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SAARC NEWSLETTER

Editorial

This issue of the newsletter brings the latest news on some of the activities conducted by the Centre during the last quarter of 2015. As always, the SAARC Cultural Centre aims to bring together the peoples of the SAARC Region, through culture. The Centre, takes this opportunity to wish all its readers a Happy New Year, and hopes to have many programmes that would reach out to all in the region, as well as globally.

The SAARC Cultural Centre Governing Board meeting was held in September 2015, and this was an important date in our calendar as programmes for the year 2016 are discussed at the meeting. The SAARC Artist Camp was a very special programme as it was held in Bamiyan, which had been declared as the SAARC Cultural Capital for the year 2015. The Artist Camp was successful not only because of participation from most of the SAARC countries, but also because it was held in Bamiyan, amidst other cultural programmes to celebrate Bamiyan being declared as the SAARC Cultural Capital for the year 2015. SAARC Non Violence Day was commemorated on the 2nd of October with a lecture for visiting journalists from South Asia. The lecture was delivered by Kalakeeerthi Dr Edwin Ariyadasa. An award winning film from Afghanistan, titled Osama was screened in November and was open to the public. This event was organized in collaboration with the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In an attempt to encourage young photographers, the SAARC Photographic Competition was held, and the best entries were shortlisted and winners selected. The theme for the competition was " World Heritage Sites in South Asia". The last programme for the year 2015, was the SAARC Charter Day Celebrations, which took place on the 8th of December 2015, at Arcade Independence Square. We do hope you enjoy reading this issue of our newsletter, and do keep informed of upcoming programmes by visiting our newly designed website, (www.saarcculture.org) as well as follow us on facebook. Let us work together in safeguarding the cultures of South Asia.



Governing Board Members of the SAARC Cultural Centre; from left to right (seated) Mr. Bharat Mani Subedi (Joint Secretary/Nepal), Hon. Mr. Sayed Mossadeq Khalili (Deputy Minister/ MOC, Afghanistan), Mr. M. H. M. N. Bandara (Director (ESC) SAARC Secretariat), Mr. Muhammad Daud Ehtisham, (Press Attaché, High Commission of Pakistan Chairperson) Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella (Director/SAARC Cultural Centre), Mr. M. A. K. Girihagama (DG SAARC/ MFA Sri Lanka) Ms. Mahbuba Moshqur (Addl. Secretary/ MCA/ Bangladesh), Mr. Rohana Ambagolla (Director SAARC – MFA, Sri Lanka), Ms. Asiyath Mohammed (Project Officer/ Maldives), Mr. Rinzin Penjore (Director/ DCA- Bhutan), Mr. S. M. G. N. Dharmasekara (Addl. Secretary- MCA-Sri Lanka)

News in Highlight...

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SAARC Artist Camp 2015 was held in Bamyan, Afghanistan from 23-27 August 2015 for the fifth consecutive year under the patronage of Ministry of Information and Culture, Government of Afghanistan. The SAARC Artist camp 2015 was unique in so many ways as the event was held as one of the first initiatives of SAARC in Afghanistan, the SAARC Cultural Capital. The SAARC Artist Camp and seventh Silk Route Festival comprising of Film Festival, Food Festival and Handicraft Festival and Musical Festival was officially declared open on 24 August 2015 at the Conference Hall of Hotel Gholghola and was attended by over 1000 participants including Deputy Minister of Culture, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Governor of Bamyan Mr. Taher Zaher, Deputy Governor of Bamyan and all the Provincial

Officials. Mr. Tahir Zahir, the Provincial Governor urged SAARC members to name Bamiyan as the permanent host for its meetings and events." We call on SAARC countries to not forget Bamiyan and to accept this city as the secretariat of this organization and deliver messages of peace, friendship and historical civilization of this ancient province to their members," Hon. Zaher said.

On behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre, both the Director and the

On behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre, both the Director and the Program Officer welcomed the Artists and the distinguished delegates. Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, addressed the august gathering and thanked the Afghan government for the warm hospitality extended to the Artists and SCC officials.

Over thirty artists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka took part in the Artist Camp. The Artists painted at the site overlooking Bamiyan valley with the Buddha Mountains from 24 to 26 August 2015 and produced 61 paintings as an outcome of daily paintings.

