The stranger, becomes a brother, The task of the tutor o'er, When the ruined city rises And the palace gleams once more.

Hark! Bard of the fateful future, Hark! Bard of the bright to be; A voice on the verdant mountains, A voice by the golden sea. Rise, child of Lanka, and answer Thy mother hath called to thee."

Don Gihantha Jayasinghe
Ex-Co APSL
Team Leader - WE SRI LANKA















WE SRI LANKA aims to foster reconciliation among all Sri Lankans. We encourage goodwill, dialogue, understanding and mutual trust to remove the barriers that divide us. We affirm the equality, promise and dignity of all our people so we can forge together a shared destiny and a brighter future for our common homeland. We also cherish and celebrate our vibrant cultural heritage and diversity.

Polonnaruwa Flood Relief Appeal

Soon after the Christmas holidays last year and the dawn of the New Year 2011 came the heavy rains to Sri Lanka. The people of Sri Lanka had also experienced a major shift in the average temperature, throughout the island during this time. This was not a precursor to a Tsunami, but a major flood taking place in most parts of Sri Lanka.

The Eastern Province was very badly affected and APSL partnered with BUDS, a Charity in providing immediate relief to the displaced. Whilst most help was quite rightly channelled to the Eastern Province, it is human nature to forget other 'lesser' victims of the same catastrophe. APSL did not.

It found many people displaced with their homes completely destroyed together with the loss of their livelihoods in remote parts of Polonnaruwa / Athurugiriya. It teamed up with the young local MP for the area, Mr Roshan Ranasinghe, but by the time APSL made contact with him, he had himself provided the displaced persons with immediate help, a task that he was able to fulfil from his personal funds even before the 'wheels of government' got going.



In consultation with the MP, we were able to offer financial assistance to buy galvanized roofing sheets not just for roofing but also as 'half walls' of their new homes. Our contribution of a modest £400 together with a further contribution from another charity of one of our own members, we donated a total of £1400 for the Polonnaruwa flood relief effort. APSL appreciates the generosity of its members who contributed to the Appeal and also thank the MP, Mr Roshan Ranasinghe, for his efficiency and transparency in working with us.

APSL Project Portfolio

The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in UK (APSL-UK) now in its 8th year is pleased to report the wide range of activities it carries out, especially in relation to using the expertise of the Sri Lankans in UK to the benefit of Sri Lanka.

APSL has initiated four core projects this year namely, 'We Sri Lanka'; 'Eastern Values', 'Employability' and 'APSL Awards Scheme'.

We Sri Lanka – The aim of 'We Sri Lanka' project is to foster reconciliation among all Sri Lankans. The 2nd APSL convention was the first event organised based on the 'We Sri Lanka' theme by APSL to build understanding, goodwill and a sense of shared purpose through dialogue, learning, and a celebration of our cultural diversity.

Eastern Values – Two successful events under the 'Life in the UK and Sri Lankan Cultural Values' seminar series were held at Jethawana Buddhist Vihara in Birmingham last year and one on the 13th November 2011. Our aim is to replicate this in Greater London, so if you are willing to have our team to engage with an audience, please get in touch with our General Secretary, Ranjan Perera.

Employability – The aim of this project is to improve employability of Sri Lankan professionals in the UK. Dedicated webpage in the APSL website is created to provide useful information such as vacancies and CVs of job seekers, advice, networking opportunities and web links to employers, recruitment agencies and employment platforms.

APSL awards scheme – The aim is to actively engage the country's younger generation and seek their ideas and stimulate the rapid development of Sri Lanka. The first stage of this project – APSL essay competition was successfully completed in July 2011. The next advanced stage of the project is currently being developed.

APSL has also been supporting individual member driven on-going projects such as 'Renewable Energy', 'Speech Therapy for Children', trilingual journal 'Gaveshana', the 'Mettha Foundation', 'Motivation Certificates & Prizes' for bright children and Sri Lanka Hospitals Project. On average, two main 'knowledge dissemination' events are held in UK and Sri Lanka every year. In addition to the above core projects APSL continued organising the popular 'Ask the expert series' and releasing publications under 'Through the professional eye series'.

Further projects and events will be added to the ongoing list by the APSL Charity Arm and the Business Arm as they develop in the future.

APSL 7th AGM & Dinner Dance

The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL) completed seven years and celebrated its milestone with a grand Dinner Dance at the Baylis House in Slough on Saturday, 2nd April 2011. Professor G.L. Peiris, Minister of External Affairs of Sri Lanka was the Chief Guest attended by the acting High Commissioner, Mr Mohammed Amza.

