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# SAARC NEWSLETTER

## Editorial

The SAARC Cultural Centre has been busy with various programmes over the last six months. Some of the more successful programmes have been the SAARC Artist Camp 2016, which took place amidst the beautiful surroundings of Thimpu in Bhutan. At this Artist Camp 6 countries from the SAARC Region came together, and artists interacted, mingled, and most importantly were creatively inspired to paint at the beautiful sites of Thimpu in Bhutan.

The SAARC Film Festival 2016 was also very successful in that it was able to screen films from the SAARC Region to a packed audience for 6 nights in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The SAARC Film Festival has gained momentum over the years, and this is the 6th SAARC Film Festival held in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This year the jury members were from France, Russia and Korea.

The Centre was also honored by the visit of His Excellency, the Secretary General of SAARC, Mr Arjun Bahadur Thapa, as well as the Honorable Minister for Culture to Bangladesh, Asadussaman Noor earlier on this year. Celebrating International Women's Day, we also had a theatre group from India performing for audiences in Colombo. This event was organized jointly by the SAARC Cultural Centre and the Indian Cultural Centre.

The SAARC Cultural Centre is looking forward to the rest of the year, where activities have been lined up, keeping in mind also the SAARC Summit scheduled to take place this year.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the SAARC Newsletter. Please do visit our website and facebook page for more updates on the activities of the Centre.

- Editor



The SAARC Film Festival, one of the best film festivals in the SAARC Region was held once again for the sixth consecutive times in grandeur at the National Film Corporation Cinema Colombo claiming the Best Feature Film Masaan Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan of India. Here Ms. Rajeshree Behera, Director, Indian Cultural Centre, receives the trophy for the Best Film 2016 from Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre.

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## News in Highlight...

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# IN FOCUS

## **The SAARC Cultural Centre Celebrates International Women's Day in collaboration with Indian Cultural Centre on the 08th March 2016 at the Lionel Wendt Theatre.**

The SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with Indian Cultural Centre organized an event to celebrate the International Women's Day 2016, by bringing down a Theatre Group from India.

The SAARC Cultural Centre celebrated International Women's Day by presenting "Baawre Mann ke Sapne" (Sound of Dreams), by a national award-winning all-women theatre production The Creative Arts, India on the 08th of March 2016 at the Lionel Wendt Theatre, Colombo 07 at 07. 30 p.m.

The Creative Arts is a performing arts initiative founded by theatre artist, Ramanjit Kaur in 2002 with a dream and motive to create awareness about and give formal and systematic Theatre training to children and adults.

Based on the works of Indian women authors like Jhumpa Lahiri, Bulbul Sharma, Abha Lyenger, Irene Dhar Malik and Lalitambika Antarnjanam, Baawre Mann Ke Sapne

directed by Ramanjit Kaur explores "tradition and skepticism, collective responsibilities and individual choice, spanning themes of caste and hierarchy, relationships, physical and emotional violence, dreams and nightmares, sexuality and search for self-identity-with new vigour".

The cast of the drama was made up of Kamal Ahluwalia, Vineeta Abhani, Pragya Gupta, Namrata Manot, Bhavna Gupta, Nandita Daga, Arati Daga, Anita Khandelwal.

The drama was a theatrical experience that was enjoyed by both male and female since it treated to various women's stories through theatre, a theater journey with two aspects - one dealing with Theatre as an Art Form and the other being Theatre as Therapy which made the entire exercise unique.

This theatrical experience was truly unique and was much appreciated by the audience.





The High Level dignitaries participated at the the Women's Day celebration including H.E. Mr. Y.K. Singha, the High Commissioner of India and Mrs. Singha, Prof. Maithree Wicremesinghe, Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre. Mrs. Rajeshree Behera, Director, Indian Cultural Centre, Mrs. Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director (Programme) SAARC Cultural Centre, Mrs. Ramanjit Kaur, Director of the "Baawre Mann ke Sapne" (Sound of Dreams)

## Bangladesh Cultural Minister Hon. Asaduzzaman Noor visits SAARC Cultural Centre 09th May 2016

The Minister for Cultural Affairs Bangladesh Hon. Asaduzzaman Noor, visited Sri Lanka. During his visit he had special meeting with Director, SAARC Cultural Centre and Deputy Director, Programmes. The SAARC Cultural Centre hosted him to a dinner at the Cinnamon Grand Hotel Colombo.







