



SAARC Cultural Centre NEWSLETTER

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Covid-19 Pandemic - The biggest challenge in the history: Wake up call for unity

The Covid-19 has repeatedly proved that it is one of the most dangerous viruses that the history has ever faced to get rid of in terms of securing the wellbeing of the humanity. It has been continuously developing and spreading all over

the world in various forms which we call variants, mutating from one to another causing some adverse and life-threatening effects to the global community. The severity is not too little to ignore, when calculating the long-term effects to one's physical and

mental health, and the evocative effects to the younger generation who completely lost two years of their total education to date. And, the mental deterioration caused by such dilemma is immeasurable. Above all, it has created severe health and socio-

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economic consequences to the entire community by creating a trending new fashion called “isolation.” But, how far the global community can “stay isolated” to defeat the rebellion is a question with no clear solution.

The World Health Organization (WHO), along with its prominent staff, is on the front line to support the Member States and their societies, especially for the most vulnerable among them, with guidance, training, equipment and concrete life-saving services as they are on the go to fight the virus. The health experts are labouring day and night to find vaccines to provide extra immunity; however, the virus is adapting itself to uphold its victory.

It is crystal clear that the vaccine provides the timely solution to get rid of the deadly virus and keep our body prepared to fight against the COVID-19. What we have not addressed to date is how we can reset the mind capacity of our generations to come. That, keeping in mind, we are bound to seek some solid approaches to address the impact of detractions that are highly sensitive and means to sort out the issues of socio-economic and cultural relationships. How far the isolation can evoke such awareness is so critical in this retrospective.

Having our grave concerns about all these aspects, we strongly believe that this is the time to look back and recall the utmost value of human relationships beyond our geographical boundaries. It is proved that there were no territorial boundaries for our ancestors: people were migrating from one region to other seeking better lifestyle and daring to enjoy the life at its best. Nevertheless, it generated a common platform to the community to settle them in a cosmopolitan kingdom what we call them today as pre-historic dynasties. As proved to date, the Priesthood had been accepted by many a primitive societies: Sumeria, Mesopotamia, Israelite, which is very much similar to what archaeologists have found in



Harappan civilization proving that the culture and its variants have provided abundant of nutrients to grow and live in harmony where no geographical, ethnic and cultural boundaries. The splendid craftsmanship, skills and creative links have established civilizations that are unsurpassed to the modern day technology and the skill and think tanks. South Asia, being one of the splendid civilized societies in the world can therefore, knit together to re-vitalize through our prolonged experience, the serenity and the serendipity by extending our hearts and hands towards the global harmony by demonstrating our empathy towards our nations.

Last but not least, what we all need to know as a global community is that the impact of COVID-19 is unprecedented and unpredicted in our lifetime and thus requires unconditional response and call for harmony to fight against the evil. The efficacy of the vaccine is rather predicted, but not proved to date, because we all are in an unprecedented situation.

The statement made by António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations is of vital importance in this regard. “Once we

have finally turned the page on this epidemic, there must be a time to look back fully to understand how such a disease emerged and spread its devastation so quickly across the globe, and how all those involved reacted to the crisis. The lessons learned will be essential to effectively address similar challenges, as they may arise in the future. But now is not that time. Now is the time for unity, for the international community to work together in solidarity to stop this virus and its shattering consequences.” As the region with 1/3 of the global population, the South Asian nations can engrave the history by uniting ourselves boundlessly: by showcasing the love, affection and the dearly attention towards others and evoking the broader understanding about the emotions, expressions and sharing the common experience through cultural expressions: the most beautiful and appealing language in the world.

Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda
Director
SAARC Cultural Center

Editorial

The first issue of the SAARC Cultural Centre’s Newsletter for 2021 is presented amidst the critical situation of third wave of the COVID 19 pandemic when the whole SAARC Region is affected severely. India: the soil with the biggest number of population in the South Asian Region, and the nation with the third largest population in the world hit with the global pandemic of COVID-19 with its biggest challenge of the decade to survive the mass population from unexpected and uncontrollable death count, being the third most affected country in the world. It is so overwhelming that the daily positive cases reached around 400,000 while causing approximately about 4000 daily deaths indicating the acute condition of the deadly virus CORONA. While India was facing its most heart-breaking pandemic experience, the other nations in South Asia was also affected by the second or third wave of the pandemic situation which threatened them more or less the same as in India. Whereas many a countries had to lock down the country with the aim of controlling

the spread, some imposed travel restrictions and limited work force in their operational stations, however, making the entire process of global economy, socio-cultural relationships and simply the day to day activities of human life.

