Editorial

The last quarter of 2017 was filled with activities and the culmination of a very successful year for the SAARC Cultural Centre. The last quarter commenced with the Meeting of the Governing Board of the SAARC Cultural Centre who has supported us in all our activities and enabled us to conduct our events successfully. The 7th Annual SAARC Film Festival and Award Ceremony concluded successfully in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November, in a glamorous event participated by the Cinema lovers of Sri Lanka. This was followed by the SAARC Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance and the SAARC Exhibition and Workshop on Handicrafts held at the Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

A wonderful collection of paintings was submitted by the school children of Sri Lanka for the Annual SAARC Non-Violence Day Art Competition. Schools from all nine provinces of Sri Lanka submitted Paintings. The Award Ceremony was held in conjunction with the SAARC Charter Day on 8th December which concluded our activities for 2017.

In 2017, SAARC Cultural Centre was able to highlight South Asian Culture in all its forms through art, paintings, dance festivals, handicrafts exhibitions, film festivals and various forms of visual and performing arts, bringing the South Asian Region closer together.

News in Highlight...

Editorial

SAARC Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance

Ninth Governing Board Meeting of the SAARC Cultural Centre

SAARC Film Festival

SAARC Exhibition and Workshop on Handicraft

SAARC Non-Violence Day Art Competition for School Children

SAARC Charter Day
The SAARC Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance 2017 was held from the 30th November to 3rd December 2017 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Official Nominations for participation was received from the host Member State of Bangladesh and the Member States of Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The Programme was a true display of cultural integration, understanding and harmony. The Inauguration Ceremony was held under the auspices of the Chief Guest, Mr. Md. Ibraheem Hosein Khan, the Secretary to the Minister of Cultural Affairs in Bangladesh. Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre and Mr. Liaquat Ali Lucky, the Director General of the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy were Special Guests at this occasion. The Inaugural Ceremony and the Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance...
took place at the Nandanmoncho open air venue and the entire area was transformed for the evening. A traditional Lathi Khela dance of Bangladesh took place prior to the inauguration. The Inauguration itself was spectacular with a joyous and festive atmosphere; the open-air venue added a different dimension to the occasion. More than 3,000 people participated at the Inauguration Ceremony, which included men, women, the young and old from all walks of life, enjoying the Traditional Dance of the SAARC Region.

The primary aim of the Workshop component of the Programme was to create something unique and diverse but which is inherently familiar. To create something beautiful which the dancers could take back to their own countries and to share that artistic experience through dance and music. Every morning, the dancers would gather and use their creativity, knowledge and technique to choreograph an entirely new dance that incorporated all the main features of each traditional dance from the respective Member State.

The Chief Guest for the Closing Ceremony, the Hon. Minister for Cultural Affairs Mr. Asaduzzaman Noor, attended the Ceremony on the 3rd December held
at the National Theatre of Bangladesh. The highlight of the Closing Ceremony was the ‘Combination Dance’ which the participants had worked so tirelessly to create. It was particularly poignant as it enabled the audience to share the vibrant atmosphere and harmony felt amongst the participants and well-wishers, as they continued to share their experiences and dance steps. It was a truly spectacular event, one which epitomized the underlying theme of “Unity Within Diversity”, and building bridges of friendship and understanding through the medium of dance.

Deputy Director Programmes of SCC, Kishani Jayasinghe - Wijayasekara being invited to sing by the Director General of the Shilpakala Academy, Mr. Liaquat Ali Lucky

Seated from left to right
Mr. K. K. Gunathilaka Administrative Officer, SCC, Ms. Surayya Akhtar Jahan, Cultural Advisor (Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs Bangladesh), Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SCC, Mr. Liaquat Ali Lucky, Director General, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Kishani Jayasinghe - Wijayasekara, Deputy Director - Programmes, SCC, Mr. Mashud Summon, Asst. Director, Dept. of Drama & Film at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy

Artistes perform traditional ‘Lathi Khela’ at the Inauguration Ceremony

Programme Assistant Nadarajah Harishnath, SCC receiving a souvenir from the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh
The SAARC Cultural Centre hosted the Ninth Meeting of its Governing Board on 3rd and 4th October, 2017 at the Mount Lavinia Hotel, Sri Lanka. The meeting was convened by Mr. Intisar Ahmad Sulehry of Pakistan, concluding the tenure of Pakistan as the chairperson of the Governing Board and handed the Chair to Sri Lanka for the next two years. Mr. D. Swarnapala, Secretary to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Wayamaba Development and Cultural Affairs assumed his duties as the Chairperson of the Governing Board. Other distinguished members who represented the SAARC Member States at the Governing Board Meeting were:

1. Mr. Mohammad Shafiq Ahmadzai, Secretary to the Minister of Information and Culture in Afghanistan.
2. Mr. Syed Md. Matlubur Rahman, Additional Secretary Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Bangladesh.
3. Mr. Karma Weezir, Director General of the Department of Culture in Bhutan.
4. Ms. Alka Sharma, Under Secretary of International Cultural Relations of the Ministry of Culture in India.
8. Mr. Intisar Ahmad Sulehry, the Press Attaché of the High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka.
9. Mr. D. Swarnapala, Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Wayamaba Development and Cultural Affairs.
10. Ms. T.P. Dharmasena, Director of the SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka.
11. Mr. M.H.M.N. Bandara, Director Education, Security and Culture of the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu.
12. Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre.

After reviewing the progress of activities for 2017, the Programmes of the SAARC Cultural Centre for 2018 was unanimously approved by the Governing Board portraying their confidence, belief and support in the activities of the SCC.
The 7th Annual SAARC Film Festival was held at the National Film Corporation Cinema Hall in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 21st to 25th November 2017. This year Feature Films, Short Films and Master Films (a Feature Film by a Master Film Maker) were shared with the Cinema lovers of Sri Lanka. The SAARC Cultural Centre invited Dr. Anne Demy-Geroe of Australia, Dr. Antonio Costa Valente of Portugal and Mr. Amir Masoud Soheili of Iran as Jury Members to select the winners of the SAARC Film Awards for 2017. The Jury Members also conducted a Film Workshop on “International Film Festivals and Cinema Education Opportunities in Asia, Europe and the Asia Pacific Region” providing valuable knowledge to an appreciative audience.
Mrs. Rosy Senanayake, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, graced the Award Ceremony as the Guest of Honour. Dignitaries from the High Commissions and Embassies of SAARC Member States in Sri Lanka, Film personalities from the nominated films and film professionals of Sri Lanka were part of this glamorous occasion. The SAARC Award for the Best...
Feature Film and Best Director was awarded to “Let Her Cry” from Sri Lanka by Asoka Handagama and Best Actress was awarded to Aishath Rishmy from Maldives for the film “Vishka”. The Best Actor was awarded to an ensemble of the film “Frangipani” from Sri Lanka. This 5-day gala event was a beautiful reflection of the visual culture of the SAARC Region providing an enjoyable insight to the culture of the SAARC Countries.
Afghanistan Charge D’Affaires to Sri Lanka, Mr. Munir Ghiasy accepting the Award for the Best Cinematographer for “The Bird was not the Bird” on behalf of Ahmad Zia Arash from Mrs. Rosy Senanayake, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

The film “Let her cry” bagged the award for the Best Feature Film and the Best Director - The Award was presented by Dhanushka Gunuthilake.

Winner of the Award for Best Actor

Bhoomi Harendran sharing a few words

Ms. Rajashree Behera, Director of the Indian Cultural Centre with the Awards won by India

Ms. Aishath Rishmy receiving the Best Actress Award from the Internationally acclaimed cinematographer, Mr. M. D Mahindapala

Ms. Dhana Kumari Joshi receiving the Best Editor Award on behalf of Bhupendra Adhikari of Nepal for the Movie “Dying Candle” from Mr. Sitendra Senaratne, the Chairman, National Film Corporation, Sri Lanka.

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Ms. Aishath Rishmy receiving the Best Actress Award from the Internationally acclaimed cinematographer, Mr. M. D Mahindapala

Swaran Mallawarachchi, Actress of the Movie “Let her cry” receiving the award for the Best Director on behalf of Asoka Handegama from Internationally acclaimed Sri Lankan Film director and Producer Inoka Sathyanganie

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The SAARC Exhibition and Workshop on Handicraft 2017 was organised in collaboration with the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and held in Dhaka, Bangladesh from the 30th November to the 3rd December 2017. The Governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka nominated teams of skilled Artisans - each individual an expert in his/her own individual craft - to participate in the SAARC Exhibition and Workshop on Handicrafts 2017. The opening of the Handicraft Exhibition took place on the 30th November at the Jataya Chitrasala Plaza and enjoyed a steady stream of visitors until the closing of the Exhibition on the 3rd December. There were handicrafts made of wood, metal, glass, coir,
cork, cloth, stones, etc, which displayed a wide range of talent, skill and knowledge. This knowledge was especially valuable to the participants during the Workshop component of the Programme. There were extensive discussions and exchange of know-how and techniques amongst the delegates, as they shared their experiences and skills of their crafts in various parts of the South Asian Region.
The Non-Violence Day Art Competition for students across the island was held for the sixth consecutive year. The competition was held under two categories with the themes “Non-Violence is goodwill towards all life” for the Junior Category and “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind” for the Senior Category. The aim was to create awareness and inspire peace, tolerance, non-discrimination, coexistence and respect for lives among the students. Students from all 9 provinces of Sri Lanka participated in the competition with Ilma International Girl’s school of Colombo submitting the most number of paintings followed by Kadayamottai Muslim Central collage, Madurankuliya of Putlam District winning the second place and Yashodara Girl’s College in Colombo taking the third place. The Award Ceremony was held at Hotel Galadari to coincide with the SAARC Charter Day on 8th December 2017.

