

LAUNCHING APSL UAE

At the invitation of H.E. Sarath Wijesinghe, the Ambassador for Sri Lanka in the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Rohan de Alwis (President APSL) and Mr. Leslie Dep (General Secretary APSL) attended the launch of APSL UAE on 20th September 2012 at the Indian Cultural Centre in Abu Dhabi. Several Sri Lankan professionals living in the UAE representing various disciplines were present at the launching ceremony.

H.E. Ambassador Wijesinghe who incidentally initiated the forming of APSL UK welcomed all those present and gave an introduction of the objectives of forming an Association of Professionals in the UAE and how it was formed in the UK.



Mr. Rohan de Alwis, the President of APSL UK explained the constitution and functions of APSL in the UK, which were to form the basis of the APSL UAE constitution. However according to the rules and regulations governing associations in the UAE, it was noted that the new association has to function under the umbrella of the Sri Lankan Embassy in the UAE.

Mr. Leslie Dep, the General Secretary of APSL UK gave a presentation of all the activities of APSL UK during the

We will be nine years old next February!

We have done quite a lot of things during this period, and been truly diverse in our activities ranging from Tsunami reconstruction help to professional capacity building; structuring and influencing the renewable energy policy in Sri Lanka; knowledge cascading and linking up with professionals in Sri Lanka, Abu Dhabi, US and Australia; reaching out to the Sri Lankan community here in the UK and sharing our professional knowledge in an understanding practical manner.

One thing I have singled out to highlight has been our genuine and sincere efforts to reach out to those who have led insular and sometimes hate filled lifestyles as a result of the civil conflict that lasted almost 28 years in Sri Lanka. I am proud to say that in the last three years, we at APSL have been successful in bringing together our people from the mainstreams of Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities here in the UK and interact with each other.

Needless to say, we have been criticised by a few, from time to time, for being "too Sinhalese" or "too Tamil!" I believe this criticism is in fact a good measure of our success, as the silent majority who constitute the mainstream is joining us. We have of course not forgotten that we have a long way to go in this area and I seek your direct help in bringing about a truly solid sensible reconciliation. Let us not get into issues which we are unable to resolve, instead let us see how the Sri Lankan community here in

the UK can identify themselves as a strong & united group, and influence Sri Lanka which is comfortable with itself. After all, we are three years into peace after 28 years of conflict. We all have to be patient, but as Professionals we need to be active in working towards a lasting reconciliation.

You can support us by attending our events, as well as by joining APSL as a Member. Alternatively, you may want to donate funds (there is no minimum amount) to APSL for the worthy direct aid projects we are involved in. Remember, we are a UK registered Charity, so you could complete a GiftAid Form to enable the Government also to give us a further contribution. Or else if you have a business, all funds you donate to APSL is 100% tax deductible.

With best wishes

Rohan de Alwis
President



past eight years and it was well received by all those present. The presentation was followed by a Q & A session and the election of office bearers to the newly formed APSL UAE executive committee.

It was revealed at the meeting that there are about 350,000 Sri Lankans employed in the UAE and nearly 100,000 of them are professionals and

they could form a very strong organisation in the UAE.

APSL UK pledged its fullest support to APSL UAE in their future activities and to work together for the mutual benefit of the professionals and also for the knowledge transfer and development projects in Sri Lanka.

4th APSL Convention - Research Symposium 2012

The fourth APSL Convention – APSL-RS 2012 on 17th November 2012 in Sheffield 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 was successfully launched in 2011 to provide a platform for Sri Lankan researchers at all levels to meet, share knowledge and initiate effective collaboration.