We have to witness that the global mass population has already completed two years in this pandemic threat with no solution to date. The medical professionals are dying hard to find a consolidated solution, but they have to satisfy themselves with the vaccine for now. Nevertheless, the global death count is rising day by day with the conquering rival COVID-19 for its capacity to adapt to the situation. Consequently, WHO had to rename them on the four letters of the Greek Alphabet: Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta of which Delta being the most threatening Indian variant.

In a scenario as such: ‘How does it affect the daily life of the nations?’ is the most challenging question that has been confronted by all governments to date. This traverse is not merely to address the sustenance of the physical life of the mass population, but also to treat their depressed minds. As we are aware, they are being affected in various ways of which living and loving are two major causes. People do not have access to their daily living and they cannot enjoy their leisure time with their loved ones. ***That is where the culture and cultural elements play a vital role in encompassing such challenges,*** and the SAARC Cultural Center makes all the efforts to reach and outreach the human life with the world’s most appealing language: **Art** which represents thoughts, emotions, ideas, attitudes of human beings.

Having said and well realized, the SCC family acknowledge our sincere empathies for all who had to give up their last breath due to COVID-19; however, their soul will remain in the hearts of humanity. Our prayers

and good wishes are extended to the affected and aggrieved families and individuals and hope steadfast recovery from this deadly virus and to evoke the regular life style of the human life no sooner.

This volume of the SCC newsletter will bring the latest achievements and announcements for the year 2021 of SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka. The highlight of our activities during the six-month period includes;

1. the progress of the activities scheduled to be held in May 2021
2. Meetings held with the Prime Minister’s office and the diplomatic missions of SAARC Member States.
3. Participation and contribution towards cultural events of diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka

However, we regret to announce that the Year 2021 is also another drawback year for the SAARC Corporation and the respective Member States as in 2020 due to the pandemic COVID 19 virus. Technically speaking, the Centre’s Calendar of activities for the year 2021 was held up so far due to the disappointing situation. Some of the activities to be mentioned are: Women’s Day in Bangladesh, Festival of Traditional Instrumental Musical and Workshop in Bhutan, Artists, Sculpture and Painting Exhibition in Bangladesh, Film Festival in Sri Lanka, Spice Festival and the Food Exhibition, Cultural Capital-Closing Ceremony India, Literary Award and Ceremony in India, and Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage of Architecture in Pakistan,

The SAARC Cultural Centre is taking all the measures to implement the above activities adhering to the rules and regulations of the SAARC Secretariat and the respective Member States imposed on COVID 19.

10 SAARC FILM FESTIVAL 2021

Date: 24-29 August 2021

Country: Sri Lanka

Status: Scheduled

SAARC Cultural Center is planning and taking all the measures well in advance to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of SAARC Film Festival from 24th to 29th August 2021 at the Tharangane Film Theatre of the National Film Corporation, Colombo while staging its closing and awarding ceremony on the 29th August 2021 under the auspices of the Honourable Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Minister concerns of Buddha Sasana, and Cultural Affairs, and the Former

President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. At this grand event, we are happy to announce that the SAARC Cultural Center made all the necessary arrangements to recall and recognize its past years' award winners and screen all the awarded films from all member states with the kind patronage of Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation, the National Television Network in Sri Lanka. Further, the SCC launched a series of newspaper articles to recognize the

nominated films for the 10th SAARC Film Festival from all the member states with the holistic view to educate our society of the cultures of the SAARC nations and the common values accustomed the art of each film maker. We are glad to announce that the SCC was able to obtain nominations from all the member states to be screened celebrating its 10th Anniversary.

Following are the preliminary entries received from the respective member states; however, these entries could be subjected to review and changes if they do not meet the qualifying criterias stated under the festival guidelines.

