

# SAARC NEWSLETTER



## SAARC Handicraft Exhibition & Workshop 2016

The SAARC Cultural Centre participated in the "Shilpa Abhimana" the Annual Presidential Awards Handicrafts Competition & Exhibition organized by the National Craft Council of Sri Lanka. The SCC exhibition was held at the Nuga Sevana Hall of the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall and was ceremoniously inaugurated by Hon. Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka with invited dignitaries and High Commissioners, and

Ambassadors representing the SAARC Member States on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Hon. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry & Commerce, Hon. Champika Premadasa, State Minister of Industry and Commerce, and Mr. T.M.K.B. Tennekoon along with Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, Director of SCC and Ms. Heshani Bogollagama, Chairperson of National Crafts Council were among the dignitaries present at this occasion.

The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka visited all stalls of the Exhibition

### News in Highlight...

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and personally appreciated the traditions which were kept alive by the artisans.

This initiative of bringing artisans and their products to establish common links was highly commended in the Media and the opportunity to watch the artisans at work was appreciated by the public.

Handicrafts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka were showcased at the exhibition some demonstrations from the artisans

of the Member States. A workshop on "New Designs and Trends in Handicrafts" was held during the exhibition, giving an opportunity to share ideas and knowledge and learn through the Best Practices. Mr. Bikash Dhakwa, Former President of Federation of Handicraft Association of Nepal and Mr. Susira Udalamamththa, Lecturer in Fashion Design and Architecture from the University of Moratuwa led the workshop.











## Editorial

The SAARC Cultural Centre takes pleasure in bringing people and activities together and we had a few months filled with activities. The Governing Board Meeting held in August 2016 ensured the support and encouragement we needed to carry out our tasks. The SAARC Art Competition to Celebrate the Non-Violence Day in October 2016 was successfully carried out with almost 1,000 school children contributing their art. An exhibition of paintings by the artists of the SAARC region was held at Apegama in Battaramulla in collaboration with the Department of Cultural

Affairs and enjoyed by all. The SAARC Handicraft exhibition was held in November and the SAARC Charter Day in December concluded our activities for 2016 with great success.

The activities of the International Year of Tourism - 2017, commenced with a celebration of women and culture. The International Women's Day celebrated iconic artists who were also known as educators, fore runners in their own fields, forging the path for the future generations of women. The activities for this year includes inauguration of the SAARC

Cultural Capital in Bangladesh, Artists' Camp in Nepal, Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance in Pakistan, Film Festival in India and SAARC Research Project on Buddhist Cultural Trails in Sri Lanka and other activities within the Region. Commencing with the International Year of Tourism, SAARC Cultural Centre hopes to ensure that activities are carried out throughout the Region, despite the challenges it offers, bringing our region together through our shared culture.

- Editors

## The Appointment of the New Secretary General of SAARC

H.E. the Secretary General of SAARC, Ambassador Arjun Bahadur Thapa of Nepal completed his tenure as the Secretary General and handed over the duties to H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial from Pakistan who assumed the responsibility of guiding the SAARC Secretariat for the next two years.

H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial assumed duties on 1st March 2017 as the 13th Secretary General of SAARC. H.E. Mr. Sial is a Senior

Diplomat from the Pakistan Foreign Service with a career spanning over three decades. He has a Master's Degree in Défense and Strategic Studies from National Défense University of Islamabad and extensive experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad and Missions abroad. He was the Director for Pakistan from 2003 - 2006, at SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu.







# SAARC Exhibition of Paintings 2016

Colombo, Sri Lanka 2 – 6 October, 2016 Apegama, Battaramulla

The SAARC Artists Camp is held annually within the Region and SCC is the proud owner of many paintings from artists of the Region. These paintings are from the Artist Camps held in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka during the past several years and are a part of our “SAARC Art for Hire” programme. These paintings reflect the artistic dynamics of the region through a cultural perspective and offer an understanding of the SAARC Region.

