



# THE PROFESSIONAL

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## Leader Comment

Spring! – a season soon to be marked by Kavun, Kokis, Kiribath, and crocus. A season, also, of renewal and growth, of new life springing out of old stock.

Having just completed four successful years, your association, too, is making ambitious plans to go for growth. These will be laid before you at the Annual General Meeting, scheduled for Saturday, April 21. To breathe new life into the association, ways of

engaging the energies and enthusiasms of many more members will be also be up for discussion. Do please come, have your say and help shape our future. Rohan de Alwis, founder-Secretary of the Association and a successful lawyer and businessman, has already opened batting in this regard. His contribution, 'Looking Back to Look to the Future', is on our website [www.apsl.org.uk](http://www.apsl.org.uk) and makes for challenging reading.

Also on the website, Professor I M Dharmadasa reports on the work he did in Sri Lanka recently whilst taking a well-deserved break from the demands of his important role as Professor of Electronic Materials and Devices at Sheffield Hallam University. A world-renowned authority on solar energy, Dharme', as he is known to his friends – which is *all* of us (the man couldn't make an enemy even if he tried!), provides a telling example of how each of us can unfussily, yet effectively, put into practice our aim as Sri Lankan professionals to work for the ultimate benefit of our motherland.

We managers (Rohan and Dharme' excepted) often

think of ourselves as indispensable, don't we?

Well, read on.

Recently, a large corporation hired several cannibals to increase their diversity.

"You're all part of our team now," said the Human Resources rep during their induction. "You get all the usual benefits, including canteen facilities, but please don't eat the employees."

Some weeks later, their boss remarked, "I'm impressed, you're all working very hard, there's been a marked improvement in corporate productivity. However, our secretary has gone missing. You haven't eaten her, have you?"

The cannibals all shook their heads. "Naaaah!", they said with one voice.

After the boss left, the chief cannibal turned on his mates. "You idiots!", he said, "for weeks, we've been eating managers and no-one noticed. But NOOOooo, now you had to go and eat the one person who actually does something around here!!!"

**Happy National New Year and happy Easter!**

## The AGM

The 3rd Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held on Saturday 21st April at the popular venue of Holiday Inn, Brentford Lock, High Street, Brentford, Middlesex. TW8 8JZ.

In addition to the elections for the Management Committee, there will also be a ballot on the proposed amendments to the constitution. One of the key proposals is changes to membership which concerns all of us.

**Make sure to be there and exercise your ballot!**

## Events calendar

- April 21: Annual General Meeting, Holiday Inn, Brentford Lock, Middlesex.
- 26 May: The Spring Event Salford University, Manchester.

## Association address

The General Secretary  
APSL Secretariat  
85 Marlborough Road,  
Beeston  
Nottingham  
NG9 2HL

Phone: 0115 967 8097  
Mobile: 07967 688971  
Email: [mervyn.silva@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mervyn.silva@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Thank you Leslie



After 3 years at the helm our Founder President Mr Leslie Gunaratne has indicated his wish to retire at the forthcoming AGM. On behalf of all the members we wish to thank Leslie for all his hard work in steering the Association through its infancy and wish him all the best in his future endeavours!

## Looking back..... to look to the FUTURE: We are 4 years old....!!

By Rohan de Alwis

On 29 February 2003, the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK ("APSL UK") was formed. We got together at the Prince of Ceylon Restaurant in Hendon, North West London under the patronage of the then High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the UK, H.E. Faisz Musthapa PC.

At this meeting, we not only had the "founder" members who did all the 'behind the scenes' work having exploratory meetings and looking for prospective members, but also those new members who had joined that day. I was one of them. The 'founder' members included Mr Leslie Gunaratne, Mr Sarath Wijesinghe, Dr Marc Ranjith Dissanayake, Dr Keerthi Devendra, Prof I.M. Dharmadasa. I hope I have not left out any other founder members, but that is why I have said "included" in the previous paragraph..!