During these three days of paintings, the Artists were taken to different locations to explore and get exposed to the cultural activities of Bamiyan - Walayat Ground concert, the Food Festival at Bamiyan SAARC Cultural Capital

Information Centre and to view the projection of 3D Buddha at the Bamiyan sites. They were also taken to see the Band-e-Amir lakes and the National Park which is 70 kms away from Bamiyan. These visits showcased the rich cultures as well as the beautiful sites of Afghanistan – further gave an opportunity for the Artists of the different SAARC Member States to mingle, interact and get to know each other.







An exhibitions of photogrphs of decorative arts and heritage sites brought from the SAARC Cultural Centre, along with the other paintings by the Artists were displayed at the Bamiyan Cultural Centre. A special screening of movies that were screened at the SAARC Film Festival in Sri Lanka in May 2015 was organized for the public providing an opportuniy to enjoy some of the best South Asian films. The SAARC Artist Camp concluded on 26 August evening in Bamiyan and certificates of participation were awarded. The Artists and officials were flown back to Kabul on the 27th of August 2016, and left to their respective countries

after almost 4 days of not only experiencing the culture of Afghanistan, but also being able to work on beautiful pieces of art inspired by the scenic landscape of Bamiyan.

It was one of the most successful collaborative events organized by the SCC in collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan. The Artists left to their respective countries with a great sense of happiness and accomplishment having established good strong ties of friendship and having got exposed to the diverse cultures of the SAARC Region and in particular the cultures of Afghanistan.

















The Governing Board of the SAARC Cultural Centre held its Seventh Meeting in Negombo, Sri Lanka on 22-23 September 2015.

The outgoing Chairperson of the Governing Board of SAARC Cultural Centre, Mr. Bharat Mani Subedi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of Nepal, called the Meeting to order and whilst welcoming all those present, also extended his warm wishes to the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre. He then handed over chairmanship of the Board to Mr. Muhammed Daud Ethisham, Press Attaché, High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka.



The Chairperson, Mr. Muhammed Daud Ehtisham, Press Attache, High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka in his opening speech welcomed all the Governing Board Members and congratulated the SAARC Cultural Centre on successful implementation of its activities for the year 2015. He commended the SAARC Cultural Centre on having achieved its goals since its inception in 2010.



Many important matters were discussed at this meeting, including programmes for 2016, which were presented, discussed, debated and accepted for presentation at the Programming Committee meeting of the SAARC Secretariat.





The Board reviewed the programmes and approved it with certain comments and observations. The SAARC

Cultural Centre Governing Board meeting concluded successfully, and the members were hosted to a dinner by the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre on the second day. They also called upon the Hon. S.B Navinne, Minister of Internal Affairs, Wayamba Development and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka at the Ministry premises in Battaramulla on the third day.









SAARC Non Violence Day 13 October 2015 at Sri Lanka Foundation Institute

To mark the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi (2 Oct), which is also observed as SAARC Non-Violence Day and International Non-Violence Day, the SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with the Sri Lanka Press Association organized a lecture at the Sri Lanka Foundation, for visiting journalists from South Asia and invited guests on the 13th of October 2015. This event was organized to highlight the need for Non-Violence in our society.

Today, violence seems to be the most popular method in solving problems, in disciplining and in controlling children and adults. Most often people resort to violence as they are not aware of other measures that could be resorted in resolving conflict. The Centre recognized the importance of the role of the media in taking this message of non-violence forward to the South Asian region.

Hon. Dulip Wijesekera, Deputy Minister of Post, Postal Services and Muslim Religious Affairs graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, and Kalakeerthi Dr. Edwin Ariyadasa was Keynote Speaker at the event.





Following the lighting of the traditional oil lamp, the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre, Mr Wasanthe Kotuwella welcomed all journalists present, and stressed the importance of Non-Violence in today's world. He spoke of the universal relevance of the principle of non-violence, and the desire to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, and understanding.

The SAARC Cultural Centre invited Kalakeerthi Dr. Edwin Ariyadasa, most respected veteran journalist who is also a media consultant, newspaper editor and an author to deliver the Keynote address. He has been on the Editorial staff of most of Sri Lanka's most read newspapers, and was instrumental in initiating the study of Mass Communication at the higher education level in Sri Lanka. He was also associated with the introduction of Media Studies at the Open University in Sri Lanka. He has received several awards in recognition of his work, and has many publications to his credit.