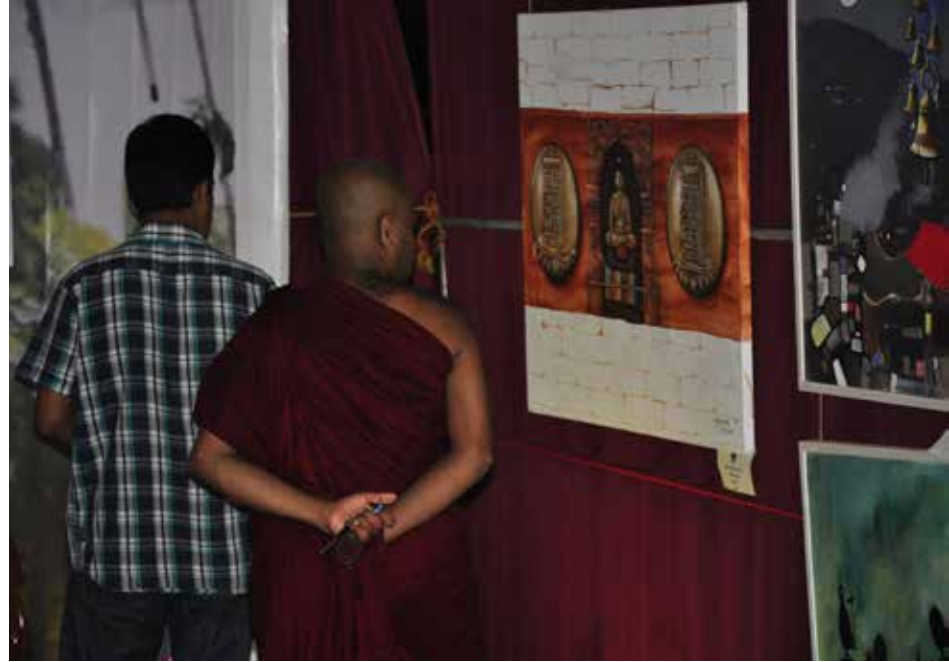
The SAARC Paintings were exhibited to the public in partnership with the Department of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Wayamba Development and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka at the “Ape Gama” premises in Battaramulla, providing an insight to artistry of 8 countries through the 56 paintings displayed at the exhibition. The exhibition was inaugurated by Hon. S.B. Navinne, Minister of Internal Affairs and Wayamba Development and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka.







This exhibition was a part of the events held at “Ape Gama” to create a platform for the tangible and intangible heritage of Sri Lanka, and was visited by a multitude of visitors from a wide spectrum including artists, college students, teachers, school children as well as families. School children from rural areas were fascinated by the paintings of the SAARC Artists depicting different styles and locations of the SAARC Region.







# **The 8<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Meeting of the SAARC Cultural Centre concluded successfully**

at Blue Waters  
Hotel in  
Wadduva,  
Kalutara from  
25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> August  
2016

The Governing Board of the SAARC Cultural Centre held its Eighth Meeting at the Blue Waters Hotel in Wadduva, Kalutara from 25<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> August 2016 and was chaired by Mr. Muhamad Daud Ehtisham, Press Counsellor of the High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka, representing the Pakistan Government, the country holding the current tenure as the Chair Person of the SCC according to the traditions of SAARC.

The successful implementation of activities for 2016 and the proposed events for 2017 was discussed in detail. The events and activities of 2017 was debated and changes made according to the directives of the Governing Board.

Representatives of the Member States scrutinized the 2017 Programmes to ensure maximum benefits to all SAARC Countries. After deliberating at length, the Programme for 2017 was accepted by the Governing Board to be presented at the SAARC Programming Committee Meeting.

The Governing Board Members of the SAARC Cultural Centre were as follows: Mr. Muhamad Daud Ehtisham, Chairperson, Governing Board of the SAARC Cultural Centre and Press Counsellor, High Commission of Pakistan for Sri Lanka, Mr. Muhammad Munir Ghiasy, Charge d' Affairs, Embassy

of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for Sri Lanka, Mr. Md. Mofidur Rahman, Cultural Advisor (Deputy Secretary), Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, Mr. Ahmed Tanmay Tahsin Ratul, SAARC & BIMSTC Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, Karma Weezir, Director General, Department of Culture, Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs, Thimphu, Bhutan, Mr. S. R. Pathnaik, Under Secretary, SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of India, Ms. Esha Srivastava, First Secretary, Press, Information and Culture, High Commission of India for Sri Lanka, Ms. Anita Kukreti, Attache, High Commission of India for Sri Lanka, Hon. Maryam Azra Ahmed, Minister of State for Education, Department of Heritage, Republic of Maldives, Mrs. Dhana Kumari Joshi, Chargé d' Affair, Embassy of Nepal for Sri Lanka and Mr. S.M.G.N. Dharmasekara, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Wayamba Development and Cultural Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka. Mr. M.H.M.N. Bandara representing the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella representing the SAARC Cultural Centre and Mr. Ashoka Garihagama representing the SAARC at the Foreign Ministry of Sri Lanka also participated.