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. This year's event attracted significant interest from Sri Lankan researchers around the UK. Following a comprehensive review process, 13 abstracts 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 and Mr. Mohan Siriwardane, Salford University will co-chair session 1 which covers Engineering and Built Environment followed by the poster session. Dr. Andrew Nayagam, Consultant in Genitourinary Medicine, Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust and Dr. Mahesh Nirmalan, Senior Lecturer and

Consultant in Anaesthesia and Critical Care Medicine, University of Manchester will co-chair session 3 which covers Medical and Biological Sciences research. There will be oral presentations and posters on solar photovoltaics, construction industry, microwave treatment of metals, light weight aircraft design, DNA synthesis, mental health as well as studies and experiences in Sri Lanka. Two leading UK based Sri Lankan researchers will deliver keynote speeches at the beginning of sessions 1 and 3. Prof. Dilanthi Amaratunga, Head, Centre for Disaster Resilience, University of Salford, will deliver a keynote speech during session 1 while Dr. Mahesh Nirmalan will deliver a keynote speech during session 3.

APSL welcomes you all to APSL-RS 2012 and we believe this will be a truly intellectual and socially satisfying experience.

*Dr. Mahesh de Silva, Chair,
APSL-RS 2012*

APSL Awards - Stage-II

Converting Green Energy Ideas into Green Energy Products (GEIs to GEPs)

After the successful completion of the first stage under the "APSL Awards Scheme", the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL) is now commencing the second stage. The first stage was a country-wide essay competition on "How to develop Sri Lanka as seen through the Eyes of Younger Generation" for 16-19 year old school children. The second stage is a competition to get proposals and convert green energy ideas (GEIs) into green energy products (GEPs).

An island-wide open competition to generate bright ideas/proposals in the clean energy sector, and to select

the most promising four ideas, by an eminent body of scientists and introduce these selected projects to funding bodies, local industry and the Government Ministries to further develop these ideas/proposals, guide & nurture, incubate & scale-up, for possible manufacturing and marketing the final products in future.

The competition closes on **31st December 2012**, and proposals should be submitted to; "APSL Awards - Stage II", the Institute of Fundamental Studies (IFS), Hantane, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

Each winner will receive a Rs.25,000

cash prize, a Trophy and a Certificate from APSL. The prizes will be awarded during an event in Sri Lanka, and the winning ideas/proposals will be introduced to responsible authorities in Sri Lanka for commercialisation process.

More details at:
http://www.apsl.org.uk/APSL-Awards-Stage-II-English-V3%202_-3.pdf

Main Contacts: APSL in the UK:
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Dr. Athula Sumathipala (spjuats@iop.kcl.ac.uk) ,
IFS in Sri Lanka: **Dr. Kumari Tilakaratne** (sdu_sc@yahoo.com)

'Living in the UK' - Eastern and Western Values..

APSL has conducted several events under the 'Life in the UK and Sri Lankan cultural values' seminar series which have so far been held in various locations throughout the UK.

The discussion sessions which target young children and their parents discuss aspects about 'why we live in the UK' 'what we maybe missing' 'what are the differences between UK and Sri Lankan 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 presentations were an eye opener to the parents as well as the young ones who were present.

Ven. Gunawansa Thero of the Jethawana Vihara in Birmingham, has continuously supported this project and stresses the importance of our Sri Lankan identity and Sri Lankan values regardless of what religion or ethnicity

we belong to. He mentioned that he was highly impressed by the activities carried out by the Association and pledged his fullest support and cooperation for future discussions and programmes in Birmingham.

The next event in the series is scheduled to be held on 20th January 2013, at the Jethawana Vihara in Birmingham. For information please contact Project Leader: Thushara Madurasinghe at thusha2009@yahoo.co.uk.

APSL chronicles Past member's corner

Q & A Session with Dr Andrew Nayagam President of APSL UK (2007-2009)

Q. Personal background

A. I am a consultant physician in Genitourinary Medicine and have lived in the UK since 1981. As a family, we make regular visits to Sri Lanka. I have been involved in charities to help Sri Lankans. I am a past president of Sri Lankan Medical and Dental Association in the UK and a trustee of Meththa Foundation.

Q. Historical background in joining/ establishing APSL UK

A. The idea of a professional association was hatched by a small group of veterans and in 2004 we met at the Prince of Ceylon Restaurant in London, to formally inaugurate APSL with Mr. Faiz Mustapha (former SL High Commissioner) as the patron. We elected the ex-co with Mr. Leslie Gunaratne as the first president. I was one of three vice presidents at that time.

