



SAARC Cultural Centre NEWSLETTER

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SAARC Painting Exhibition 2020

SAARC Exhibition of Paintings 2020 was organized by the SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with the University of Kelaniya ensuring the health measures in place. The paintings were showcased at the Senaka Bandaranayake Hall, University of Kelaniya on the 23rd of August 2020, and declared opened by the Advisor to the Honorable Prime Minister and the founder Director of the SCC Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe with a limited participation of delegates from the esteemed member states and invited participants.

The paintings showcased at the exhibition were those of the SAARC Artist Camp held in Hulhumale, Maldives in 2019. The paintings were drawn under the theme 'Oceans, a binding treasure of South Asia' and 'Cultures and Confluences of Creativity.' Total number of paintings exhibited were 52, all of which were drawn by 26 artists representing the Member States of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. They all showcased their own experience under the same theme and it provided an astonishing experience to the audience

and enjoyed the common characteristics of the region from a different perspective. It was an inspiring moment that paintings became the prime medium of expression and the discussion too.

The artworks consisted of a variety of genres, techniques and media. One could enjoy the vast and multi-fold appeal of the mother nature delineated through delightful visions. Though the 'Oceans' remains as the binding and common inspiration for the artists yet each artwork entails a narrative of its respective creator. The unspoken is carefully crafted

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to bring forth the essence, joy and serenity of the ocean. The underline tale of the shared cultural heritage and values are spoken through seascapes, calligraphy, abstract landscapes and figurative visions. Most of the paintings were of oil on canvas, whereas few paintings that were crafted with mixed media and acrylic added a variety to the exposition.



On behalf of the SAARC Cultural Centre, the Director, Prof. (Mrs). Prashanthi Narangoda welcomed the distinguished delegates and addressed the gathering and thanked the Chief Guest Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, the founder Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre and the distinguished guests. Mr.

Samarasinghe, delivered an inspiring speech at the inauguration with his life long experience at SAARC service and emphasized the challenges and obstacles as we move forward. He expressed his gratitude for the continuation and the advancement of the tasks he under took and promoted as the center par excellence

on SAARC Culture and wished all the success for the activities carried out by the SCC under the leadership of the present Director, Deputy Director and the efficient staff. Dr. Anamika Biswas, Deputy Director, Program proposed the vote of thanks and the ceremony was over.



Editorial

It is with great pleasure that the SAARC Cultural Center launches the Second Issue of the SAARC Cultural Centre's Newsletter for the year 2020 through which you will be informed the important events took place at the SCC during the year 2020, amidst the pandemic situation of COVID-19 outbreak. It is obvious that the entire region was affected so despondently that the SAARC Member States were of no exception. The better-off moments and the unfortunate memories are all accumulated in to the past year 2020, however, the SAARC Cultural Center was working in line with all the health guidelines and COVID-19 precautions advice and instructions provided by both government and the Secretariat.

However, the immediate impact of the unprecedented melancholy over the globe was witnessed at the implementation process of the approved Calendar of activities for the year 2020, It is pathetic to look back the whole year that ended up with no accomplishment to the calendar of activities approved by the authorities for the year 2020. That the communities of the region were so disappointed and isolated for a moment and even the arts, crafts and many other artistic impressions and expressions of our region were hidden in the dark, and diminished in an unknown land or thin air.

As we all are aware, the whole SAARC mechanism was kept silence for an entire one-year from the start of Corona Virus Pandemic situation in the Region. With the lockdown of the country, SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo had to pause all the activities for the year 2020 as per the instructions

given by the SAARC Secretariat. It is obvious that the whole SAARC Region and the esteemed governments, private and multi-national organizations worked in line with the health guidelines of the respective Member States to take up the challenge of the COVID -19 pandemic. The most concern was the human life!!

SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo also worked according to the health guidelines by the health sector of Sri Lankan Government and adhered to work from home during the lockdown. Consequently, SAARC Secretariat was of the view that the scheduled activities for the year 2020 to be carried forward to next year 2021 to provide better performance opportunities to the region and its culture.

However, during the Covid 19 pandemic, SAARC Cultural Centre was able to hold the annual event SAARC Painting Exhibition 2020 in collaboration with University of Kelaniya adhering to the strict health guidelines of the government. Apart from that the SCC was able to meet the members of the Research Grant committee and have a review and update the status and the progress of the previous grants. Further, some scholars presented their final paper in terms of finalizing their research grants.