# SAARC Charter Day 2016

32nd SAARC Charter Day was celebrated on the 8th of December 2016 at Hotel Ramada with the participation of distinguished guests from the SAARC Member States. Director of the SCC Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella welcomed all guests and the Deputy Director Programmes Ms. Soundarie David Rodrigo read the message of the H. E. the President of Sri Lanka. The message of the H.E the Secretary General for SAARC Organization was read by the Programme Officer Mr. Karma T. Wangchuk.

The SAARC Non-Violence Day Art Competition winners were also a part of the celebrations and they were awarded their certificates by the distinguished guests. It was an evening of celebration of art and culture and the child artists had an opportunity to meet the distinguished guests of the SAARC Member State.





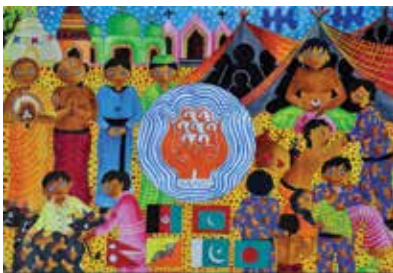
## SENIOR CATEGORY

1<sup>st</sup> place



W.V. Nimesh Milinda Premasiri  
Mo/ Medagama National School,  
Medagama Monaragala

2<sup>nd</sup> place



S. M. Tharushi Manawage  
R/Gankanda Central Collage,  
Ratnapuara

3<sup>rd</sup> place



H. Dinushanka Chandimal Wijesinghe  
Mo/ Medagama National School,  
Medagama Monaragala

# International Non-Violence Day celebrated with Art Competition for School Children

The SAARC Cultural Centre organized a competition for School Children to create awareness and attitude changes as well as a window for understanding the children's psychology through their concept of non-violence. The following statements by Mahatma Gandhi, father of Non-Violence was given as themes for the artistic creations:

**Senior Category: "My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God, Non-Violence is the means of realizing him" - Mahatma Gandhi**

**Junior Category: "You must be the change you want to see in the world" - Mahatma Gandhi**

A beautiful array of paintings created using the mediums of water colours, crayons, acrylic and oil paints were submitted. The young adults of the senior category interpreted the theme across a wide spectrum of ideas of unity, non-violence and peace. The children of the Junior Category interpreted "Change" through the portrayal of environment & development.







The SCC reached out to students Island wide to create awareness and inspire in our society the importance of peace, tolerance, non-discrimination, co-existence and respect for each other. The Junior category (ages 5 to 14) students were more enthusiastic about participating in the competition than the Senior Category students (ages 14 to 19) who had less time for art and culture.

The Award Ceremony was held to coincide with the SAARC Charter Day 2016 at Ramada Hotel Colombo on 08<sup>th</sup> December 2016.



### JUNIOR CATEGORY

1<sup>st</sup> place



Ramika Pooja Sooriyaarachchi  
R/ Sivali Central Collage,  
Ratnapura

2<sup>nd</sup> place



S.M. Thamasha Dinithi  
Ferguson High School,  
Ratnapura

3<sup>rd</sup> place



Jayasundara Bandara Namal Vishawa  
Presidents Collage,  
Kotte

## The SAARC Cultural Centre is delighted to introduce three new Professional Members of Staff.



### Deputy Director - Programmes

Mrs. Kishani JAYASINGHE – WIJAYASEKARA  
International Operatic Soprano & International Commercial Lawyer  
LLM (Nottingham UK); LLB (Nottingham UK);  
PGDip/Masters; ARAM; LRAM; DipRAM (Royal Academy of Music London UK)  
Jette Parker Young Artiste, Royal Opera House (Covent Garden UK)  
Asian Woman of Achievement for Art and Culture



### Deputy Director - Research

Ms. Bindu URUGODAWATTE  
Archaeologist  
BA Hons. (Peking – Chinese Govt Scholar);  
PGDip (Rotterdam – Dutch Govt Fellowship);  
MA (Harvard – Fulbright Scholar & Harvard Fellowship);  
Asian Fellow 2010 (Asian Scholarship Foundation)



### Culture Specialist (Research)

Dr. (Ms.) Lopamudra Maitra BAJPAI  
Visual Anthropologist  
MA (Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology- UGC Merit Scholar, India)  
MDMC (Media and Communication specialising in Journalism- SIMC Merit Scholar, India)  
PhD (Ethno-archaeology & Folk Culture- JRF - Indian Council of Historical Research – Govt. of India, New Delhi)





