



SAARC Cultural Centre NEWSLETTER

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SAARC International Women's Day 2019

The SAARC Cultural Centre has been organizing diverse events to celebrate the lives of women since 2012 and this celebration has become an annual event in our activities. This year the International Women's Day was held in collaboration with the Visual and Performing Arts University in Colombo. The celebrations commenced with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp by the Director of SAARC Cultural Centre Ms. Renuka Ekanayake, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Visual and Performing Arts

Senior Prof. Sarath Chandrajeewa, Special Guest Speakers Ms. Sumitra Peries, Ms. M.N. Edussuriya and Ms. Sumitra Rahubadde. SAARC Member States were represented by H.E. M. Ashraf Haidari Ambassador of Afghanistan, Mr. Mohammad Hazrat Ali Khan Counsellor of the Bangladesh High Commission, Mr. Niteen Subhash Yeola Head of Press, Information and Culture from the High Commission of India, Ms. Khadheeja Najeeha Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Maldives,

Ms. Dhana Kumari Joshi Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Nepal, Mr. Intisar Ahmed Sulhery Press Attaché of the High Commission of Pakistan and Ms. Yasoja Gunasekara Director General South Asia and SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka. Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre Ms. Renuka Ekanayake made the welcome address and the Vice Chancellor of the University of the Visual and Performing Arts Senior, Prof. Sarath Chandrajeewa elaborated on the role of women in arts.

News in Highlight

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Three eminent and inspiring women of Sri Lanka from three different disciplines, Ms. Sumithra Peries the pioneering film maker, Ms. Sumithra Rahubadda an inspiring author and Ms. Mercy Nalini Edussuriya an educationist par excellence shared their triumphs and tribulations in their chosen career paths. Ms. Peries who commenced her cinematic career as an editor of films expanded into film direction, specially in issues faced by women, shared her memories of the challenges she faced. This was followed by a dance item portraying the changing roles of women by

the young ladies of the Maldives Education and Cultural Centre in Colombo. Ms. Edussuriya, the second speaker who started her career as a teacher recollected her journey through the halls of education and the trials faced in the fast-changing world of the modern era and stated that success of a woman's life is based on her self-confidence and self-worth. A musical item by the students of the Visual and Performing Arts University enlivened the celebrations next. Finally, Ms. Rahubadde who was an administrator discussed the role of women in industries and the lack of

female participation in policy making. The celebrations concluded with Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe Wijayasekara Deputy Director Programmes giving the vote of thanks.



SAARC Exhibition of Paintings

The Fourth SAARC Exhibition of Paintings was held from 22nd to 24th January 2019 in collaboration with the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka at the Senake Bandaranayake Auditorium. This Exhibition has become an eagerly awaited event in the SAARC Cultural Centre Calendar of Activities where Sri Lanka art lovers has an opportunity to enjoy the talents of the SAARC Region under one roof. This Exhibition also provided an opportunity for the budding artists of Sri Lanka and particularly from the University of Kelaniya to study and learn different aspects of paintings from the Regional artists.

The Exhibition of Paintings displayed the diverse paintings and artistic talents of the SAARC Region with a collection of over 50 paintings from the SAARC Member States of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The paintings on display consisted of a stunning array of artistic talents and creative

vision of the SAARC Artists were from the repository of paintings that the Centre has accumulated over the past nine years from the SAARC Artist Camps held across the Region. These vibrant works of art, showcasing the natural beauty of our diverse Region, tangible and intangible culture, society and life, abstracts, landscapes, portraits, etc., were immortalized on canvas by representative artists of the SAARC Member States. The paintings on display were the result of a consolidated effort over the years to bring together painters from the Region, to create works of art, under the auspices of the SAARC Artists Camp. A majority of the paintings on display for this Exhibition were the results of the SAARC Artists Camp and Exhibition of Paintings 2018 held in Sri Lanka, under the themes, “South Asian Splendour” and “Vibrant Tranquillity”. The sceneries brought to life by our SAARC Artists, display their creative inspirations in the company of other artists from the Region.

Editorial

SAARC Cultural Centre is happy to bring the first issue of its newsletter for 2019 and share the interesting programmes and activities of the Centre. The Research Grants awarded on two South Asian Cultural Trails are in final stages with the awardees revising their reports with the expertise feedback of the research review panels. This is one of the greatest contributions of the SAARC Cultural Centre towards the development of a research platform on different cultural aspects of the Region.

The International Women’s Day was celebrated with three inspiring pioneer women of Sri Lanka sharing their ladder to success and tributes and tribulations along the way. The SAARC Exhibition of Paintings was held in collaboration with the University of Kelaniya displaying the artistic creations of the Region collected through the annual SAARC Artist Camps. The Closing Ceremony of the SAARC Cultural Capital and the SAARC Literary Award Ceremony was held in Bhutan on 29th June 2019.