The event was 'houseful', exceeding the target audience. The well known group "Fusion" kept the patrons entertained during the usual Sri Lankan and English music. The food, yet again, was of high quality and in abundance served at the tables by the Baylis House staff.

At the AGM election, APSL's members unanimously elected Mr Rohan de Alwis, to succeed Professor I.M.Dharmadasa as APSL's President for 2011 / 2012. APSL's past Presidents include Mr. Leslie Gunaratne, Dr. Andrew Nayagam and Professor I.M. Dharmadasa. Mr Rohan de Alwis is a Solicitor and corporate lawyer. The General Secretary, Mr Ranjan Perera, is a Chartered Engineer and has his specialism in the field of Bio-Diesel and is a Chartered Environmentalist.

Since the formation in February 2004, APSL has built itself as the primary association of all professionals in the UK with around 400 members, both active in its work in the U.K. and in Sri Lanka.



It has engaged with the Sri Lankan community in the UK having two series of events, one being the "Ask the Expert" and the other "Living in the UK". In the "Ask the Expert" series, APSL has had events where "Ask the medical doctor", "Ask the lawyer", "Ask the academic", "Ask the IT professional", "Ask the Ayurvedic doctor" and "Ask the Diplomat" were in fact some of the events run so far. In the "Living in the UK" series, APSL has been able to reach out to both first and second generation Sri Lankans with discussions on "Western Values" and "Eastern Values" and attempting to bridge the gap by looking at the best of the two worlds. These events have been held so far in London, Birmingham and Manchester.



On its Charity front, it has worked directly in Sri Lanka for Tsunami and IDP relief work, as well as providing immediate cash donations/help to those displaced by the floods in Batticaloa and Polonnaruwa. APSL is currently involved in fund raising for Hospitals in Colombo through Dr. Uditha Jayatunga as well as for the extension to the Molecular Medicine Unit at Ragama Hospital through Dr. Aresha Manamperi.







Invitation to contribute to the Newsletter

Members are warmly encouraged to contribute to the future issues of our Newsletter. Articles and messages contributing to the aims, mission, vision and strategic objective of APSL (please see the website home page), can be forwarded to APSL for consideration for publication in this newsletter. For more information, please contact Leslie Dep (w.dep@ntlworld.com) or Mohan Siriwardena (mohan.siriwardena@googlemail.com).

How to become a Member

- 1. Complete a membership form (available on our website www.apsl.org.uk)
- 2. Get two members to countersign as proposer and seconder
- 3. Pay membership fees up-front or by Standing Order and send the application electrically to General Secretary (generalsecretary@apsl.org.uk)
- 4. Executive Committee will consider your application
- 5. Secretary will write to inform you of the decision / welcome you

Membership fees

Ordinary member - £15.00 per annum Overseas member - £10.00 per annum Life member - £150.00 Student (Fulltime) member - Free

How to pay membership fees

Electronic payment: HSBC Bank plc - Rickmansworth Branch.

Sort Code: 40-38-20; Account Number: 11444506; Account Name: ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL SRI LANKANS IN THE UK (APSL). Please let our treasurer know about your payment (surajwijendra@yahoo.com)

<u>Cheque:</u> Please send a cheque drawn in favour of <u>APSL UK,</u> to our Treasurer, Mr. Suraj Wijendra, Treasurer, APSL, 41, Tudor Way, Mill End, Rickmansworth, Herts. WD3 8JA.

APSL @ FOC 2011

APSL continued to feature at the annual Festival of Cricket this year too. A substantial number of new members joined APSL, and some of the current members networked with each other, making it a very memorable and productive day for us. Well done to the APSL organising committee for their commitment and hard work to making this effort a success.

APSL Executive Committee 2011 / 2012

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

President: Mr. Rohan de Alwis.

Vice-Presidents: Mr. Mervyn Silva, Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy, Mrs. Shiranee Joseph de Saram

General Secretary: Mr. Ranjan Perera

Deputy General Secretary: Mr. Mohan Siriwardena

Treasurer: Mr. Suraj Wijendra

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Executive Committee Members: Dr. Thilak Abeyawardena, Dr. Keerthi Galappatti, Mr. Leslie Dep, Dr. Marc Ranjith Dissanayake, Mrs. Gayani Senaratne, Sir. Prof. Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, Mr. Lasantha de Alwis, Dr. Mahesh de Silva, Mr. Gihantha Jayasinghe, Mr. Mishantha Liyanage, Dr. Thrishantha Nanayakkara, Dr. Andrew

Nayagam, Dr. Athula Sumathipala, Dr. Ananda Thevadasan, Dr. Lara Jayatilaka

Immediate Past President: Prof. I.M. Dharmadasa



The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK

APSL

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