The celebration of SAARC Charter Day 2020 was also taken place on the 08th December 2020 to commemorate the remarkable milestones of the South Asia's History with regard to the regional cooperation. Despite, it must have had its utmost pride and concern about the nations in the region, the SCC team had to adhere to the

strict health guidelines imposed due to 2nd wave of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Though, the entire region was hibernating from different corners, SCC was also able to visit the distinguished envoys from the Embassies and High Commissions of SAARC Member States and have some potential discussions about the activities and the expectations of the SAARC Cultural Center for the next decade. Their inputs and the comments were recorded as valuable points to expand the activities and the relationships among the member states from a novel perspective that will essentially be helpful in developing South Asian Cultural Dialogue.

With that holistic understanding and firm belief we wish the year 2021 will be a healthier and prosperous year for the SAARC Region as well as the whole world!!

Further, passing through such an impotent year, we wish that we will be able to conduct the activities and programs as scheduled for the year 2021!!

Therefore, the ISSUE NO.II of the SAARC Cultural Center News Letter will highlight the events reminiscent in the year 2020 and the activities proposed for the First Half of the Year 2021. SAARC Cultural Centre persistently wishes all our nations and the world a healthy, wealthy and fruitful new year 2021 and ahead!!

- Editor

12th GB Meeting – SAARC Cultural Center 2020



SCC was able to conduct its 12th GB Meeting on the 27th and 28th of October 2020 on virtual mode with the participation of the distinguished members of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. While we thank all the members for their progressive inputs and ideas, the SCC proposed to have some new implementations especially to face the challenges in the particular situation with the aim of reaching the communities via different platforms. As all of our members agreed, the online meetings and gatherings have become more familiar and easier due to health issues and travel

restrictions, it was also agreed that the virtual performances and transmission and communication via cyber space are more effective than physical participation and performance. Despite the fact that we are socially detached for a moment, the members agreed that the virtual communications make us emotionally tightened especially in situations like this. It was correctly proved at the GB meeting by the very warm and welcoming comments by the members of the General Board Meeting. We thank all of them for their fullest and kindest support!!

SAARC Research Grants

In the absence of the Deputy Director (Research) and the Cultural Specialist (Research), the Director undertakes the Research section with her fullest capacity and held a meeting with three consultants and reviewed the research reports sent by the grantees during the past few years. It was highlighted that some of them are of very high quality and recommended to publish as an editorial.

Further, it was recommended to publish the SAARC Research Journal Vol. 7-2020

with the invited articles from the research scholars representing the eight member states. The consultants after a thorough purview recommended a list of authors from among whom to invite and call for papers for the Research Journal Vol.07 to be published. The Center is happy to inform that the response from the scholars were so accomplishing and sent their articles to reach the center by the earliest. The Journal is in the process of editing and will be published no sooner.



36th SAARC Charter Day



SAARC Charter Day 2020 was celebrated in a charm way as per the instructions deputed by the SAARC Secretariat, and under the restricted COVID 19 rules and regulations imposed by the Department of Health, Sri Lanka on the 08th December 2020 at SCC premises as a nominal celebration. Director Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda chaired the meeting and orated the messages sent by H.E. the President, Honorable Prime Minister and H.E. the Secretary General for SAARC while Dr. Anamika Biswas, Deputy Director (Programs) orated the message sent by Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka Mr. Dinesh Gunawardhana. After a small reception the SCC summed up the celebration of 36th SAARC Charter Day.

In Focus >>

Director for SAARC Cultural Centre visits Indian Cultural Centre

Director, SAARC Cultural Centre Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda paid a courtesy call on Director, Swamy Vivekananda Cultural Centre Dr. Rewant Vikram Singh on the 05th of August and had some fruitful dialogue in relation to the cultural cooperation between the SAARC Cultural Centre and the esteemed Member State of India. The ongoing activities at the SCC and the cooperation for their successful implementation was aimed at the discussions. Further, a discussion was held to purview the progress and the status of the proposed SCC site at Matara, Navimana and the means of future operations to promote the regional cultures centering from Matara. Director SCC appreciated the continuous support on the activities by the ICCR and the esteemed member state India at this meeting.

Director, SAARC Cultural Centre meets with H.E. the Ambassador, Afghanistan, Colombo

Director Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda paid a courtesy visit to Embassy of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Colombo on the 28th September 2020. The future programmes to be implemented in Afghanistan and the ongoing activities of the SCC were discussed during the meeting. The support at the SCC activities were assured by the H.E. Mr. Ashraf Haidari, Ambassador for Afghanistan in Colombo.