Country	Name of the Film	Category	Name of the Artists
Afghanistan	Hawa, Marim and Ayesha	Feature Film	Directed by Sahraa Karimi
	The Weaver	Feature Film	Directed by Mohammad Ayreek
	The Boy and The Kite	Short Film	Directed by Sated Jawad Afkar
	Turning Point	Short Film	
Bangladesh	Maya- The Lost Mother	Feature Film	Directed by Masud Pathik
	No Dorai- Dare to Surf	Feature Film	Directed by Taneem Rahman Angshu
	Nari Jibon- Women's Life	Short Film	Directed by Gazi Rakayet
	Eternal 21st February In World Arena	Short Film	Directed by Fazlay Azim Jewel
	Kalo Megher Vela- The Cloud Boat	Master Film	Directed by Mrittika Goon
Bhutan	Udum Vara (The Mythical Flower)	Feature Film	Directed by Nima Yoeser
India	Mai Ghat: Crime No 103/205	Feature Film	Directed by Ananth Narayan Mahadevan
	Hellaro	Feature Film	Directed by Abhishek Shah
	Son Rise	Short Film	Directed by Vibha Bakshi
	The Secret Life of Frogs	Short Film	Directed by Ajay Bedi, Vijay Bedi
	Pink	Master Film	Directed by Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury
Maldives	An'guru	Web-Based Short Film	Directed by Ali Shifau
	Gulhun (Connections)	Short Film	Directed by Aishath Fuwad Thowfeek
	Bavathi	Feature Film	Directed by Ilyas Waheed

Nepal	Sarita Age-11 Years (Tell Me Who I Am)	Feature Film	Directed by Sergio Basso
	Nalapani	Feature Film	Directed by Rimesh Adhikari
	Agnidahan	Master Film	Directed by Ghanashyam Lamichhane
Pakistan	Processing Nominations		
Sri Lanka	Paangshu	Feature Film	Directed by Visakesa Chandrasekaram
	Vishama Bhaga (The Other Half)	Feature Film	Directed by Lalith Rathnayake
	Laksha Art Documentary	Short Film	Directed by Mr. Amith Priyanjan

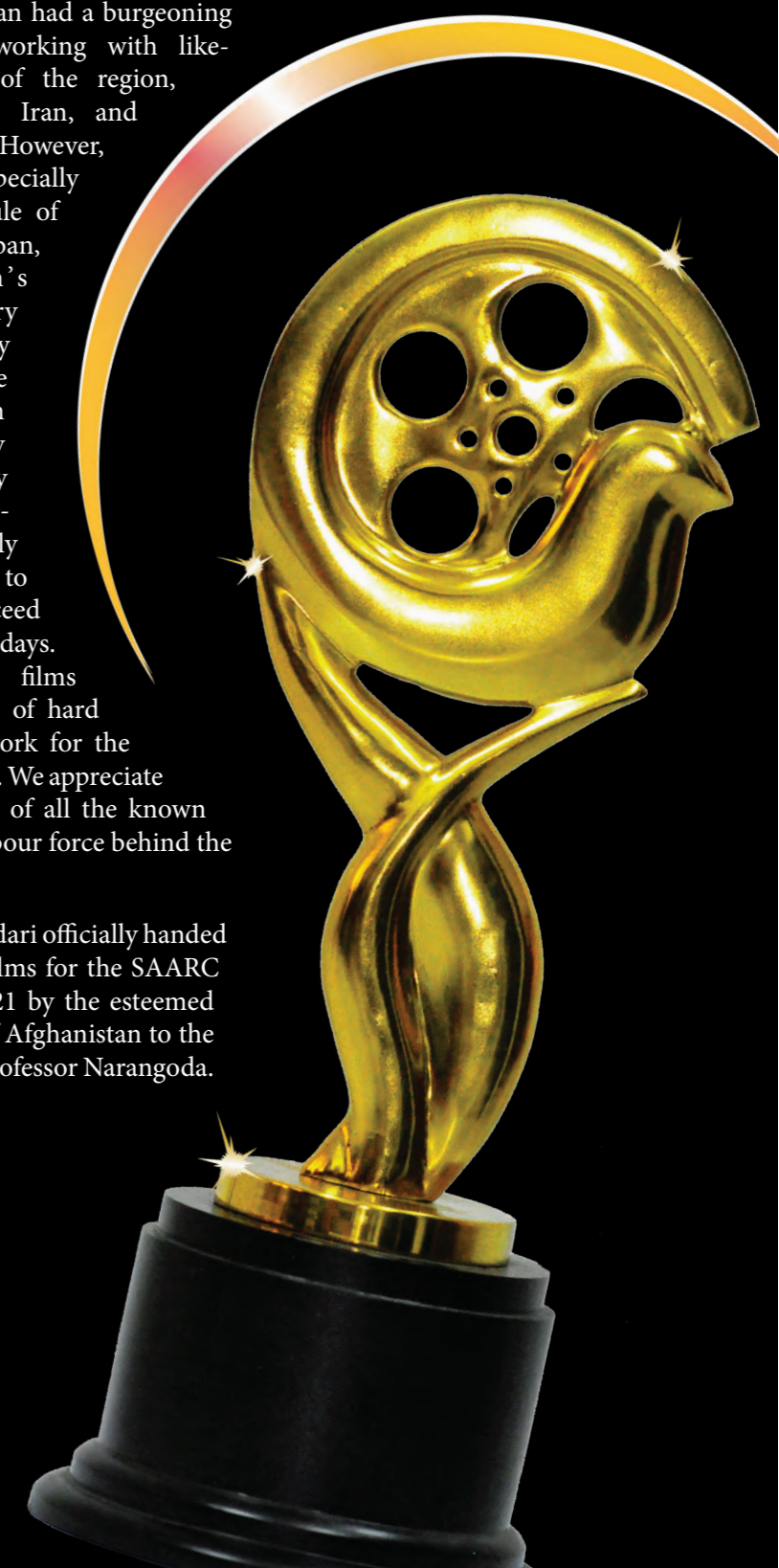
We are so thankful to the Embassy of Afghanistan for being the first among those nominations!! The extracts of the meeting were also published in the official website of Afghanistan Embassy on Friday, 09/04/2021 under the Heading 'Afghanistan Becomes the First SAARC Country to Send Film Nominations to SAARC Film Festival 2021.'