The SAARC Film Festival, a much-awaited event of the cinema enthusiasts of Sri Lanka was rescheduled to be held from 2nd to 7th July 2019 and we have received Short Films, Feature Films and Master Films (34 films in total) from the SAARC Member States of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The SAARC Cultural Centre is currently planning the SAARC Artist Camp in Maldives, SAARC Research Programme on Islamic Cultural Trails in Afghanistan, SAARC Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance in India, etc. These activities are planned to foster intercultural dialogue, cultural harmony, appreciation of the unique cultures of SAARC Region, understanding the shared cultural heritage of the Region, etc.

- Editor





The inauguration of the Exhibition commenced with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp led by the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre Ms. Renuka Ekanayake and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya Prof. D.M. Semasinghe. Ms. Dhana Kumari Joshi First Secretary of the Embassy of Nepal in Sri Lanka, Mr. Intisar Sulhery Press Attaché of the High Commission of Pakistan in Sri Lanka, Ms. Thiloma Abayajeewa Acting Deputy Director from the SAARC Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya Senior Prof. Lakshman Senevirathne, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities Prof. Patrick Ratnayake, Senior Professor of Archaeology Prof. Anura Manatunga, the Head of the Department of Fine Arts Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda, Chairperson of the National Craft Council Ms. Heshani Bogollagama, Librarian of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura Dr. Nayana Wijayasundara and the Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural



Affairs Mr. Vijitha Nandakumara also graced this occasion. The Director of SAARC Cultural Centre Ms. Renuka Ekanayake welcomed the gathering and was followed by the address of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya Prof. D.M. Semasinghe. The inauguration was enlivened by a traditional dance presented by the students of the Fine Arts Department of the University of Kelaniya. The Vote of Thanks was delivered by the Deputy Director Programmes Ms. Kishani Jayasinghe Wijayasekara.

A workshop on Art Therapy and lectures on paintings and art was conducted in parallel to the exhibition on 23rd and 24th January 2019 for the high school children of the Kelaniya area. Ms. Shimali Perera was the resource person for the art therapy workshop titled "Creative and Expressive Art" which was graced by Mr. Mohammad Hazrat Ali Khan

Counsellor of the Bangladesh High Commission in Colombo. The workshop created an informal space for the participating high school students to have an opportunity to express themselves through the media of art. The lectures and discussions on painting and art were conducted by Professor Patrick Rathnayake Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Professor Anura Manatunga senior professor of Archaeology of the University of Kelaniya. These lectures provided the high school students with information, ideas and knowledge regarding visual arts and the role it plays in different cultures.



Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre makes a courtesy visit to the Indian High Commission

SAARC Cultural Centre maintains close relations with the High Commissions and Embassies of the Member States in Sri Lanka who supports all our activities. On 13th March 2019 the Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre Ms. Renuka Ekanayake paid a courtesy visit on the Acting High Commissioner of India for Sri Lanka H.E. Dr. Shilpak N. Ambule to discuss the activities of the Centre. The Director highlighted the importance of India's support in strengthening the SAARC mechanism for the promotion of Regional unity through cultural understanding. The progress of activities planned for 2019 was also discussed in detail with the Acting High Commissioner who pledged his support for the activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre.



HE the Ambassador of Maldives to Sri Lanka pays a courtesy call on the Director, SAARC Cultural Centre

H.E. Mr. Omar Abdul Razzak the Ambassador of Maldives to Sri Lanka paid a courtesy visit to the SAARC Cultural Centre on 29th May 2019 accompanied by Mr. Aslam Shakir, Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of Maldives. The Director and the Ambassador discussed the SAARC Cultural Centre programmes for the year 2019 and specifically about the proposed Artist Camp to be held in Maldives. The Ambassador also pledged his support to encourage participants from Maldives for the activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre. The Ambassador and the Deputy Ambassador also pledged to share information regarding the SAARC Cultural Centre with interested persons in Maldives by disseminating the information.



SAARC Cultural Centre at the Innovate Sri Lanka 2019 Exhibition



The Innovation, Invention and Venture Creation Council (IIVCC) of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura invited the SAARC Cultural Centre to participate in the “Innovate Sri Lanka 2019 Exhibition held at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) from 2nd to 3rd April 2019. The Innovate Sri Lanka 2019 had more than 200 stalls dedicated to new research, innovation and information in the fields of science, arts, culture, management, business, environment, agriculture, technology, etc.

The Inaugural ceremony was held on 2nd April 2019 from 08:30am onwards at the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Hall of the BMICH with H.E Maithripala Sirisena, the President of Sri Lanka as the Chief Guest with Dr. Bandula Wijay as a Guest of Honour. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre Ms. Renuka Ekanayake, Secretaries and

officials of Ministries of Sri Lanka, heads of organizations of the public and private sector exhibitors, faculty members of universities, were present at the inauguration.

Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura Senior Professor Sampath Amaratunge in his welcome speech stressed the importance of dissemination of knowledge and information. The president of Sri Lanka H.E. Maithripala Sirisena during his address stated that Sri Lanka was at its peak in science, technology and innovation millennium ago and have yet to reach that level in the modern era and encouraged the students and the academics to be creative and innovative for Sri Lanka to reach its past glory. Dr. Bandula Wijay, scientist, engineer and entrepreneur with more than 30 patents on medical devices and the Sri Lankan Ambassador on Science Technology and Innovation, highlighted

the importance of learning and knowledge and stated that creativity and innovations are born through knowledge.

The exhibition stall of the SAARC Cultural Centre was adorned with a painting by Samina Nafies of Bangladesh titled “Togetherness” created at the SAARC Artist Camp in 2018, publications and video clips of the Centre’s past activities. The Innovate Sri Lanka 2019 provided an opportunity for the SCC to meet academics and researchers from different disciplines and the academics of the Graduate School at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura shared information regarding projects affiliated with culture and possibilities of future cooperation. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences shared data on cultural programmes and research and discussed possibilities of collaboration.



Research Review Meeting – Research Grants on Buddhist Cultural Trails

The Review Meeting for SAARC Research Grant on Buddhist Cultural Trails was held on 30th May 2019 at the SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka via video conferencing. The Research Review Committee comprised of Prof. Sudharshan Seneviratne, Emeritus Professor of Archaeology (University of Peradeniya and former Sri Lankan High Commissioner to India), Prof. Asanga Thilakaratne

Professor of Buddhist Studies (former Director of the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies & Colombo University) and Dr. B.D. Nandadeva a specialist in fine arts and intangible cultural heritage (formerly at the Department of Fine Arts, University of Kelaniya). These three eminent scholars discussed in details the research reports submitted by the recipients of the SAARC Research

Grant on Buddhist Cultural Trails. The Review Committee provided constructive feedback to the researchers so that they are able to fulfil the objectives of the research project and prepare their reports to be published. The Research Review Committee expressed its satisfaction on the progress made by the Research Fellows and made suggestions for further improvement in their respective research projects.

The following research grant awardees presented their progress reports at the meeting:

Afghanistan

Mr. Noor Agha Noori - *Culture and Conflict: Impact of War on Cultural Heritage of Afghanistan (1979 onwards)*

Bangladesh

Prof. Biman Chandra Barua – *The Development of Culture and Tourism in Bangladesh: The Role of Buddhist Religious Tangible Sites*

Bhutan

Mr. Sangay Tashi - *The Role of Museums in the 21st Century for Sustainable Development*

India

Dr. Garima Kaushik - *A Gendered Survey of Buddhist Sites in India and Sri Lanka*

Sri Lanka

Dr. Wimal Hewamanage - *Tooth Relic Procession and Utilizing Elephants: Ethical Investigation*



Research Review Meeting – Research Grants on Hindu Cultural Trails

SAARC Research Grants for further Research on Hindu Cultural Trails was awarded to 8 researchers from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and the research commenced in December 2018. The Review Committee comprising

of Prof. Sudarshan Seneviratne (Professor of Archaeology & former Sri Lankan High Commissioner to India), Prof. S. Pathmanathan (Professor of History and Chancellor of University of Jaffna) and Dr. B.D. Nandadeva reviewed the research

reports and discussed the reports with the recipients through video conferencing. The award recipient from Bhutan was unable to participate as he was out of the country but all other recipients received feedback on their research projects.

The following research grant awardees presented their progress reports at the meeting:

Afghanistan

Mr. Ketab Khan Faizi -
Archaeological Sites of Hindu Shahi Period of Afghanistan

India

Ms. Jyotsna Krishnan Avanoor -
Sociology of Gender: A Study with reference to Gender Identity in Koodiyattam

India

Mr. Ahanthem Homen Singh -
Hindu Temple Culture of Manipur:

Towards Mapping, Conservation and Promotion

India

Ms. Ayswaria Wariar - *A Study of Ritualistic Traditions and Sculptures Specific to Dance and Music in Ancient South Kerala Temples*

Pakistan

Dr. Mueezuddin Hakal - *Hindu Temples and Rituals in Rawalpindi, Pakistan*

Pakistan

Dr. Kiran Shahid Siddiqui -
Endangered Hindu Temples of District Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan

Sri Lanka

Ms. Vasana Premachandra, Ms. P.M.R. Priyadarshani, and Mr. Kalpa Asanga - *Study of the space spreading, Architectural features and chronology of the Hindu temple in the Mullaitivu District Northern Province Sri Lanka*



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