# SAARC Secretary General visits SAARC Cultural Centre

## 21st April 2016



H.E. Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, visited the SAARC Cultural Centre during his Official Visit to Sri Lanka. The Secretary General visited the office and met with all staff members. In addition to this visit, special meetings with Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre and Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director (Programmes) were held at the SCC office. At the end of the visit, a group photograph was taken with the staff of the SAARC Cultural Centre. The Secretary General was accompanied by Mr. M.H.M.N. Bandara, Director, SAARC Secretariat and Mr. Mahendra Chhetri, Accounts In-charge, SAARC Secretariat.

The Secretary General also visited the new construction site of the SAARC Cultural Centre and was updated on its progress. The SAARC Cultural Centre invited the Secretary General to a dinner at the Mount Lavinia Hotel together with the High Commissioners and Ambassadors.





# ACHIEVEMENTS

## SAARC Artists' Camp 2016

Bhutan 25-28 April 2016

The SAARC Artists Camp 2016 organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan in Thimphu, concluded successfully for the sixth time.

All Artists comprising of six nominees each from Bangladesh, ten from Bhutan, five from Maldives, four from Nepal, five from Pakistan and five from Sri Lanka arrived in Bhutan for the Artist Camp.

The Inauguration ceremony was held at the Conference Hall of Hotel Namgyel Heritage in Thimphu under the patronage of Dasho Tshering Dorji, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Government of Bhutan and all the dignitaries from the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs and Foreign Ministry and invited guests from other Ministries and local governance.

On behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre, both the Director and the Program Officer welcomed the Artists and the distinguished delegates. SAARC Cultural Centre Director, Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, addressed the august gathering and thanked the Bhutan Government for the warm hospitality extended to the SAARC Artists and SAARC Cultural Centre officials while Dasho Tshering Dorji welcomed SAARC Artists, officials from SAARC Cultural Centre and distinguished invitees to the Dragon's Kingdom Bhutan.

The Artist Camp 2016 was declared opened by SAARC Cultural Centre Director and the Honorable Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan by signing off on the canvas.

The Artists started painting at the site overlooking Thimphu city and valley with the imposing Buddha overlooking from the







Kuenselphodrang Mountains from 25 to 28 April 2016 and produced 73 outstanding paintings as an outcome of the Artist Camp 2016.

During the SAARC Artists Camp 2016 the Artists were taken to different locations such as Dochula Pass at 3000 m and Bhutanese Lhakhangs and 108 Druk Wangyel Khangzang Chortens which is 25 km's away from Thimphu to explore and get exposed to the cultural activities of Bhutan. A visit to see the imposing Buddha at Kuenselphodrang was also organized for the Artists and local crafts markets as part of cultural exchanges.

These visits showcased the rich cultures as well as the beautiful sites of Bhutan and further gave an opportunity for the Artists of the different SAARC Member States to mingle, interact and get to know each other on the trip and establish networks.

The exhibitions of completed paintings along with the other paintings brought by the Artists were also displayed at the Namgyel Heriatge Conference Hall on the concluding day of the Artist Camp on 28 April 2016. Some of the paintings of the Artists brought by them for showcasing were sold to interested individual parties which are also one of the many achievements for the visiting Artists.

The SAARC Artist Camp concluded on the 28 of April in Thimphu and certificates of participation were awarded by the Dasho (Dr) Sonam Tenzin, Honorable Home Secretary, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, to all participants.

It was one of the most successful collaborative events organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with the Government of Bhutan.

The Artists who had come to participate left to their respective countries with a great sense of happiness and accomplishment having established good networks among themselves and having got exposed to the diverse cultures of the SAARC Region and in particular the cultures of Bhutan. Many of them had promised to collaborate among themselves to promote contemporary arts in the region which is established in some of the Member States.



