



APSL

UK Registered Charity No: 1145786

www.apsl.org.uk

Winter 2013



The Professional

APSL entering the second decade!



“We will be nine years old next February!” wrote my predecessor Mr. Rohan de Alwis, in the autumn 2012 issue of the Professional. “We have done quite a lot of things during this period and have been truly diverse in our activities...” he continued. As I pick up the mantle from Rohan as the President of the APSL, I wish to thank all my predecessors for their excellent stewardship of the association, vision and generosity with time and effort; in leading this association forward. I consider it a privilege to be entrusted with steering this great association of like-minded peace-loving people, who work in harmony as a force for good **instilling** pride and self-belief in the Sri Lankan psyche.

APSL’s vision is that of a peaceful and prosperous Sri Lanka, where Sri Lankans, spread across the world who have realised their potential with the help from those gone before them, in turn support the generation after them to realise their true potential. As such, APSL is an association for all Sri Lankan professionals regardless of their creed, language or political affiliation, who share our vision. Our vision is based on the belief that we are all children of one mother - Sri Lanka, and underneath our superficial differences, we have more in common than we care to accept, or dare to admit. This vision has held us

fast through thick and thin and helped us achieve a great deal during the difficult years in the past and APSL to go from strength to strength.

Our ongoing activities of the Research Symposium, Living in the UK, and Ask the Expert series have continued. The APSL-Awards Stage II - the Island-wide Essay competition on ‘Converting green energy ideas into green energy products’ was held during the second half of 2012. I would like to congratulate the winners and the runner-ups who were awarded cash prizes, trophies and APSL certificates during the award ceremony held in Colombo on 7th August 2013. Further details about the event and award winners are found inside this issue. Those, as well as the names of Sri Lankan students from rural schools who have been awarded Motivational Certificates in recognition of their outstanding achievements against the odds, can also be found on our website.

We also held a Student Day on the 19th October at the Sri Lankan High Commission, London. This was to welcome the newly arrived Sri Lankan students who started their studies in UK universities this autumn. This was conducted in collaboration with the Association of Sri Lankan Students, UK (ASLSUK). Over seventy delegates participated in the event and we received excellent feedback with the request that it is included as an annual event in our calendar for the benefit of new students. Looking ahead, I see the following as our priorities for action:

Improving the engagement with our current and potential members: As we are busy professionals spread across the country, with demanding careers and family commitments, I see greater and more innovative use of Information Technology and in particular the Social Media as a way of improving our

communication and engagement with members. As a starting point, we are planning to conduct a survey of our members in the New Year in order to better understand the needs and priorities and tailor the services we offer.

Deliver still more tangible results: We are working on a membership card that would offer tangible benefits such as access to a ‘Members Only’ area on our website as well as discounts on goods and travel. Now that we are a UK registered charity, we also plan to raise funds regularly to support worthy causes in Sri Lanka during all our future events and activities.

Greater involvement of younger Sri Lankans in the UK as active members and prepare them as future leaders of the association: An effective way to realise this would be through increased partnership working with young professional groups with similar interests as we have done recently.

As stated earlier, APSL will be turning ten years old next February, and special celebrations are being planned to mark this momentous occasion. The date is 31st May 2014 and the venue is City Grange Hotel, Tower Hill in London. More details can be found overleaf.



I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very happy and prosperous New Year!

Mervyn Silva - President

APSL 10th Anniversary celebrations



First announcement

APSL was formed in 2004 and next year will be its 10th anniversary. A great deal has been achieved during this time and our membership has grown from a few members to one of the biggest Sri Lankan organisations in the UK. The members come from a wide range of professions. In order to mark the 10th anniversary, we have planned events to coincide with our Annual General Meeting. We are planning to invite Sri Lankans of eminence to celebrate their achievements and give presentations. The evening will conclude with a lively dinner dance. The draft programme is as follows:

Date: 31 May 2014

Venue: Grange Tower Bridge Hotel, London

Draft Programme:

1.30 - 2.00 pm: Registration

2.00 - 5.00 pm: Presentations by invited speakers

5.00 - 5.30 pm: Tea/coffee

5.30 - 6.30 pm: Annual General Meeting

7.00 Dinner Dance

This will be an entertaining evening and one not to be missed. This will be a great opportunity for you to make acquaintances with other professionals. Please embed this date in your diaries. In keeping with our charitable objectives, we hope to give part of the surplus from this event to a chosen charity in Sri Lanka. We will be publishing more details soon in our website www.apsl.org.uk

Dr Andrew Nayagam, Head of the 10th Anniversary Organising Team

APSL chronicles

Q & A Session with Mr Leslie Gunaratne Founder President of APSL UK (2004-2007)

Q. *Personal background*

I am a Chartered Engineer and a Chartered Quality Professional. I obtained BSc and MSc at Herriot Watt University in Edinburgh.

I am now partly retired after 40 years' service in the UK. My last employer was Lloyds Register.

Q. *Historical background in establishing/joining APSL UK*

During 2002 – 2003 I noticed many separate organisations for Sri Lankan professionals in the UK, such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants and so. The benefits of a single and unified organisation, that would offer more effective and efficient outcomes through team work, began to grow strong.

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

I shared my thoughts with one of my closest friends, His Excellency Mr Sarath Wijesinghe, the current Ambassador for Sri Lanka in Israel. He was delighted and arranged an urgent meeting with the then High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in London, Mr Faiz Mustapha, PC. I invited, Drs Marc Dissanayake and Keerthi Devendra to join us at our meeting with the High Commissioner. On a very cold winter evening during the second week of February 2004, we met with the High Commissioner. He gave his blessings, and allocated the first available day in his diary which happened to be 29th February 2004 for our inaugural meeting.

Our next task was to select a name for the organisation. The Association of Sri Lankan Professionals in the UK was agreed upon. Subsequently, Mr Wijesinghe a lawyer and I drafted our constitution comprising of our Vision, Mission and Objectives. Next we had to define the terms 'Sri Lankan' and 'professional'. We agreed upon a definition for Sri Lankan, but decided not to define who a professional was as we wanted to include professionals from all disciplines.

Our next task was to spread the word which we did it by phone. As a result, we managed to get some 15 attendees – All Professionals for our inaugural meeting.



Thus APSL was 'born' on the 29th February 2004, at the Prince of Ceylon Restaurant, Hendon with Mr Faiz Mustapha in the Chair. Mr Mustapha spent a considerable amount of time revising our draft constitution. Elections followed and I was elected as the first President of the APSL.

Mr Rohan de Alwis and the late Mr L Ariyasena were elected as the General Secretary and Treasurer. Mr Sarath Wijesinghe was elected as one of the Vice Presidents.

Some of the attendees who were present at the inaugural meeting and still actively involved are, Drs Andrew and Mrs Nayagam, Professor Dharmadasa, Dr Marc Dissanayake and Mr Rohan de Alwis. The late Mr A L Ariyasena did a tremendous job building up the association funds starting with a blank piece of paper.

Our next task was to design the logo. With the assistance of Mr Brian Ranasinghe, a former member, I designed the logo which I am glad to see is still being used.

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

During the first year of my tenure, the Tsunami struck Sri Lanka on Boxing Day 2004. Our immediate response was to raise some money, and I managed to collect about £1000.00 within hours. I contacted Mr Alwis who happened to be in Sri Lanka at the time. Mr Alwis supplied urgently needed material to the victims by using this money. In the meantime, Dr Marc Dissanayake donated urgently needed medicine for the victims.

Soon afterwards we held a number of sessions to explore what we could do to help the Tsunami victims and find a way forward. The first session was held at the Lihiniya Restaurant attended by the newly appointed High Commissioner to Sri Lanka in London, Mrs Shenuka Seneviratne.

We formed Vision Lanka, the charitable arm of APSL and successfully constructed 10 'Turn Key' houses at Habaraduwa. I was selected to be in charge of the Project from inception to completion and handed over the completed houses to selected families.