Q. Motivations (personal and group) for the initiative of APSL

A. There are many Sri Lankan organisations doing charitable work both in the UK and in Sri Lanka. They all have their own objectives. We felt that there is no overarching association to bring all the professionals under one umbrella. So, our idea was to bring all Sri Lankan professionals under one banner to work for the betterment of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan community in

the UK, thus enabling them to network and exchange ideas. The philosophy of APSL is not to compete with other organisations but to cooperate and work with them.

Q. Details on office as a past president of APSL UK

A. In 2007 I was elected as the second president of APSL when the association was still in its infancy. During the next two years I had the task of consolidating all the previous work and moving the association to the next level. We forged a very good relationship with the Sri Lankan High Commission and started on a series of 'Ask the Expert' events held at the SLHC. We held an event for the Sri Lankan undergraduates where a number of Sri Lankan academics addressed the students and took part in discussions. About 130 students attended. We also had fund raising events, some of which were held outside London (Manchester, Wakefield) to broaden the membership base. Distinguished Sri Lankans were invited to these events as keynote speakers. This not only gave us an opportunity to showcase our talents but also enabled them to interact and share their knowledge with our members. We made a significant increase in the membership numbers and APSL became widely known in this country and also in Sri Lanka.

Q. Views on current APSL activities

A. The two presidents, Prof. Dharmadasa and Rohan de Alwis, who took reign after me have taken APSL to a much higher level. APSL is a much stronger association now with a bigger and broader membership. It is also well recognised in Sri Lanka where we are undertaking knowledge transfer and collaborative projects. One such project is the 'Solar Village'. There are many developments under way and I would encourage people to visit our website to find out more about our activities.

Q. Message to APSL members

A. APSL is a great association of people from all communities, religions, political philosophies and professions. It is a great forum to meet and discuss ideas. I would like to encourage Sri Lankans to visit our website and find out about our activities. If you like what we are doing, I would like to invite you to join your fellow Sri Lankans and contribute to the development of Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan community in the UK.



8th AGM & Dinner Dance

The 8th Annual General Meeting and Dinner Dance of the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL) was held at the Grange City Hotel in London on 12th May 2012. It was a well-attended meeting chaired by Mr. Rohan de Alwis, the President of the Association. In his welcome speech he mentioned that the past year was very significant as APSL received charity status in February 2012.

Mr. Ranjan Perera, the outgoing General Secretary presented the report for the year 2011-2012. In his report, he mentioned that during the year under review APSL had organised two very important events in the United Kingdom. "We Sri Lanka" event on 1st October 2011, where the aim was to promote and encourage reconciliation between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities living in the UK. The other major event was the "APSL Research Symposium" - 3rd APSL Convention held on 19th November 2011. Several researchers based in the UK presented papers and awards were given to the best research paper presented at the Symposium. In addition, the General Secretary also

reported of the APSL essay competition held in Sri Lanka for Sri Lankan students under the topic "How to develop the country through the younger generations eye". The response was tremendous and awards were given to the best essays in Sinhalese, Tamil and English at a function held at the Institute of Fundamental Studies in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

Mr. Suraj Wijendra, the Treasurer thereafter presented the Annual Statement of Accounts for year 2011- 2012.

In his acceptance speech Mr. Rohan de Alwis, who was re-elected as President for the second term, stressed the importance of becoming a charity and requested members to encourage more young professionals to join the Association. He also thanked the outgoing General Secretary Mr. Ranjan Perera for the excellent and dedicated services rendered during his three-year tenure. A memento was presented to him in appreciation, as well as a bouquet of flowers to his wife and APSL Member, Dr. Anya Perera.

Mr. Leslie Dep the newly elected General Secretary proposed the vote of thanks.

The AGM was followed by the Keynote Address delivered by Rt Hon Sir Desmond de Silva, PC, QC on the topic "Sri Lanka after the war". His Excellency Dr Chris Nonis thereafter addressed the gathering.

A raffle draw was also held and the first prize was a return air ticket to Sri Lanka donated by Elegant Travels and the second prize was a Silver Fly Smiles membership from Sri Lankan Airlines. The third prize was a hamper donated by Marks & Spencer.