# SAARC Film Festival 2016

The SAARC Film Festival was organized for the sixth consecutive year by the SAARC Cultural Centre, from the 1st – 6th June 2016. This Film Festival was organized in collaboration with the Digital Film Academy, Sri Lanka Foundation and the National Film Corporation was the venue for the screening of the films. The Russian Cultural Centre was the venue for the Masterclass. The Film Festival was held with the aim of providing a platform for film directors, enthusiasts to meet and discuss pertinent issues in the film industry, as well as acknowledge that the SAARC Region has produced films with a standard of excellence, giving an opportunity to the general public to view these films.

A call for nominations was sent out to all Member States of the SAARC, for two categories, namely Short Films, and Feature

Films. There was also an open film category. Nominations were received from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with a total of 18 films (11 Feature Films and 7 Short Films). An internal organizing committee was set up, with a consultant Mr. Dhanushka Gunatilleke brought in from the Digital Film Academy to advice on some of the specific issues concerning the organizing of a film festival. An International panel of eminent Jury members was invited to be on the panel of esteemed Jury from Russia Mr. Andrei Vasilenko, Ms. Fabienne Aguado from France and Ms. Jinna Lee from South Korea. Screenings were held on all days from the 1st – 5th of June 2016, attracting large crowds from the general public. All films were screened to a full house.

## INAUGURATION

The Film Festival was inaugurated with lighting of the traditional oil lamp by the Director, Invited High Commissioners/Ambassadors, Members from Representing Member States, Jury Members, and the Deputy Director Programs Ms Soundarie David Rodrigo, SCC. Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director SAARC Cultural Centre welcomed the audience, and inaugurated the Film Festival.

Prior to the opening film, refreshments were served at the foyer of the Theatre. The First film to be screened was Masaan – from India and the film was introduced by Mr Dhanushka Gunathilleke.

Prior to all screenings there was an introduction together with a brief synopsis to the film. Where the Director's of the films were present, they were called to present the film.





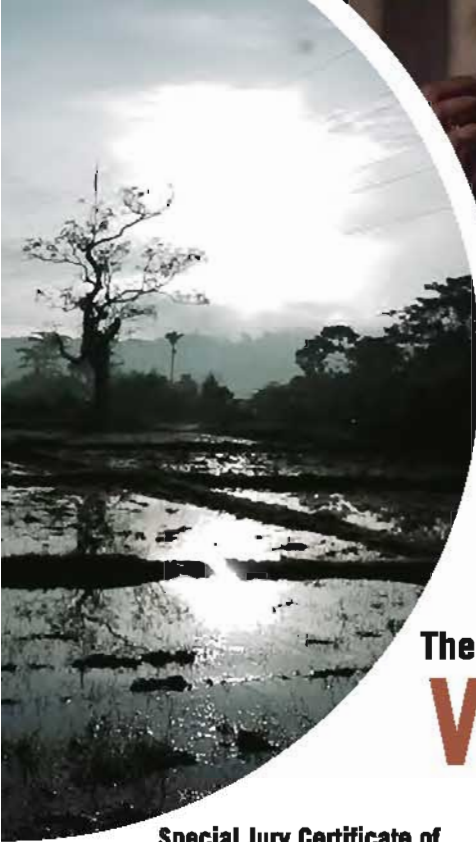
## Workshop

A Masterclass was held to coincide with the Film Festival at the Russian Cultural Centre in Colombo. The topic under discussion was "Contemporary Russian Cinema, and how to take part in International Film Festivals". The masterclass was introduced by Mr. Dhanushka Gunatilleke, who was the consultant brought in by the SAARC Cultural Centre to assist in organising the festival. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Andrei Vasilenko from Russia, who shared his knowledge and experience of Russian Cinema. Mr. Vasilenko is a well-known curator, critic, programmer of the Vladivostok International Film Festival in Russia. His presentation was followed by that of Ms. Fabienne Aguado from France. She is the founder of the Centre for Cinematographic Scripts (CECI) based in France, and has been managing it for the last 10 years. She is a talent scout, reader, adviser on the development process and script consultant, as well as a regular member of juries at international festivals and forums. The final presentation was that of Ms. Jinna Lee, who is a programmer at the Busan International Short Film Festival.