In his keynote address titled 'A SAARC Media for Peace and Harmony' Dr Ariyadasa reiterated on the important role of the media, taking examples of modern sophisticated communication to bring the global community closer. He also spoke of social media, stating that the arrival of Mark Zuckerberg in the global

communications scene has revolutionized modern technology and social media. He also spoke of violence in the form 'hate speech'. He stated that the totality of mankind is tormented by social media and the smartphone, that despite the technology, we have not reached the age of global non-violence.

His recommendation for the SAARC Community was that;

- SAARC should initiate a periodical 'Peace, Harmony and Friendly Co-existence Festival' in which all Member States could participate,
- 2. SAARC Member States, should each set up a Peace and Harmony' Monument, utilizing the architectural traditions of each Nation.

He concluded his keynote address, stating that SAARC should initiate substantial moves to promote peace and harmony.

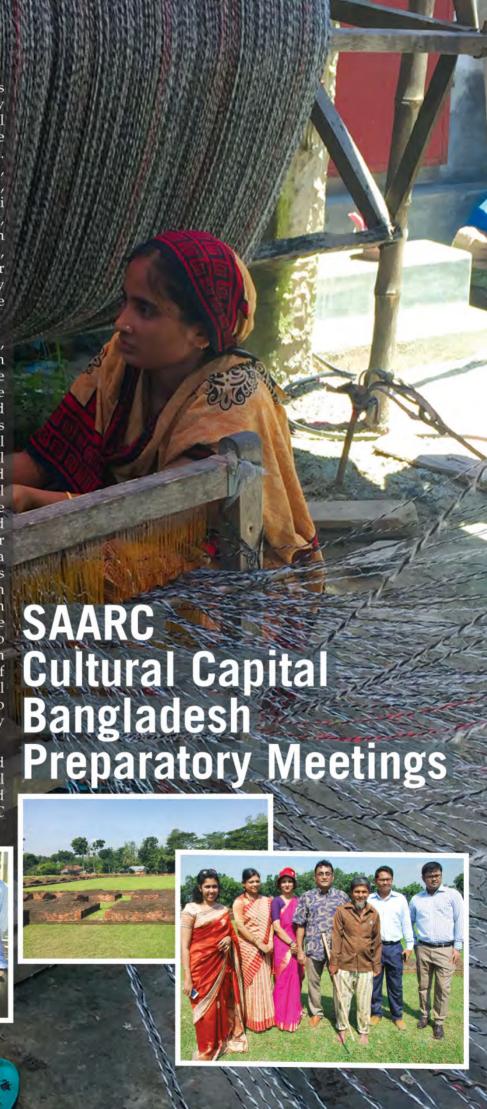
Following the Keynote address, there was a response by Professor Upendra Padhi, Working President, Utkal Journalist Association, Odisha, India, one of the Senior Journalists from India. This was followed by the Vote of Thanks delivered by Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo, the Deputy Director-Programmes, SAARC Cultural Centre. On behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre, she thanked the Chief Guest, Keynote Speaker and the collaborating partner- Sri Lanka Press Association, who facilitated the visit of South Asian Journalists.

The session concluded with lunch being served at the Sri Lanka Foundation to all those present. A preparatory meeting to discuss plans for Bangladesh to declare a city in its country as the SAARC Cultural Capital was arranged in July 2015. The meeting was attended by Hon. Minister Asaduzzaman Noor, Minister of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh Gangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, Mr Wasanthe Kotuwella and Deputy Director (Programmes) Ms Soundarie David Rodrigo.

During this high level meeting, possible options for cities in Bangladesh to be nominated as the SAARC Cultural Capital were discussed. The Ministry had marked Comilla, Kushtia and Bogra as potential cities for SAARC Cultural Capital 2016. Minister of Cultural Affairs, Asaduzzaman Noor, talked extensively on the SAARC Cultural Centre's role in promoting culture through diverse events and programmes among SAARC Member States. The meeting was followed by a Press Conference, which was successful as it had participation from all the leading media institutions in the country. The officials from the SAARC Cultural Centre were taken to one of the districts, namely Bogra, in order to evaluate the possibility of considering it as the SAARC Cultural Capital for the year 2016. They also visited a Handloom craft industry near Adamdighi in the Bogra district.