The members and their guests thoroughly enjoyed the sumptuous Sri Lankan meal and were entertained by the band "Suresh and the Breeze" until midnight when the 8th APSL AGM and the dinner dance came to a close.

Further information regarding APSL and membership details are available on APSL web site;



Executive Committee 2012/2013

President	Mr. Rohan de Alwis
VP (Strategic Planning & Member Development)	Mr. Mervyn Silva
VP (Knowledge Networking) VP (Finance)	Dr. Mahesh de Silva Mr. Suraj Wijendra
General Secretary	Mr. Leslie Dep
Membership Secretary	Mr. Mohan Siriwardena
Treasurer	Mr. Thushara Madurasinghe
Deputy Treasurer	Dr. Ananda Thevathasan
Executive Committee Members	Dr. Athula Sumathipala Mrs. Gayani Senaratne Dr. Marc Dissanayake Dr. Andrew Nayagam Prof. Sir Sabaratnum Arulkumaran Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy Mrs. Shiranee Joseph de Saram Mr. Gihantha Jayasinghe Mr. Derrick Brainerd Dr. Asanga Fernando Dr. Thilak Abeywardena Dr. Chesmal Siriwardena Dr. Roger Srivasan Mr. Lakkana Yalagala Mr. Ranjan Perera
Immediate Past President	Prof. I. M. Dharmadasa

Festival of Cricket 2012

For the fourth year running APSL participated at the Festival of Cricket held at the Winchmore Hill cricket grounds on 8th July 2012. This event which is held annually is the largest Sri Lankan event in the year and most Sri Lankans in the UK eagerly await this day to have a nice outing with their families meeting friends.

The event this year was disrupted by the heavy overnight rain and also by the unfortunate fire incident in one of the food stalls. Due to the above the organisers had to cancel the cricket matches but kept the gates opened until 6.00 PM for the large number of Sri Lankans who visited the grounds until close.

The APSL stall also attracted many visitors with several of them interested in joining the association. Seventeen membership applications were issued with two joining on the day. It was an opportunity to the general public and also to our members to meet the APSL office bearers and get to know our activities.

The stall was also visited by the chief guest the Sri Lanka Deputy High Commissioner Mr. Lenagala. Finally a big thank you to all the Executive Committee members who braved the weather and were present to assist that day.



We Sri Lanka..

WE SRI LANKA aims to nurture a plural and inclusive national consciousness that instills a sense of equality and shared purpose among all Sri Lankans, irrespective of ethnicity or religion. We do this by,

- **Reconnecting** people from different ethnic communities of the UK - Sri Lankan diaspora/community
- **Rebuilding** lives of people living in war affected areas in Sri Lanka, and
- Encouraging understanding, tolerance and **reconciliation** among different ethnic groups, upholding the dignity of all Sri Lankans, and celebrating our rich, cultural diversity.



WE SRI LANKA 2012 was held at Birkbeck College, University of London on October 6th drawing over a 100 people from the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher communities in the UK. The event commenced with a 'Pooja' dance, playing of national anthems, and lighting of traditional lamps. This was followed by silence to remember war victims, and holy readings from Sri Lanka's main religions. APSL President, Rohan De Alwis welcomed the gathering with an introduction to APSL and its activities. We Sri Lanka Team Leader, Gihantha Jayasinghe then emphasised the importance of making a personal commitment to remove prejudice, and upholding the dignity and equality of all Sri Lankans. Compere and APSL Vice President Mervyn Silva then shared that **Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu** had enthusiastically commended We Sri Lanka for the crucial work related to reconciliation. H.E. High Commissioner, **Dr Chris Nonis**, then spoke about affirming our 'Sri Lankan' identity, the rapid economic progress in Sri Lanka's North & East of Sri Lanka since the war, and the key role professionals could play in shaping the island's post war future.