# International Women's Day 2017

The International Women's Day was celebrated at the Lionel Wendt Theatre with an evening of performance by the young all female ensemble from the University of Visual and Performing Arts of Sri Lanka and honouring several iconic pioneering women artists who also played the role educators. These beloved Sri Lankan artists, Iranganie Serasinghe, Vajira Chitrasena, Sumithra Peiris, and Mary Anne David were honoured at this celebration. These distinguished forerunners, have paved the way for future generations of women with their

persistence, versatility, hard work, courage, integrity and continued to share their knowledge with grace. They have widened the landscape of possibilities and given young girls the hope and power to dream without boundaries. It was our privilege to honour them during the International Women's Day celebrations as representatives of all women artists of the region.

"Thuuryaa" is a pioneering all female percussion band, bringing a feminine touch to the male dominated percussion industry of Sri Lanka. Sithara, the first female

percussion graduate of the University of Visual and Performance Arts, along with other talented students established Thuuryaa, creating a unique ensemble with courageous young souls pushing the boundaries of art and creating rhythm. It seems very appropriate to have modern female pioneers to perform for the iconic figures who pushed the artistic boundaries and paved the way for the modern artists and to celebrate the International Women's Day. It was indeed a celebration of women by women and for women, enjoyed by all.

“

I'm quite happy being a woman and I was delighted to see the women drummers. The day of my youth, I don't think we would have been allowed to be drummers. The men would have said this is not a thing for women to do, women don't play drums. Yes, there were so many things that women couldn't do. And now we're doing it all. We have become policemen, we have become doctors, proctors, we have joined the army, the navy, the air force. I think we have done it all really well...and we have also brought up our men very well I think.

”

**Iranganie Serasinghe**, an Adored National Personality, Actress, Environmentalist and a Feminine Icon.

*Keynote Speaker*

SAARC Cultural Centre International Women's Day,  
8<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 at the Lionel Wendt Theatre, Sri Lanka







# “ART AND CULTURE NO BOUNDARIES AND HAS NO BARRIERS”

**Kishani Jayasinghe –  
Wijayasekara**

The Welcome Address was given on behalf of the Director Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella, and the SAARC Cultural Centre by the Deputy Director for Programmes, Mrs. Kishani Jayasinghe - Wijayasekara. The highlights of her speech were as follows:

“At the SAARC Cultural Centre we are blessed and extremely fortunate not only due to its existence, but to actually be a part of such an entity, where our primary focus is to celebrate cultural diversity in the South Asian Region, and through the language of Art and Culture - in all its varied and wonderful forms - unite the people of South Asia.”

“Art and Culture knows no boundaries and has no barriers. It is one of the few forms of communication that almost every person - whether man, woman, adult or child - can appreciate and enjoy; it poses no obstacles of language, nationality, race, religion, politics, economy or territory. It allows us to enjoy our differences, highlight our talents, and explore our heritage.”

“On this very special day it is of even more significance, as it brings to the fore that women across the Region have always been on the front lines when celebrating cultural diversity. The strength and character of a woman comes to the fore with the challenges that she faces. In our Region they are many, however the integral role of a woman and the light she brings to her home, family, workplace,

society and day to day life, is often further illuminated when she is the face of culture. This flame only burns brighter and stronger within the world of artistry. This is why we chose to honour several women pioneers and beloved female artists today. This handful of artists is by no means all inclusive, but serves as a mere snap shot of the rich artistic heritage in the Member State of Sri Lanka, which is only magnified eightfold when taken together with the enormous pool of artistry and talent within all the SAARC Member States of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.”

“The beauty of Art and Culture is that despite the diverse nature of cultural traditions within the SAARC Member States, it allows us the opportunity to build strong relationships, appreciate and respect each other, further our tolerance and understanding of one another and revel within the unified state of music, dance and artistry, drawn together by the invisible thread of art and culture, celebrating the common cultural heritage of the South Asian Region.”







# The visit of H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, the Secretary General of the SAARC Secretariat in Nepal

H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, the Secretary General of the SAARC visited the SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo, accompanied by Mr. M.H.M.N. Bandara, Director of Education, Security and Culture at the SAARC Secretariat on 30th May 2017. They were warmly welcomed by the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre Mr. Wasanthe Kotuwella in the Sri Lankan traditional way by offering a sheaf of Betel leaves. Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe Wijayasekara (Deputy Director Programmes), Ms. Bindu Urugodawatte (Deputy Director Research), Dr. Lopamudra Maitra Bajpai (Culture Specialist Research) and Mr. Keerti Gunathilaka (Administrative Officer) were also present.



Activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre were discussed after the presentations made by Deputy Director Programmes and Deputy Director Research. Mr. Bernard Vasantha, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Wayamba Development and Cultural of Affairs of Sri Lanka made a presentation on the progress of the new construction of the SAARC Cultural Centre by the Government of Sri Lanka in Nawimana, Matara in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. H.E Mr. Sial was also introduced to the staff of the SAARC Cultural Centre and a group photograph was taken with the SCC Staff.





The site visit to the SAARC Cultural Centre in Nawimana was cancelled due to the adverse weather conditions prevailing in Sri Lanka. H.E. Mr. Sial visited the Galle Fort, the only Colonial Period World Heritage Site in Sri Lanka. The Maritime Archaeological Museum housed in the Dutch period warehouse was visited providing a glimpse of Sri Lankan Maritime history. The visit to Galle Dutch Fort was concluded with a stroll along the ramparts and the Flagrock Bastion of the Galle Fort.





# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **SAARC Cultural Capital 2017 Bangladesh**

- Inauguration
- Cultural Festival on  
Traditional Dance
- Exhibition of Handicraft

**Dates to be announced**

The SAARC Cultural Centre initiated the programme “SAARC Culture Capital” starting with Afghanistan in 2016 which was held at Bamiyan. The SAARC Culture Capital for 2017 is the city of Mahasthangarh in the District of Bogra in Bangladesh. Mahasthangarh is one of the sites which has been submitted to the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites of UNESCO. The activities will include local cultural events as well as events collaborated with the SAARC Member States. It is envisaged that SAARC Cultural Capital will generate considerable cultural, social and economic benefits to the local community and towards the development of Tourism.

The SCC will organize a festival on Traditional Dance with the participation of the Member States to highlight the SCC theme for 2017 “Unity within Diversity” and an exhibition of Handicrafts. The Member States of the SAARC will participate in this event thereby creating opportunities and bringing artisans of the region together for knowledge sharing and better understanding of our material cultures.

Understanding the different cultural heritages of the Member States is the first step in building bridges within the region for sustainable development.

The SAARC Cultural Centre is very excited to announce the first SAARC Cultural Extravaganza based on Music to be held in Pakistan. This programme will reflect the rich musical heritage of each Member State and provide an opportunity for the SAARC Member States to collaborate, combine and display their talents, unique musical instruments and styles. The Cultural Extravaganza will enhance the understanding of Music, particularly its inherent ability to unite the Region, whilst still celebrating the individual diversity of each Member State.

## **SAARC Cultural Extravaganza Pakistan**

**Dates to be announced**

## **SAARC Research Grant Sri Lanka**

**Dates to be announced**

The SAARC Cultural Centre will call for proposals for research on Buddhist Cultural Trails (BCT) based on the findings of the Research Seminar to carry out research on BCTs in the Region. The Research Projects will provide an opportunity for the Member States to explore new research areas and sites along the BCT. This will also act as a precursor to the Cultural Trails proposed for the future and lay the ground work in research to look at Cultural Trails as connected routes where ideas, information and knowledge travelled both ways.



## New Publications

### SAARC ART MAGAZINE

Issue-3

March 2017

The SAARC Art magazine (Issue-3, March 2017) was launched with a fresh focus on interpreting the concept of 'art' through the perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) with this issue highlighting the concept of 'theatre' from the SAARC countries. The Art Magazine is available for your perusal at our website: [www.saarcculture.org](http://www.saarcculture.org)



## Culture Quotes



“ *I am not ready to die because it requires infinitely higher courage to live.* ”

**Sarojini Naidu (13<sup>th</sup> February 1879 – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1949)**

*“The Nightingale of India”, an Indian Independence Activist, a Poet, a partner in the formation of the Indian Constitution, first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the first Indian female Governor of a State (Uttar Pradesh).*

“ *There is nothing that we cannot achieve if we try... I was not born as a mountaineer; I am a housewife. I am trying and hopeful I will succeed. I am doing this to inspire other women.* ”

**Pasang Lhamu Sherpa (10<sup>th</sup> December 1961 – 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1993)**

*The first Nepalese woman to climb the summit of Mount Everest and the very first woman to be decorated with the "Nepal Tara (Star)" by His Majesty the King.*



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