The Masterclass was attended by film lovers and students of films, and ended with a very interactive session where the audience were able to interact with the jury members and ask questions pertaining to cinema as well as possibilities of entering competitions and residencies. The workshop was very successful as there was much interaction and exchange of knowledge on the above mentioned topic. The workshop saw in attendance over 60 participants.







The following films emerged as  
**WINNERS**

**Special Jury Certificate of  
Recognition for New Talent**

**Special Jury Mention**

**Best Cinematographer**

**Best Screenplay**

**Best Editor**

**Best Original Score**

**Best Film – Open Category**

**Best Short Film**

**Best Director**

**Best Actor**

**Best Actress**

**Best Feature Film Bronze Medal**

**Best Feature Film Silver Medal**

**Best Feature Film Trophy**

**Eranda Mahagama, Sarjani Shanika, Dulanjalee Balage**  
Representing Sri Lanka for the film titled *Living without Life*.

**Benegal's Cinema**  
Directed By, Iram Ghufan representing India.

**Barkaat Hassain**  
of the film *Jalal's Story*, representing Bangladesh

**Indika Ferdinando**  
of the film *Ho Gaana Pokuna* representing Sri Lanka

**Tissa Surendra**  
of the film *Ho Gaana Pokuna* representing Sri Lanka

**Chirkutt Band**  
of the film *Jalal's Story* representing Bangladesh

**An Apple from Paradise**  
representing Afghanistan directed by Hodayun Morawat

**Apple,**  
Directed by Chamila Priyanka, representing Sri Lanka

**Neeraj Ghaywan**  
Representing India for the Film Titled *Masaan*

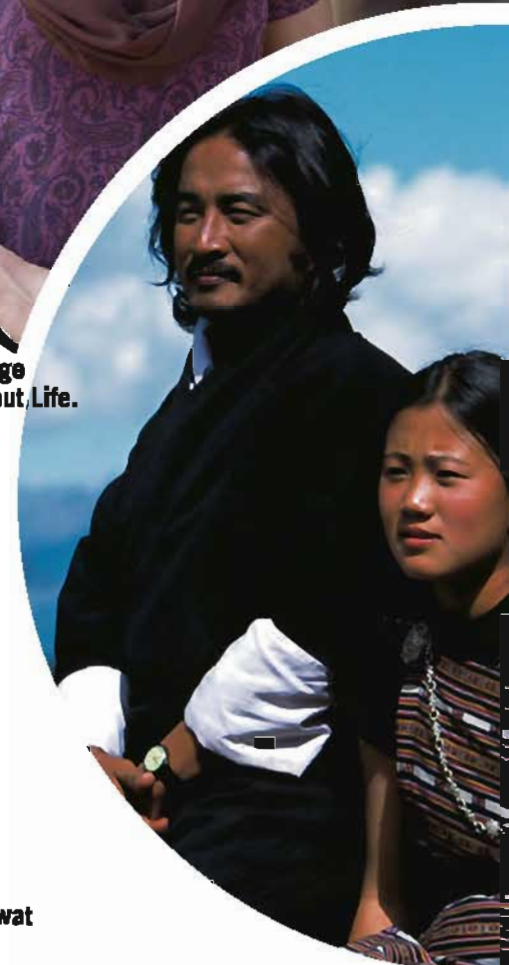
**Rajab Grussainov**  
of the film *An Apple from Paradise*, representing Afghanistan

**Kaushalya Fernando**  
of the film *Bora Diya Pokuna* representing Sri Lanka

**Goonga Pehelwan**  
Directed by Mit Jani, Prateek Gupta, Vivek Chaudhury Representing India

**Travellers and Magicians**  
Directed by Khyentse Norbu representing Bhutan

**Masaan**  
Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan representing India







## Award Ceremony - SAARC Film Festival 2016

At the end of screening of films as per schedule, an award ceremony was held on the 6th of June 2016, at the National Film Corporation Theatre. The invited Chief Guest for the awards was the Hon Minister of Internal Affairs, Wayamba Development and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka, Mr. S.B. Nawinne. However due to unavoidable circumstances he was unable to attend the event, in his absence his Secretary Mr. D.Swarnapala, attended the event. The Hon. Minister's message was read out by the compere. The Director addressed the gathering and thanked all those present for their support. Prior to announcing the winners, a representative from the panel of Jury, Mr Vasilenko addressed the gathering. There were also two entertainment acts by Sri Lanka's leading drumming and dance exponents - The Ravi Bandu Dance Ensemble. The awards were finally announced with much pomp and flair.