Director had a discussion with the Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Buddhasasana and Cultural Affairs in Sri Lanka

Director SAARC Cultural Centre Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda met with Mr. Gamini Senarath, Secretary to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to discuss the issues regarding the establishment of SAARC Cultural Centre in Matara Nawimana. They discussed the administrative matters of the centre and future management of the centre after establishment in Matara.



ODE TO 2020!!

SAARC Cultural Center, with its serene understanding and motivation towards promoting our cultures has been working since 2009 and it has been an awesome experience to the communities of the region ever since. It was not only a place for restoring and promoting our cultural heritage for the generations ahead, it was also a pleasant and memorable meeting place for many a groups and a place for sharing thoughts, ideas and new knowledge. Needless to say it has made the programmes of the SAARC Cultural Center more viable and dynamic and also provided the inception for many research, publications and creative work. The experience gained by the staff of the SAARC Cultural Center is immense at this point because they were engaged in some innovative programmes year round and busy with publishing Journals, articles and other productive means that were all of novel look since they represented the commonality of the region. The place they work is not merely an office: it was a haven for enjoyment, and rejoice.

However, the year 2020 was not fruitful as such due to the very reason of the pandemic situation spread all over the world. We were all working in restricted guidelines: the staff was called for work on roster basis, only the essential workload were performed, and physical gathering, events and meetings were all paused for a while. International travel ban was another hurdle that all of us had to face. With all these restrictions, we adapted ourselves to a new normal atmosphere where we all met in different modes. On line meetings became the fancy of the era, and virtual performances enjoyed the highest prestige. And now, social distancing is the smartest choice.

We the staff of the SCC feel this difference more than anybody, because we have been working in a very live atmosphere and engaged

in the most prestigious task bearing in mind. You may ask why? The simple answer is that Culture is the most supramundane aspect of human evolution. Throughout our advancement to date we have proved that we are so named as humans due to our achievements that necessarily symbolized the identity of each one of us amidst the common values, customs, characteristics and other livelihood emollitions. It reflects us that we have been living in a shared society that balanced the physical and emotional complexities by various means including religion, arts and crafts, language and expressions that sanctified our regions and nations.



Amidst such a situation SAARC Cultural Center as a team regrets that we were unable to perform the approved activities of the year 2020 and thereby held up with uncertainty. However, what we learnt is that the humanity perceives limitless venues and avenues to reach and outreach unconditionally.

What makes us happy is that the SCC was able to conduct the SAARC Exhibition of Paintings 2020 at the University of Kelaniya under severe restrictions and limited number of participants before the delegates and invitees. However, it evolved an expression that the region has shared the same experience from different perspectives and looked at its serenity. The paintings of the Art camp held in Maldives were exhibited to the audience reflecting the beauty, serenity and the visual expression of our artists so enthusiastically.

Nevertheless, the entire SAARC region made every possible effort to strengthen their values and customs and the effort made by the SAARC Secretariat to keep the ties consolidated is tremendous. Monitoring from every single point of view, the Secretariat managed to communicate with all the regional centers and shared the decisions so spontaneously to take speedy actions to resolve the souls of aggrieved. And, the implementations for the year 2021, and to update the mandate was not neglected. With that in mind, the SCC conducted the 12th GB meeting on the 27th-28th October 2020 on virtual mode. I believe that it is so significant that all the members of the General Board participated so actively and provided their comments, feedback and compliments with their highest blessings to continue with its activities in the coming year 2021. We as the SCC team is grateful to the distinguished members for their inspiring comments since it infuses us to work more positively in an unprecedented challenging situation, and feel that we not isolated. Similarly, the center was able to participate in the Programme Committee meeting on the 15th November 2020 and celebrated the Charter Day on the 08th December to mark the establishment the SAARC Regional cooperation in 1985. Though, the Center celebrated the Charter Day in a very concise manner, it recalls and reminds us the mammoth steps taken by the SAARC leaders to establish a monitoring body for the advancement of the regional cooperation.

Reminiscing the pros and cons of the year 2020, however, it is overwhelming that we are moving towards the door step of the year 2021!! The message gifted by the year 2020 is that we have to adapt ourselves in the prevailing situation and work with the self-discipline and self-judgement. As the team SCC we wish that we will be able to accomplish our tasks for the region in the year 2021 and the people of our region and beyond will enjoy a happier, healthier and prosperous year ahead!!

