



SAARC Cultural Centre NEWSLETTER

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SAARC International Women's Day

In 2018, The SAARC Cultural Centre celebrated the SAARC International Women's Day in collaboration with the Department of Cultural Affairs in Sri Lanka on the 8th of March 2018, at the Auditorium of the District Secretariat in Kalutara. "A Mother's Song: An aesthetic journey through South Asia in search of the Rhythms of love" was the SAARC title on Women's Day and the program was designed to communicate solutions to societal evils through the medium of music and song. The auditorium



The music and the singers entralling the audience

was filled to its maximum capacity with over 650 ladies, comprising of mothers, daughters, grand mothers from all walks of life and age groups. It was a day of celebration for women but also a strong reminder that women have the power to change the world.



Traditional drummers & dancers ceremonially leading the Chief Guest & Guests of Honor to the Auditorium



Chief Guest Ms. Y. Gunasekara Senior Director General of the SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka accompanied by Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director SAARC Cultural Centre & Mr. Intisar Sulehri of Pakistan High Commission

Ms. Yasoja Gunasekara, the Senior Director General of the SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka was the Chief Guest at this occasion. Mr. Munir Ghiasy, the Charge d' Affairs from the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Sri Lanka and Mr. Intisar Sulehri, the Press Attaché from the High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka represented the SAARC Member States. The welcome speech was delivered by Mr. U.D.C. Jayalal, the District Secretary for Kalutara. Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre and Ms. Yasoja Gunasekara,

the Senior Director General of the SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka addressed the gathering with insightful messages to women, uplifting the moral of the audience and enthusiastically welcomed by all participants.

Ms. Anusha Gokula Fernando, the Director of the Department of Cultural Affairs in Sri Lanka conducted "A Mother's Song: An aesthetic journey through South Asia in search of the Rhythms of love" by communicating current social problems faced by women and providing solutions through traditional culture using songs



A part of the audience gathered to Celebrate the Women's Day



Ms. Anusha Gokula Fernando Director of the Department of Culture & Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella Director SAARC Cultural Centre lighting the ceremonial lamp



Chief Guest Ms. Gunasekara of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sri Lanka, Guests of Honor Ms. Fernando, Director Department of Culture, Mr. U.D.C. Jayalal District Secretary Kalutara with Ms. Bindu Urugodawatte Deputy Director Research and Dr. Soumya M. Chavan Culture Specialist Programmes of the SAARC Cultural Centre



Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella delivering his insightful speech



Welcome address by the District Secretary Mr. U.D.C. Jayalal

and music. It was an enjoyable and educational experience, which opened the eyes of the audience and urged them to take a break away from the rat race of life and actually think about love, happiness and family. Ms. Fernando used songs familiar to all and payed particular attention to the words and messages brought out through the songs. She highlighted the the fact that in this age of information there isn't much difference between rural and urban communities and for the women to be aware, in this rapidly changing world to pay attention to the traditions. Ms. Fernando was able to get the audience to re-evaluate our cultural norms and values, intangible heritage, traditions, customs and how

to use it in the modern day. The SAARC International Women's Day 2018 concluded with the delivery of vote of thanks by Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe-Wijayasekara, Deputy Director Programmes of the SAARC Cultural Centre.



The melodius voices of this duo was enjoyed by all



Ms. Anusha Gokula Fernando taking the audience through the journey of "A mother's song"



Mr. Munir Ghiasy of the Embassy of Afghanistan with Mr. Intisar Sulehry of Pakistan & Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella of the SAARC Cultural Centre



Deputy Director Programmes of the SAARC Cultural Centre Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe-Wijayasekara delivering the vote of thanks



A section of the audience

Editorial

The Year 2018 dawned for the SAARC Cultural Centre with the blessings of the 54th Programming Committee approving our activities for the year. The confidence, encouragement and support of the Member States towards the activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre uplifted our moral and motivation, increased our enthusiasm to forge ahead at full speed.

The first quarter of 2018 was very busy for the SAARC Cultural Centre with the SAARC Literary Award on 26th January in Galle, Sri Lanka; Preparatory Meeting for SAARC Culture Capital 2018 in (13th to 14th) February in Bhutan; SAARC International Women's Day celebrations on 8th March in Kalutara, Sri Lanka. The new Senior Director General of the SAARC Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka, Ms. Yasoja Gunasekara made a courtesy visit to the SAARC Cultural Centre.

The newest member of our staff, the Culture Specialist for Programmes Dr. Soumya Manjunath Chavan has become a valuable contributor to the SAARC Cultural Centre. The nitty gritty of planning our events and activities kept us chained to our computers but the support of the team at the SAARC Cultural Centre enabled us to carry out our planning quickly and effectively.

The next quarter is going to be eventful and interesting with the 8th annual SAARC Film Festival to be held in Sri Lanka, Inauguration of the SAARC Culture Capital in Thimphu, Bhutan and SAARC Handicraft Exhibition and Workshop in Bhutan in May/June. We look forward to carrying out our Cultural activities and hope you enjoy them as much as we do in organizing them.