Diaspora Dialogues, a group of young professionals, who visited Sri Lanka in March 2012 with British MPs, spoke candidly about their visit. The group's focus is to identify reconciliation and development needs in Sri Lanka, forge links with people on the ground, and encourage more UK-Sri Lankans to

become involved. They showed how reconciliation in Sri Lanka was a complex and gradual process, and that it should include everyone with a Sri Lankan background, regardless of status, age, race or religion, residing in or out of Sri Lanka. Ayesha Abdeen, Dr Shevanthi Nayagam, Jayan Perera, Nilmini Herath and Dr Asanga Fernando presented. Ranjan Perera moderated the Q&A.

Amitav Banerji, Head of Political Affairs at the Commonwealth Secretariat gave the keynote address, 'Nurturing Plural and Inclusive Societies.' He described the Commonwealth as an incredible mosaic based on inclusiveness, consensus, and unity in diversity, and quoted Nelson Mandela who famously remarked, "The Commonwealth makes the world safe for diversity." He then turned to the subject of transitional justice. He said that winning a war is far from winning the peace, as scars of war take long to heal, and they will never heal if underlying alienation and marginalisation are not addressed, and every Sri Lankan is not able to live a life of dignity and fulfilment. He pointed out that implementing LLRC recommendations are key to building a durable peace in Sri Lanka, and it was noteworthy there is now an Action Plan for this, as well as a National Human Rights Action Plan. Prof I. M. Dharmadasa moderated the Q&A session, and an exquisite Bharatha Natyam dance by Sharlina Kirubaraj followed.

WE SRI LANKA 2011 raised £1,700 to help **rebuild** lives in conflict affected areas. Donations were made to the Batticaloa Underprivileged Development Society to support war affected children and widows, and to God's Own Children's Foundation to help educate war affected children in the Vanni. In addition, Jaffna Library received two new computers thanks to the generosity of Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran and Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy.

Following a break for tasty Sri Lankan refreshments, the audience enjoyed a 'Fusion' dance by Sayuri Sasinghe, Erandi Harshini and Indula Bopitiya. A panel discussion on 'Road to Reconciliation' with Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher community representatives followed.

Dai Liyanage said narrow minded extremism and exclusion of other communities was unacceptable, and added it is now time to put away differences and work together for a common purpose. **Vairamuttu Varadakumar** said reconciliation is critical for Sri Lanka having experienced intense political violence, but it is not about just forgiving and forgetting.

Accountability, transparency and honesty were needed to counter fear, uncertainty and anger, and it was imperative to build trust at grassroots level. Sri Lankans expect compromise, collaboration and creative peace-building from political leaders of all communities. **Amjad Mohammed Saleem** asked the diaspora to revisit the LLRC, and articulate practical steps, mindful of issues around governance, religious tension and identity. He said people should not think in ethnic silos but ask the difficult questions. **Rochelle Mortier** asked for benefits of development to be evenly distributed and violent conflict - Sri Lankan killing Sri Lankan - never take place again. She said that if Sri Lankan identity is reduced to only Sinhala Buddhism or Tamil Eelam, it would reduce us all. She called for an inclusive state, independent rule of law, and justice for all, irrespective of income, race, religion, caste or class. Dr Andrew Nayagam moderated the Q&As.



Audience break-out groups facilitated by Diaspora Dialogues, Voices for Reconciliation, and APSL followed. **Key learnings** included meeting basic needs, working with local people, recognising language barriers, having broader perspectives, an inclusive identity, that it is everyone's responsibility, complexity of reconciliation, and inspiration from the visit of the young professionals. **Actions to aid reconciliation** included sponsoring children, creating livelihoods, building infrastructure, demilitarisation, asking right questions and educating others, more interaction between Sinhala and Tamil diaspora, collaboration between 1st and 2nd generations, dialogue with the Sri Lankan government, good governance, challenging political parties, reducing misinformation, spreading positive news on projects in Sri Lanka, and a roadmap for reconciliation like South Africa. Gayani Senaratne officiated the raffle draw in the presence of Deputy High Commissioner Mr. Lenagala. The event concluded with APSL General Secretary Leslie Dep making the vote of thanks, and the playing of the beautiful song of reconciliation 'We are Sri Lankan.' We thank our sponsors CSCSS, Elegant Travels, The Mistoria Group, Sri Lankan Airlines, Dunn Shipping and Magni Arts.

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