The meeting was very productive, and consequently, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh has nominated the city of Bogra as the SAARC Cultural Capital for the year 2016.





SAARGFILM DAY

The SAARC Film Day Series was an initiative, borne out of the SAARC Film Festival, which has been successfully carried out by the SAARC Cultural Centre consecutively for the last five years. Given the demand for it by the general public to view award winning films from the SAARC Region, the SAARC Cultural Centre introduced the concept of the "SAARC Film Day Series" to showcase films from the region, every month. However due to

u n a v o i d a b l e circumstances the film day series had to be stopped in 2014.

In November 2015, the SAARC Cultural Centre, was able to resume this programme by screening an award winning film "Osama" from Afghanistan to a full audience. The film was screened on the 19th of

November 2015 at the National Film Corporation Cinema Hall in collaboration with the Embassy of Afghanistan in Sri Lanka. The guest of honor was Mr. Zabiulla Nassiri, Charge de Affairs, Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Amongst the guests, there were members of the diplomatic core, Officials from

Ministries, performing artists, film directors, as well as film enthusiasts. The Cinema Hall has a seating capacity of well over 350 seats, and the hall was packed to its maximum capacity.

"OSAMA", directed by Siddiq Barmak in 2003, has bagged Cannes and Golden Globe Awards in 2003 and 2004. The film was highly recommended by the Ministry of Culture, Government of Afghanistan, and was screened on their recommendation.

An award winning film from Afghanistan

The film is set against the backdrop of Taliban era in Afghanistan. The central theme of the film is discrimination of basic human rights against women during the Taliban Period.

The SAARC Cultural Centre also had the help of the Digital Film Academy, and Agenda 14, for this

event. On the day of the screening, guests were invited to a reception hosted by the Afghanistan Embassy in Sri Lanka. Prior to the screening, officials from the SAARC Cultural Centre, on behalf of the Director, SCC, welcomed all dignitaries and guests to the screening, and gave a brief synopsis of the film in all three languages. This was followed by the screening of the film, which was well received.

As the film day series resumed

after a considerable break, this particular screening was also organized to test the popularity and to gauge as to whether bringing this programme back would be a successful move. Given the feedback from the audience and invitees, it was evident that the general public wanted such screenings of films from South Asia to

take place on a regular basis. The Centre received excellent reviews on the choice of film, and on the organization of the film. The fact that it was open to the general public free of charge was also appreciated.













SAARC PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The Third SAARC Photographic Competition 2015, organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre concluded with Mr. Asis Kr. Sanyal from India emerging as the winner of the competition. The theme for Photographic Competition was World Heritage Sites in South Asia. The selection was done by a panel of professional photographers. A total of 204 entries from 48 photographers from SAARC Member States were received by the centre.



1st Place

Jantar Mantar A unique observatory of Ancient India

by Asis Kr. Sanyal



2nd Place

Asfi Mosque (Stories in Stone), India

by Ashutosh Seth



3rd Place

For an evening trip India

by Amitava Chandra





Panoramic View of Mahabodhi Temple, India by Bijoy Kr. Jain



Nyatapola Temple in Bhaktapur, Nepal by Narayan Mahajan



Buddhist monk kora around Boudhanath Stupa, Nepal by Narayan Mahajan



Illuminated view of Pashupatinath Temple at Evening, Nepal by Narayan Mahajan



Our Pride Taj Mahal, India by Supriya Biswas

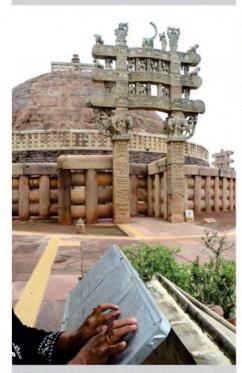


Jai Garh Fort, India by Barun Rajgaria

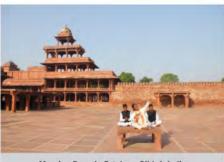


The Story of River & Forest, India by Debdatta Chakraborty

Photographic Honorable Competition Mentions



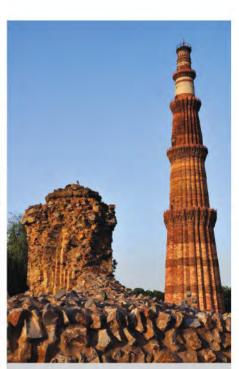
Reading about World Heritae Sites in Braille, Sanchi, India by Tanveer Farooqui



Morning Raga in Fatehpur Sikhri, India by Alok Avinash Rajgarhia



Taj from a different perspective, India by Asis Kr. Sanyal



Qutub Minar, India by Rabin Chakrabarti

SAARC CHARTER DAY 2015











The 31st Anniversary of founding day of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC Charter Day) organized by SAARC Cultural Centre, was held at Arcade Independence Square on 08th December 2015.