I was in fact contacted by Mr Sarath Wijesinghe about three

days before the meeting at the Prince of Ceylon to join the soon to be formed association, and my task was to ensure we put in place an administrative system in place for the good long term future that was awaiting the new Association. Sarath had previously got to know me from my involvement with the Association of Sri Lankan Lawyers in the UK. This all meant I was to be the General Secretary, but at the meeting there had to be consensus as many of the "founder" members, as well as those attending for the first time, who did not know me. I was in principle happy to get involved in a truly Sri Lankan Association which was open to all professionals across the board, and more importantly this was to be an association of all Sri Lankans, where we were to give priority to merit and efficiency of our members and therefore we did not care whether our members were Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays or whether they were from "Down South", "Up Country" or even "cross country"...!! Nor were we going to respect any member on the basis he was a Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim or Athe-

ist. Whilst we are what we are, we must at all times be aware of how deep the petty divisions have affected us. Sri Lanka no doubt had its issues in the past, in fact more than 2-5 to 50 years ago. Today, it is genuinely a secular state, like Turkey and the UK. Whilst the UK is a Christian country and Turkey is an Islamic Republic, in both countries religious and ethnic minorities can live in equal status. It is equally true, that ethnic, race and religious issues/conflicts that has been with the human race since we all became civilised will never be eradicated, And if anybody is thinking they can eradicate such in equalities, then they are not living in the real world. **Sri Lanka is no different.** (continued)

To read these articles in full, please visit our website [www.apsl.org.uk](http://www.apsl.org.uk) and go to **Spring Newsletter**

## The Autumn Event



The Vision Lanka & APSL Autumn Event 2006 - took place at the Zoom Centre, Kodak Zoom Centre, Harrow, Middlesex, on Saturday, 18<sup>th</sup> November. It was very well attended (over 130 tickets had been sold) and it was also very well organised and managed.

Proceedings opened with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp by Leslie Gunaratne (President), Prof I M Dharmadasa and Dr Andrew Nayagam (Vice-presidents) and Mervyn Silva (General Secretary) of the Association together with founder members Dr. Marc Dissanayake, Dr Keerthi Devendra and Mr Piyatissa Liyanage. This was followed by the singing of the Sri Lankan National Anthem. In welcoming those present, Dr Dissanayake thanked the ICICI Bank for sponsoring the event.

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## Sarath for BASL presidency

Sarath Wijesinghe, the former Senior Vice President of APSL is due to stand for the Presidency of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) for the year 2008.



Currently the Chairman of the Consumer Affairs Authority in Sri Lanka, Sarath practiced as a solicitor, advocate in the UK after having obtained the post graduate degree in the University of London, College of the London University of International Law, International Relations and International Institutions.

**Good Luck Sarath!**

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## Destination Salford

APSL Spring Event 2007, our next big event for members, family and friends will be held on 26th May at Salford University, Manchester.

Salford University has a number of Sri Lankans in key roles.

Our main contact, Prof. Terrence Fernando, Director of the Future Workspaces Research Centre Scientific Director of the Think Lab is working with us closely in ensuring that that it will be a memorable event.

Guided tours including to the Virtual Environment 'Think Lab'

[www.avp.nicve.salford.ac.uk](http://www.avp.nicve.salford.ac.uk)

- Aeronautical Engineering labs with flight simulators, wind tunnels and pilot training facilities,
- Superb play grounds and plenty of activities to entertain the kids,
- Parallel tracks with leading speakers,
- Dinner and dance are some of the activities being planned.

If you wish you could arrive early and enjoy the University's modern leisure facilities that include, swimming, sauna and steam rooms.

Better still, if you haven't seen much of the north of England, why not make a weekend of it by taking advantage of the bank holiday Monday and booking yourself into one of the many excellent hotels in the area?

Manchester has many attractions to the visitor. If you feel adventurous, scenic Lake District and the cities of Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield are just an hour's drive from waiting for you to be discovered during your northern weekend.