I introduced Road Shows in London and Sri Lanka and we held our first Awareness Raising session in Sri Lanka in late 2004.

Q. Views on current APSL activities

I am very impressed by the ongoing activities of the APSL and especially the new Welcome Event for Sri Lankan students coming to the UK. Road shows are being continued effectively during different academic terms.

Q. Views on the future of APSL

APSL is a unique organisation and we should all be proud of it. It needs your

support to continue and to grow in keeping with the changing times.

Q. Message to APSL members and non-members

Be open-minded, bring innovative ideas in and increase the awareness in Sri Lanka that cancer is an Asbestos related illness.

APSL / ASLS Joint Student Event



A joint student event organised by the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL) and the Association of Sri Lankan Students UK (ASLS), was held on the 19th October 2013 at the Sri Lanka High Commission, London.

The main objective of the event was to welcome the new intake of Sri Lankan students to the UK universities and to give them an opportunity to meet Sri Lankan professionals for a networking session and also to listen to a few important presentations with respect to living and studying in a new country.

The event was held under the patronage of H.E Dr Chris Nonis, High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the UK. Mr Neville De Silva, the Deputy High Commissioner was also present.

It was a full-house event presided jointly by Mr Mervyn Silva, President of APSL and Mr Mithila Wegapitiya, President of ASLS, in the presence of nearly seventy five students and many members of APSL.

The event started off with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp and a welcome speech by the APSL President,

followed by a talk on the objectives of the event by the ASLS President.



The following presentations were given by members of the APSL, which were carefully selected to cover many important issues relevant to students during their study period in the UK.

- 1. Life in the UK** – Mr Rohan De Alwis (Immediate Past President APSL)
- 2. Cultural Difference** – Prof I M Dharmadasa (Past President APSL)
- 3. Studying and Working in the UK – Regulations** – Ms Ruki Pinidiya (Solicitor)
- 4. When things go wrong** – Dr Anya Perera – (Past Ex Co member APSL)
- 5. Career Development** – Mrs Gayani Senaratne (Membership Secretary APSL)

H.E Dr Nonis in his speech welcomed the new batch of students and gave a glimpse of his study days in the UK and stressed the importance of making use of the time they spent here and do well in their studies to further their career prospects and offer their knowledge and services to the motherland.



The highlight of the event was the "Speed networking event" participated by all present giving everyone an opportunity to get to know each other during a given period of time.

During the Q&A session, Dr Kokila Waidyaratne, Minister for Education at the High Commission, gave a brief account of how the High Commission can assist the Sri Lankan student population in the UK.



The event came to a close with concluding remarks made by Mr Mervyn Silva and Mr Mithila Wegapitya and the vote of thanks given by Mr Malinga Ratwatte, Immediate Past President ASLS.

In conclusion APSL would like to thank H.E Dr Nonis and Mr Neville De Silva for their presence at the event and Mr Herath, Minister for Cultural Affairs at the High Commission for making all the arrangements to hold this event. We also wish to thank the speakers, all members of the APSL and ASLS and finally all the students present at this very successful event.

APSL Awards Scheme - Stage-II

Competition Held in Sri Lanka for Converting Green Energy Ideas into Green Energy Products (GEIs to GEPs)

Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL) held the second successful stage of the "APSL Awards Scheme" with a competition to submit project proposals to convert green energy ideas (GEIs) into green energy products (GEPs). The deadline for the submissions was the 31 December 2012.

Fifteen submissions were received from participants all over Sri Lanka and the

results of the competition were announced at the Annual General Meeting of the APSL held on 27th April 2013 at the City Grange Hotel, London.

The award ceremony was held at the National Science Foundation Auditorium in Sri Lanka on 7th August 2013. Chairman NSF - Prof. W. L. Sumathipala, Director NSF - Anusha Amarasinghe and Director IFS - Prof. C.B. Dissanayake, participated as the Chief Guests. Director IRD - Dr. Athula Sumathipala, Prof. I.M. Dharmadasa, Dr. Indrajit Coomaraswamy and Dr. Chesmal Siriwardhana represented the APSL UK.