**JUNIOR CATEGORY: “NON - VIOLENCE IS GOODWILL TOWARD ALL LIFE.”**

**SENIOR CATEGORY: “AN EYE FOR AN EYE MAKES THE WHOLE WORLD BLIND.”**

Senior 1st place
W. Dhammi Aloka Gunasinghe,
Gankanda National School, Ratnapura District receiving her cheque
Junior 1st place winner
K.T. D. Nipuna Dihars
of Mathugama Ananda
Shastrala National School,
Mathugama, Kalutara
district receiving the certificate

Senior 2nd place winner
A. G. Dinuka Madushan
Siriwimala, Kadugannawa National School, Kandy District receiving the certificate

Junior 2nd place winner
K.M. Anjuli Senethya of Nalanda Girl’s College, Minuwangoda, receiving her cheque

Senior 3rd place winner
Yogaraththinam Vanushiyam, Jaffna Central College, Jaffna District receiving his cheque

3rd place Junior Category winner D.M. Hansitha Disanayake, Badulla Dharmadutha National School, Badulla District receiving the certificate
The SAARC Cultural Centre celebrated the thirty-third SAARC Charter Day at the hotel Galadari on 8th December 2017 with the attendance of dignitaries from the High Commissions and Embassies of the SAARC Member States, SAARC Observer States and the Diplomatic Corps in Sri Lanka. Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam, Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Ms. Yasoja Gunasekara, Director General of SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Munir Ghiasy from the Embassy of Afghanistan, Ms. Maleka Parveen from the High Commission of Bangladesh, Mr. Niteen Subhash Yeola from the High Commission of India, Ms. Dhana Kumari Joshi from the Embassy of Nepal, Ms. Umaira Mohamed from the Embassy of Maldives and Mr. Intisar Ahmed Sulehry from the High Commission of Pakistan participated as Guests of Honour. Representatives from the SAARC Observer States of Australia and Iran joined the celebration. Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre warmly welcomed the gathering and the messages for the SAARC Charter Day celebrations from H.E. the President of Sri Lanka, Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Hon. Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka and H.E. the Secretary General of the SAARC Secretariat were read out to the dignitaries invited at the occasion. Saraswathi Abhinandana Pooja dance by the State Dance Troup of the Cultural Department of Sri Lanka entertained this august gathering.
Director welcoming the Chief Guest Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam the Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka

Welcome address by the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre

Director and Deputy Directors welcoming the representative from the Pakistan High Commission in Sri Lanka

Representatives from Australian High Commission, Bangladesh High Commission and Embassy of Maldives

Director welcoming the representative from Iran

Director, SCC with the delegates from India and Pakistan

Deputy Director Programmes reading the message from the President of Sri Lanka

Ms. Yasoja Gunasekera, Senior Director General of SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka and Ms. Dhana Kumari Joshi from the Embassy of Nepal

Mr. Thusira Malawwethantri, Director General, Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, Mr. Wasantha Kotuwella, Director, SCC and Mr. Lionel Fernando Former Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka

Director, SCC with the staff members of SAARC Cultural Centre

Culture Specialist - Programmes, Dr. Soumya Manjunath Chavan, SCC reading the message from the SAARC Secretary General

SAARC Cultural Centre staff welcoming the representative from the Indonesian Embassy in Sri Lanka, Mr. Dwatmaji Hanomanresi
Announcements

- SAARC Literary Award and Ceremony in Sri Lanka
- SAARC International Women’s Day in Sri Lanka
- SAARC Culture Capital in Bhutan

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Culture Quote

“Cinema’s characteristic forte is its ability to capture and communicate the intimacies of the human mind”

Satyajit Ray (2nd May 1921 – 23rd April 1992)
Indian filmmaker and author, widely regarded as one of the greatest filmmakers of the 20th century Asia

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