- Editors



Mr. Najibullah Manalai of Afghanistan receiving the first SAARC Literary Award from the Chief-Guest Hon. Mangala Samaraweera, Minister of Finance & Mass Media with Mr. Hemaka De Alwis Sponsor of the Galle Literary Festival.



SAARC Literary Award and Ceremony 2018

26th January 2018 at the World Heritage City of Galle

South Asia is the home for some of the World's best-known Epics, Stories and Poems which created an integral part of culture of the Region for centuries. The culture of South Asia is brightened by its literature and literature in turn has enriched song, dance, handicraft, and all other aspects of culture. Literature reflects culture and the norms of the society. Contributions of literature to the society is immense - it relaxes, enchants and enrich the minds, takes the reader to a different world away from problems and stress. Therefore, the SAARC Cultural Centre will honour a literary figure of the Region through the SAARC Literary Award.



Mr. Hemaka De Alwis, Chairman of Fairway Holdings the sponsor of Galle Literary Festival accompanying the Chief Guest, Hon. Mangala Samaraweera Minister of Finance & Mass Media



The SAARC Literary Award



Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella Director SAARC Cultural Centre accompanying Mr. Manalai to the Award Ceremony



Literary enthusiasts & writers



Director SAARC Cultural Centre Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella with Mr. Intisar Sulehry of Pakistan High Commission

The SAARC Literary Award was approved by the 9th Governing Board and the 54th Programming Committee Meeting of the SAARC. The SAARC Literary Award was initiated to recognize the key literary persons of the Region to promote South Asian literature and writers, to review new trends in writing and to understand new



A section of the audience at the SAARC Literary Award



Mr. Najibullah Manalai with Ms. Tenzin Yangchen (Bhutan) & Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella Director SAARC Cultural Centre



Chief Guest Hon. Mangala Samaraweera with other Guests of Honor

areas of literature in the Regional and International arenas. The SAARC Literary Award will be presented alphabetically to a writer from each Member State, commencing with Afghanistan for 2018.

The SAARC Literary Award Ceremony was held in conjunction with the Galle Literary Festival, the largest International Literary Festival held in Sri Lanka. SAARC Literary Award ceremony was held at the World Heritage City of Galle on 26th January 2018. Hon. Mangala Samaraweera, the Minister of Finance and Mass Media, was the Chief Guest at the event. The inaugural SAARC Literary Award was awarded to Mr. Najibullah Manalai from

Afghanistan by the Minister of Finance and Mass Media, Hon. Mangala Samaraweera and Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre amidst a gathering of writers of international calibre and literary enthusiasts of Sri Lanka.

The first ever SAARC Literary Award winner, Mr. Najibullah Manalai was nominated by the Honoured Member of Afghanistan. Mr. Manalai is a versatile writer of poetry, narrative fiction, newspaper columnist, translator and a political analyst. He is multilingual and he writes in Pashto, Dari (Farsi), French and English and he brings western philosophy to Afghan readers in their own language and writes

to western audiences regarding oriental mysticism, bringing both cultures closer together through the language of literature. Mr. Manalai is an avid supporter and a promoter of Afghan literature within Afghanistan and created the “Golden Reed Prize” an annual literary award presented to a literary personality in Afghanistan, thereby promoting literature and supporting and giving recognition to other writers. During the last decade, Mr. Manalai has worked tirelessly to promote reading in Afghanistan not only through his own publishing but with promotion of other writers and authors, publishing of audio books to bring literature to those who cannot read.



Ms. Anoja Wijesekara, former Sri Lankan ambassador to Indonesia in discussion with Mr. Manalai



Hon. Mangala Samaraweera, Minister of Finance and Mass Media, Hon. Wijepala Hettiarachchi Member of Parliament, Mr. Hemaka De Alwis Chairman Fairway Holdings, Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella Director SAARC Cultural Centre and Mr. Geoffrey Dobbs founder of the Galle Literary Festival



Mr. Intisar Sulehry of the Pakistan High Commission with Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella & Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe-Wijayasekara of the SAARC Cultural Centre



Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe-Wijayasekara of the SAARC Cultural Centre with Mr. Manalai



Mr. Intisar Sulehry with the other important guests

The Preparatory Meeting of THE SAARC CULTURE CAPITAL 2018 in Bhutan

12th - 13th February in Thimphu, Bhutan



The Preparatory Meeting

The Government of Bhutan invited the SAARC Cultural Centre to attend a preparatory meeting to plan the SAARC Culture Capital in Bhutan. The meeting was held from 12th to 13th February in Thimphu, Bhutan. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Karma Weezir, the Director General of the Department of Culture in Bhutan and the SAARC Cultural Centre was represented by Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director and Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe-Wijayasekara Deputy Director Programmes.