The APSL Awards Stage 2 was an island-wide open competition to generate bright ideas/proposals in the clean energy sector, and introduce these selected projects to funding bodies, local industry and the Government Ministries for further development and possible manufacturing and marketing the final products in future. The competition was widely publicised by the Sunday Times, Lankadeepa and Veerakesari papers (Sponsors for publicity in Sri Lanka) and open to all Sri Lankans at home or abroad without any age restrictions.

Four winning ideas were selected for awards, and each winner was given a Rs25000 cash prize, a trophy and an APSL certificate.

The winning project proposals:

- **Mrs W. P. Somawathie, c/o (Mr W.G.Ariyawansa):** Ranrasa Products - Food drying and packaging centres round the country,
- **Mr Lal Wickramasinghe:** Hemp (Pan) Industry Centres – commercialise traditional hemp products,
- **Mr N Geekiyanage:** Durru-Maduru - Mosquito repellent from betel leaves and solar energy,

- **Mr M Hettiarachchi:** Liquid manure from leaves and power generation from sticks.



The three runners-up:

- **Mrs Sumana Dissanayake:** Cottage industry using Vetakolu fibres,
- **University of Moratuwa:** Sustainable city development & bio-gas project,
- **Mr M Siriwardane;** Milk production centres for food and manure production and job creation around the country.

The awards ceremony included a lively discussion between the academics, scientists, entrepreneurs, award winners and the general public on various nationally important green energy related topics and problems faced by small-scale green energy industries.

During the discussions, it became clear that there are three different categories of research: Blue-Sky Research, Applied Research and Knowledge Transfer Research Programmes. The first two categories can take decades of research activities to see any impact on people's lives. However, Sri Lanka's current need is for Knowledge Transfer Research Programmes that would lead to employment opportunities and wealth creation to expedite the rapid economic and social development of the country. This competition was purposely designed and carried out by the APSL-UK to promote Knowledge Transfer Research.

The awards ceremony was organised through joint collaboration between APSL-UK and National Science Foundation (NSF), Institute for Fundamental Science (IFS) and Institute for Research and Development (IRD) of Sri Lanka.

Finally APSL would like to thank Prof Dharmadasa (Project Leader) and his team, the sponsors for publicity, NSF, IRD, IFS and most importantly the participants for the successful completion of the Award Scheme Stage II project.

APSL's Representation at CHOGM

APSL was well represented at the Peoples Forum of CHOGM which was held at the Hotel Chaaya Tranz, Hikkaduwa from 10th to 14th November 2013. Dr Andrew Nayagam and Rohan de Alwis attended the meeting. Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy also attended as a panel member of 'Post 2015 Development Agenda'.



The meeting was attended by representatives from most of the 53 Commonwealth Countries. The theme of the Commonwealth Peoples Forum this year was 'Equitable growth and inclusive development: beyond 2015'. This was the first Commonwealth Peoples Forum (CPF) to take place since the launch of Commonwealth Charter which emphasises the importance of people's views in the furtherance of Commonwealth ideals.

Dr Jemilah Mahmoud (Founder of MERSY Malaysia) delivered the keynote address on 'The role of civil society in

post 2015 development architecture'. Wide ranging discussions took place at different meetings including a fringe meeting on 'Civil Society Approaches to Post-War Reconciliation'.



It was of relevance to us as APSL has been engaged in similar reconciliation work in the UK for the last 3 years. After three days of discussions a consensus document was produced, which would be submitted to the Heads of Government.

APSL 9th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and DINNER DANCE

The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL) held its 9th Annual General Meeting on Saturday 27th April 2013 at the City Grange Hotel, London.

It was a well-attended meeting by members of the Association and after two years as President, Mr Rohan de Alwis stepped down in keeping with the APSL's democratic tradition. Mr Mervyn Silva, Business Development Manager at NHS West and South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Commissioning Support Unit, was elected as the new President.