Among the distinguished invitees were members of the Diplomatic corp, artists, academics as well as distinguished officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka. Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, warmly welcomed the distinguished guests to the reception. The message of His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, President of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka was read out by

Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director, SAARC Cultural Centre. Mr. Karma Wungchuk, Program Officer read out the message of the Hon. Ranil Wickemesinghe Prime Minister of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Ms. Apsara Karunaratne, Research Assistant read out the message of His Excellency, Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC Organization.

The newly redesigned website for the SAARC Cultural Centre was launched during the celebrations.

The reception was followed by a traditional dance performance who delighted the audience.

















ANNOUNCEMENTS

International Women's Day March 2016

SAARC International Women's Day 2016 in collaboration with the Indian Cultural Centre in Sri Lanka

In 2016, the SAARC Artist Camp and Exhibition of Paintings will be held in Bhutan. The Camp will be held for a duration of 4 days, to be coupled with an Exhibition of Paintings and an Interactive Session for Artists.

SAARC Artists Camp April 2016

SAARC Film Festival 2016

The SAARC Film Festival will be organized on a much larger scale, with several other fringe events, as well as collaboration with film institutions both in Sri Lanka as well as other countries from the SAARC Region. The Film Festival will continue to call for feature and short films, this year again; there will be a strong emphasis for films that will showcase art and culture of the countries with the aim of bringing together the countries of the Region through the arts. Nominated films will be viewed by the jury prior to it being screened.

SAARC Cultural Festival on Folk Music and Folk Dance, giving folk musicians from the SAARC Region a platform to perform, popularize folk tunes and music, work together, develop friendship and also exchange new ideas, based on folk tunes. Daily cultural evenings, a workshop on the preservation of folk music, will also be organized to coincide with the Festival.

The Cultural Festival will be held over 3 days, with concerts and recitals held at various venues, with the opening and closing performances.

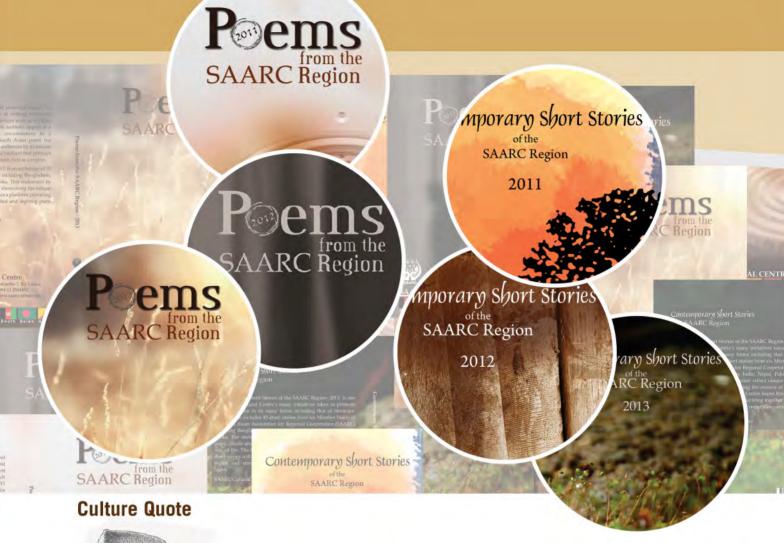
SAARC Cultural Festival on Folk Music/ Dance

Date to be announced

SAARC String Festival Date to be announced

The SAARC Cultural Centre would organize a string festival, bringing together instrumentalists from the region, who would perform at a festival in Sri Lanka, as well as several other fringe events in the country. The festival would culminate in a combined performance/orchestra of strings by all participating artists. The SAARC String Festival will be held for a duration of 3 days.

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Nothing is higher than man, nothing nobler! There is no distinction of clime, age and person: There is one indivisible brotherhood

Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) The national poet of Bangladesh

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