"The Director of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Cultural Center, headquartered in Colombo, Professor Prashanthi Narangoda, called on Ambassador M. Ashraf Haidari today. They celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the SAARC Film Festival in advance, cutting a cake to mark the event and to appreciate Afghanistan's becoming the first SAARC member-state to send its film nominations for the 2021 SAARC Film Festival.

Professor Narangoda and Ambassador Haidari took note of the hard efforts of the Director-General of the Afghan Film, Dr. Sahraa Karimi, who has gradually but consistently revived Afghanistan's film industry. The Director offered an invitation to Dr. Karimi to attend in person the SAARC Film Festival 2021, provided the COVID19 quarantine restrictions allowed. She also offered an open invitation to the Afghan Film Director-General to consider visiting Sri Lanka after removal of the COVID19 travel restrictions, which the Ambassador appreciated.

It is to be highlighted that in the 1980s, Afghanistan had a burgeoning film industry, working with like-minded artists of the region, including India, Iran, and Pakistan. However, the 1990s, especially under the misrule of medieval Taliban, Afghanistan's film industry was completely collapsed. In the post-Taliban era, the industry has slowly made a comeback, recently working hard to revive and exceed its former good days. The nominated films are the products of hard and dedicated work for the particular revival. We appreciate the commitment of all the known and unknown labour force behind the mammoth task!!

Ambassador Haidari officially handed the nominated films for the SAARC Film Festival 2021 by the esteemed member states of Afghanistan to the Director, SCC, Professor Narangoda.



Activities in-Progress

SAARC Women's Day - Bangladesh

Date: 8th March 2021
Country : Bangladesh
Status : Postponed

SAARC International Women's Day, marks the global celebration of achievements led by women and their contribution to the society. This programme has been crucial in the calendar of activities of the Centre ever since its inception and continues to take its leap in honouring the remarkable footprint of women in culture. It is important to duly recognise and appreciate deserving women achievers in the field of culture so as to reach out further and to inspire the likeminded. In line to the proposition, Member state of Bangladesh has designated Ministry of Women and Child Affairs as the collaborative partner to expedite SAARC International Women's Day 2021. The same programme was to be held in the preceding year but deferred due to the overwhelming situation prevailed in the region. Despite the disruptions in consequence of the global pandemic, Centre has been in regular discussions with the focal points to streamline the arrangements in compliance with the guidelines mandated by the SAARC Cultural Centre. Decision on the choice of events remains with the collaborative partner as the programme is of non-Participatory in nature. Centre at its best interests awaits to reinvigorate its commitments and efforts to commence the arrangements imminently.

SAARC Festival of Traditional Instrumental Musical and Workshop - Bhutan

Date : 26-27 April 2021
Country : Bhutan
Status : Postponed

Traditional instrumental music is an integral and important aspect of the South Asian culture encapsulating numerous musical traditions and styles. Diverse communities, languages and distinct music styles emulate a blend of diversity in the South Asian region. Each member state has its very own, unique and rich traditional instruments and highly skilled instrumentalists. It is significant that a common regional platform is established and the much-needed support is rendered to promote the traditional instrumental music while preserving its authenticity.