Mr Leslie Dep, General Secretary, presented the annual report giving in detail the following projects and activities carried out by the Association during the year 2012 to 2013.

Projects:

1. "We Sri Lanka": (Project Leader Mr Gihantha Jayasinghe)
For the third year running, the We Sri

Lanka event was held on the 6th October at Birkbeck College, University of London. This event, with the main objectives of reconciliation and rebuilding of the war affected areas in Sri Lanka, was a success with a wide section of Sri Lankans living in the UK attending. As pledged at the last year's event two computers were handed over this current year to the Jaffna Library donated by Dr Sir Arul Sabaratnam and Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy – two of the executive committee members. In addition £ 350.00 was donated to the war affected children orphanage (GOCF - Jaffna); £ 200.00 to BUDS (UK based charity working in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. With this years proceedings £ 650 has been donated to Mettha Foundation.

2. Research Symposium: (Project Leader Dr Mahesh De Silva)

For the second year, this event was held at the Hilton Sheffield Park Hotel in Sheffield on 17th November 2012, fulfilling our commitment to APSL members living outside London. The symposium consisted of three sessions; Engineering and Built Environment Research, Poster Session and Medical, Biological Sciences and Chemistry research.

3. Award Scheme: (Project Leader Prof I.M Dharmadasa)

Continuing with the projects APSL carry out in Sri Lanka, the second Award Scheme project was conducted this year with a competition for submitting proposals for converting Green Energy Ideas into viable Green Energy Products. The whole objective of this competition was to promote green ideas into viable business ventures. Fifteen proposals were received and four winners received a cash prize of Rs 25,000 a trophy and a plaque. Award ceremony was held at the National Science Foundation (NSF) Sri Lanka in August 2013. The Sri Lankan newspapers Sunday Times, Lankadeepa and Veerakesari sponsored the publicity of the competition in Sri Lanka, as they did the previous year.

4. "Ask the Expert" Series: (Project Leader Dr Andrew Nayagam)

Two events were held under this series:

- "Ask the Lawyer": This event was

held on the 26th January 2013 at the Sri Lanka High Commission with presentations by three Sri Lankan Lawyers practicing in the UK.

- "Ask the Doctor": This event was held on 6th March 2013 at the Sri Lanka High Commission with presentations by four Sri Lankan Doctors working in the UK.
- "Living in the UK": Project Leader Mr. Thushara Madurasinghe: This is an event for educating Sri Lankan children on Eastern and Western values, which is being held on a regular basis at Jethawana Buddhist Vihara, Birmingham. This event was held on the 3rd March 2013, at the above temple with a discussion lead by Mrs Gayani Senaratne, executive committee member APSL.



Newsletter: Editor Dr Chesmal Siriwardane; Graphic Designer Mr. Sudarshan Gunasekera: Two newsletters "The Professional" - Autumn 2012, and Spring 2013 incorporating a new format were published during the year with interesting articles on APSL projects.

APSL would like to thank all the project leaders and their teams for the tremendous work they did to make all the above events a big success. We also wish to thank H.E. Dr. Chris Nonis, for allowing the APSL to hold the Ask the Expert series and events at the Sri Lanka High Commission and also to Mr H.M.K. Herath, First Secretary, Cultural Affairs at the Sri Lanka High Commission and his staff for making all the necessary arrangements.

Other Activities:

1. APSL UAE: In September 2012, the President and the General Secretary attended the launching of APSL UAE in Abu Dhabi under

the patronage of H.E. Sarath Wijesinghe, the Ambassador for Sri Lanka in the United Arab Emirates.

2. A MOU was signed between the APSL and the National Science Foundation (NSF) in Sri Lanka to work together in the development of research studies in Sri Lanka. Prof I M Dharmadasa initiated this agreement with Dr Noble Jayasuriya of NSF.
3. Mr Derrick Brainerd organised a fund raising event at Lancing and the proceedings were donated to the APSL. Out of the £ 1000.00 donated to APSL, £ 500.00 has been donated to Mettha Foundation. (Total of £ 1,150.00 to Mettha Foundation)
4. The Treasurer Mr Thushara Madurasinghe presented the annual statement of Accounts for year 2012/2013 showing a strong financial position of the association.