Mr. Dorji Norbu, Director General of the National Library and Archives, Mr. Khenpo Phuntsho Tashi, Director of the National Museum, Mr. Kunzang Thinley, Principal of the Royal Academy of Performing Arts, Ms. Utsha Gurung Conservator of the Division for Cultural Properties, Ms. Kuenzang Choden, Officiating Chief Curator of the National Textile Museum, Mr.

Karma T. Wangchuck, Chief Programme Officer of the Royal Privy Council, Ms. Lhamchu, Driglam Officer of the Driglam (Etiquette) Division of the Department of Culture, Mr. Kunzang Delek, Chief Archivist of the National Library and Archives, Ms. Nagtsho Dorji, Chief Architect of the Division for Conservation of Heritage Sites, Ms. Tshering Choki, Archivist of the National Library and Archives, and Mr. Sonam Tenzin, Cultural Officer of the Division for Conservation of Heritage Sites participated in the discussion.

Discussions were held regarding the locations for the SAARC Culture Capital and different venues for the various events of the Culture Capital. The location, duration and activities of the Inauguration, Closing Ceremony and other activities were discussed at length and the suggested locations visited to understand the size and

ambience. The programmes, events, functions and activities of the SAARC Cultural Capital 2018 were deliberated and an expert working group was established to prepare the list of programmes such as Food Festivals, Nature Walks, Art Exhibitions, Educational Seminars, Musical Events, Dance Festivals, Film Screenings, Costume Parades, Talent Shows, Competitions for Children etc., all of which will showcase the culture and the traditions of South Asian Region and Bhutan in particular.

The locations for events discussed included the Clock Tower, the Buddha Point, the Textile and Weaving Museum, the Craft Bazar, the Takin Zoo, Changangkha Lhakhang Temple and other historical and cultural monuments to be associated with the Culture Capital. The Inauguration Ceremony will be held on the 31st of May 2018 in Thimphu.

Visit of the Senior Director General of SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sri Lanka, to the SAARC Cultural Centre



Senior Director General Ms. Y. Gunasekara with Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella in discussion



Mr. Kotuwella with Mr. Jude Chandimal Research Officer at the SAARC Division of Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella introducing the team of SAARC Cultural Centre to Ms. Gunasekara



Director Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella with Ms. Gunasekara Senior Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sri Lanka

Ms. Yasoja Gunasekara, the Senior Director General of the SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a courtesy call to the SAARC Cultural Centre with Ms. Buddhi Herath and Ms. Nuwanthi Jayasuriya (Assistant Directors) and Mr. Jude Chandimal (Research Officer). Ms. Gunasekara and her team were warmly welcomed by the Director of the SAARC Cultural

Centre, Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella and held a brief discussion on the activities of the centre.

A short movie regarding the progress of construction of the proposed SAARC Cultural Centre at Nawimana, Matara and a presentation of the activities of 2017 and 2018 was shared with Ms. Gunasekara. Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe-Wijayasekara,

Deputy Director Programme and Ms. Bindu Urugodawatte, Deputy Director Research further elaborated on the activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre during the lively discussion which followed. Ms. Gunasekara and her team were presented with publications of the SAARC Cultural Centre at the conclusion of the discussion.



Mr. Kalum Bandara (Finance Officer SAARC Cultural Centre), Mr. Jude Chandimal (Research Officer Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Ms. Nuwanthi Jayasuriya (Assistant Director Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Ms. Buddhi Herath (Assistant Director Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Dr. Soumya Chavan (Culture Specialist Programmes SCC)



Ms. Gunasekara in discussion with Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe-Wijayasekara and Ms. Bindu Urugodawatte Deputy Directors of the SCC

Announcements



8th SAARC Film Festival

The 8th Annual SAARC Film Festival will be held from 22nd to 27th May 2018 at the National Film Corporation Cinema Hall in Sri Lanka. A wonderful opportunity to understand the South Asian culture through the medium of Film. Admission is Free and all are welcome.



SAARC Seminar on Hindu Cultural Trails

Call For Papers (CFP) for the Seminar on "Hindu Cultural Trails Celebration of a Timeless Tradition - Gods and Goddesses, Pilgrims and Prayers, Temples and Texts" is available at our website. Deadline for the submission of abstracts is 30th May 2018.



SAARC Research Grant on Hindu Cultural Trails

Call for proposals for the SAARC Research Grant for further Research on Hindu Cultural Trails is available at our website. This is an opportunity to carryout research on Tangible, Intangible or Popular Cultural aspect of Hinduism for the academics and scholars of the Region.



SAARC Culture Capital

The Inauguration of the SAARC Cultural Capital 2018 will be held in Thimphu, Bhutan on 31st May 2018. A delightful array of events are planned to highlight culture of South Asia.



SAARC Handicraft Exhibition & Workshop

The SAARC Handicraft Exhibition & Workshop will be held in conjunction with the SAARC Culture Capital in Thimphu, Bhutan on 31st May to 1st June 2018



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