The year gone by...

- Dr. Anamika Biswas, Deputy Director (Programs) - SCC

We all have witnessed a pandemic year, the same has been the biggest event and story of our lifetimes. In a simple and very honest way we all know that it is the most devastating and disrupting year that we have lived through. This also means that we have the responsibility – and the promise – to both understand the change as it has happened; and what this means for our future.

We need to listen to both voices of people and nature – to evolve and nurture the very gift of life. Generally, this is the time to recap our activities of the year gone by; this year SAARC Cultural Centre has been fortunate to have on board, Professor (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda as the Director. She is a qualified professional and academician who has been serving in the Department of Fine Arts, University of Kelaniya since 1992. She has a vast and all-round experience in academics, research and public relation. She is also a member of the National Trustees Board. The Centre is delighted to have a Director with a vision based on academic research to enhance the quality of research, education and social awareness and to treat the needs of economy, polity and

culture of the Region.

The year also saw tenure completion of Culture Specialist (Programmes) – Dr. Soumya Manjunath Chavan and Deputy Director for Programmes – Ms. Kishani Wijayasekara and Deputy Director for Research- Ms. Bindu Urugodawatte. The Centre is grateful for their services and contributions.

As was approved, SAARC Painting Exhibition was organized in the month of August along with complete safety guidelines and precaution. The programme received warm reception from the scholars, academicians and professionals. A catalogue with information about the artists was also published for distribution and documentation. The exhibition was inaugurated by Mr. G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Advisor to the Honourable Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Founding Director of the SAARC Cultural Centre

The Centre celebrated SAARC Charter Day on 8th December 2020 by reading the messages of his Excellency the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Honourable Prime

Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, Honourable Foreign Minister Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena. The Centre also received good wishes and blessings from the Secretary General of the SAARC, Mr. Esala Ruwan Weerakoon. The day was to underline and reboot the mission and vision of the SAARC as a regional body to contribute, share and enhance the regional cooperation for all round development.

In the coming year 2021, we are preparing to organize all approved programmes, given the circumstances are improved. As the time is passing by, many countries across the globe have initiated vaccination against the Covid-19. We hope and wish that the South Asian Region will soon follow the lead. SAARC Cultural Centre is eager to be active in conservation, research and promotion of shared cultural Heritage of the SAARC Region.



Research collaboration by the SCC – move towards 2021

One of the prime concerns of the SCC is to promote research of the regional culture, language and other aspects in collaboration with partner agencies and organizations.

SCC is happy to announce the first of such collaborations will be conducted by the Center of Contemporary Indian Studies of University of Colombo, Sri Lanka to commemorate the 46th World Hindi Day on the 12th January 2021. The SCC is happy to

deliver its compliments and extended hands along with many other hosting partners to conduct the International Hindi Webinar with the participation of scholars, graduate and undergraduate students from India, Sri Lanka and many other parts of the world.

In June 2021, the SCC will join as the strategic Partner for 2nd International Conference on Archaeology,

History and Heritage 2021 (ICAHH 2021) scheduled to be held on 03rd – 04th June 2021 on Virtual Platform. The SCC research scholars will have the opportunity to publish in SCOPUS indexed journals. Further, ICAHH 2021 will consult the SCC as a Scientific Committee Member for the conference, will serve in the panel of session Chairs at the conference.





ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAARC Calendar of Events for the First Half of 2021

01	SAARC International Women's Day	08th March	Bangladesh	Non-Participatory
02	SAARC Festival of Traditional Instrumental Music and workshop	March	Bhutan	Participatory
03	SAARC Artists, Sculpture Camp and Exhibition	April	Bangladesh	Participatory
04	SAARC Film Festival	May	Sri Lanka	Participatory
05	SAARC Food Festival and Spice Exhibition	June	India	Participatory
06	SAARC Cultural Capital- Closing Ceremony	June	India	Non- Participatory
07	SAARC Literary Awards	June	India	Non- Participatory

Cultural Festivals have become very popular in the SAARC Region, and to date, the SAARC Cultural Centre has successfully organized many Cultural Festivals. Whilst continuing to organize similar Festivals, in 2021, the Centre will also focus on showcasing the rich culture of the SAARC Region to the rest of the world. Interaction is an essential component of our Programmes, as well as collaborating with other Festivals to showcase the SAARC Region.

“ It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver. ”
-Mahatma Gandhi

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