Office Bearers 2013-14:

At the election of office bearers, the following were elected with several new faces joining the team for year 2103/2014:

President: Mr Mervyn Silva

Vice Presidents: Mr Ranjan Perera, Mr Suraj Wijendra and Dr Mahesh de Silva

General Secretary: Mr Leslie Dep

Membership Secretary: Mrs Gayani Senaratne

Treasurer: Mr Thushara Madurasinghe

Executive Committee Members:

Mr Mohan Siriwardane

Dr Marc Dissanayake

Prof Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran

Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy

Dr Andrew Nayagam

Dr Roger Srivasan

Mr Derrick Brainerd

Dr Thilak Abeyawardane

Dr Asanga Fernando

Dr Chesmal Siriwardane
Dr Athula Sumathipala
Prof I M Dharmadasa
Mr Janath Jayawardane
Mr Lal Jayawardane
Dr Mrs Sadani Wahalatantri
Mrs Nirmalie Peris
Dr Miss Anushini Mututantri
Mr Asaf Bakeer Markar
Mr Rohan De Alwis (IPP)

The newly elected president in his first Address thanked the members for electing him and requested their corporation in discharging his duties in the coming year.

Before the close of the AGM, members were given an opportunity to put forward their ideas and proposals for the coming year. Several members expressed their views in taking forward the association for the benefit of the members and also to achieve the objectives of the association with the projects carried out here in the United Kingdom and in Sri Lanka.

The AGM was followed by a Dinner Dance attended by members, their families and guests. The Chief Guest was the Patron of APSL, the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the United Kingdom, H.E. Dr. Chris Nonis.

He delivered the Keynote Address to a packed audience on "Sri Lanka and its journey forward". After dinner, Dr Nonis spoke with every guest on a 'one to one' basis at their tables.

A grand raffle draw was also held with several valuable prizes donated by the City Grange Hotel, Mr Suraj Wijendra, Dr Thilak Abeyawardane and Mr Leslie Dep.

The evening of music, song and entertainment was provided by Aundre Martinez & FUSION with the Grange

Hotel Chef's providing a mouth-watering authentic Sri Lankan Meal to the guests.

The vote of thanks was given by Mr Leslie Dep, General Secretary. He thanked Mr Nazoomi Azhar, (Head of Finance and Audit of the Grange Hotels Group) and his staff for the support given during the organisation of the event and Ms Ruki Pinidiya for her untiring efforts in selling a large number of tickets for the dinner dance. He also thanked the Mistoria Group, Elegant Travels Ltd, Silverline Tours Colombo, Sri Lankan Airlines, Trico Freight UK Ltd, Nandy & Co Solicitors, Metropolitan Accountants Ltd, Afta Travel, Lotus Aviation and A Lanka

Travel for their sponsorships by way of advertisements to the APSL newsletter "The Professional Spring 2013". Finally Mr Dep thanked Dr Chris Nonis for delivering a very well received keynote address and to all those who attended the event to make it the big success it was and a very enjoyable night to remember.

The new APSL executive committee requests the support of their members and the donors to carry out more charitable work here in the United Kingdom and in Sri Lanka in the coming year. (www.apsl.org.uk)

Future Events

- Ask the Accountant Event - 18th January 2014 at the Sri Lanka High Commission
- We Sri Lanka Forum (Date/Venue TBA)
- 10th AGM Celebrations – 31 May 2014 at City Grange Hotel, London

Contacts:

general.secretary@apsl.co.uk

president@apsl.co.uk



Thank you to all the members who have paid their membership subscriptions which go to supporting the association's activities and its charitable work. If you have not yet paid your subscriptions for the year 2013/14, please do so without delay.