### Conclusion

The SAARC Film Festival received many positive reviews in the Media, as well as from the general public as an excellent initiative by the SAARC Cultural Centre. The audience for all the screenings of the films were very happy with the standard of the festival, and the jury comments were very positive with new ideas and initiatives to further enhance the event in the years to come. Overall the SAARC Film Festival was a success and has received much publicity in terms of the organization





# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **SAARC Cultural Capital Bamyan - Closing Ceremony** September 2016

The SAARC Cultural Capital for the year 2015/2016 was in Bamyan, Afghanistan, and during this period several local and other programmes involving all 8 SAARC Member States were successfully carried out. The SAARC Artist Camp was one such successful program. Programmes were conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of Afghanistan. The closing ceremony of the SAARC Cultural Capital will take place in September 2016. At this ceremony all official cultural activities in Bamyan will come to an end, and the Cultural Capital will be handed over to Bangladesh, where the city Bogra will be named the SAARC Cultural Capital for the year 2016/2017

The SAARC Cultural Capital Inauguration to declare the city of Bogra as the SAARC Cultural Capital for the year 2016/2017, will take place in October, in Bogra, Bangladesh. The event will be jointly organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Bangladesh. Several cultural programmes, both locally as well as those with participation from the SAARC countries will take place during this period.

## **SAARC Cultural Capital Bogra - Inauguration** Date to be announced

## **SAARC Non- Violence Day 2016** October 2016

To commemorate SAARC Non Violence day 2016, the SAARC Cultural Capital will organize an Art Competition for Children on the Theme of Non Violence, all school going children will be given an opportunity to paint, thereby instilling values of non-violence through the medium of art.

The SAARC String Festival will be held in India this year, and string instrumentalists from the region will be invited to perform at the Festival. The Festival would culminate in a combined performance/ orchestra of strings by all participating artists. The SAARC String Festival will be held for the duration of 3 days.

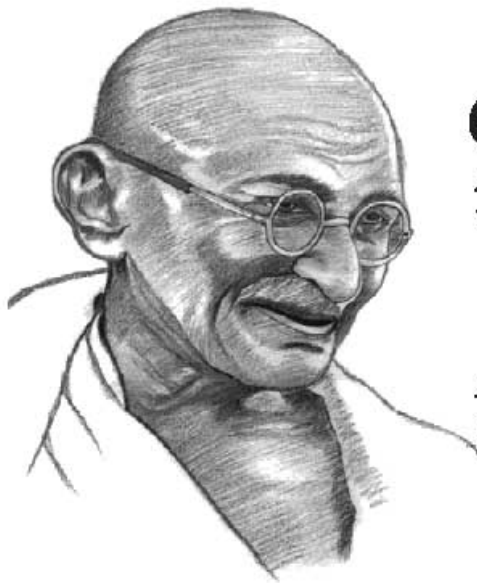
## **SAARC String Festival 2016** Date to be announced

## **SAARC Handicraft Village/ Exhibition 2016** November 2016

The SAARC Handicraft Village and Exhibition has been successfully held in Delhi, Bangladesh and Nepal. The SAARC Handicraft Village gives an opportunity for all artisans from the SAARC region to display their products in the different SAARC countries, and this year, it is scheduled to take place in Colombo, Sri Lanka.



# Culture Quote



“

*Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.*

”

**Mahatma Gandhi**

*(Non-violent leader of Indian independence; 1969-1948)*

“

*We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race.*

”

**Kofi Annan**

*(Ghanian Diplomat, 7th UN Secretary General, 2001 Nobel Peace Prize Winner; b. 1938)*



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