The inaugural edition of the SAARC Festival of Traditional Instrumental Music and Workshop was proposed to be held in collaboration with the member state of Bhutan in 2020. The designated partner in collaboration is the Department of Culture, Ministry of Home and Culture Affairs of Bhutan. The scheduled events for 2020 were postponed due to the turn of events prompted by the pandemic. It was then rescheduled to 26-27 April 2021 to be held as an online based programme but dates have been extended further. New programme format has been devised to accommodate the requirements of the need. Subsequent to the changes, pre-recorded instrumental performances are requested from the participants and in addition, a workshop has been scheduled to be held virtually under the theme of "Insight into traditional instruments: A South Asian Walkthrough". New dates for the programme will be announced soon.

Artists, Sculpture and Painting Exhibition - Bangladesh

Date(s) : to be announced
Country : Bangladesh
Status : Awaiting

SAARC Artist Camp and Exhibition (Painting & Sculpture) 2021 is a collective initiative integrating the 10th installment of the SAARC Artist Camp and the inaugural SAARC Sculpture Symposium together. It is one of the impressive and vibrant segments' holding an important place within the calendar of activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre. It was placed on schedule to be held in the month of April 2021 in association with the member state of Bangladesh. In a prolonged period of social isolation, and with travel restrictions in place, the possibilities of organising the programme became narrow and has been postponed. New dates will be announced via the official channels and published in the SCC website. As an out-turn, Programme format took its realignment to adapt to the new normalcy. thus, the new format encompasses three major events respectively an interactive workshop (online), Working on-site (online), and a virtual exhibition common to both the events. On the other hand, Sculpture being an intrinsic part of SAARC Artist Camp and Exhibition (Painting & Sculpture) 2021 would offer an open dialogue between the sculptors and their art, creating a platform for interchanging ideas and technicians.

SAARC Spice Festival and the Food Exhibition - India

Date(s) : Not announced
Country : India
Status : Awaiting

SAARC Food Festival and Spice Exhibition 2021 will be the amalgamation of culinary extravaganza and the display of spices unique to the region. Conceptualised in 2019 and was to debut in the year 2020 in collaboration with the member state of India. However, the programme did not take place due to the impact of covid-19 in the region. Centre has initiated the required measures to organise the programme via virtual means and awaits nominations from the member states. The new format would incorporate events of online exhibitions, cooking demonstrations and online workshops. The core objective of this programme would be to create awareness on the preservation of Indigenous recipes, traditional cuisines, rituals, norms and practices unique and native to the region. As it sounds, this festival would remain a substantial regional platform for the exchange of traditional culinary practices and it would encourage artist interaction between the member states.

SAARC Cultural Capital-Closing Ceremony India

Date(s) : to be announced
Country : India
Status : Awaiting

The concept of the SAARC Cultural Capital was incepted in 2013 which came as a proposition at the 5th Governing Board Meeting of the

SAARC Cultural Centre and approved unanimously at the 3rd meeting of the SAARC Ministers of culture held in New Delhi on September 25, 2014. This programme was launched with a view to recognise and highlight the diversity of each SAARC Member State, whilst celebrating the shared culture and heritage of the Region. Commencing with Afghanistan, each SAARC Member State is invited in alphabetical order, to designate a city of their choice as the SAARC Cultural Capital for a period of one calendar year. During this period, the designated Cultural Capital would host a series of cultural and social events, made up of participatory and non-participatory programmes. The programmes conducted during the year, would reflect the individual identity of the host Member State whilst displaying an overall dimension of the South Asian Region. The number and variety of events conducted during the SAARC Cultural Capital will be determined by the Host Member State in consultation with the SAARC Cultural Centre.

First ever city designated as the SAARC Cultural Capital was Bamiyan, the ancient city known to the world for its archaeological significance and which remains the symbol of regional connectivity. Thimphu was designated as the SAARC Cultural Capital for the period 2018-19 which is the capital of Bhutan and distinctly renowned for its unique cultural Values and the hospitality of its people. During the designated period, the city became host to a series of cultural festivals, Film Festivals, Food festivals, Exhibitions etc.

Honour of nominating a city to be designated as the SAARC Cultural Capital for the period of 2019-2020 is bestowed to the SAARC Member State of India, however with the prevailing conditions due to global pandemic,

developments of this programme have been hindered. Even so the Centre has been seeking all necessary measures to streamline the programme in association with the member state of India imminently.

SAARC Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage of Architecture - Pakistan,

The concept note has been prepared in order to meet the ongoing situation in order to make it convenient and flexible to the host member state Pakistan.

In keeping with the objective of developing expertise and skills among the Member States in heritage management, the SAARC Cultural Centre has so far conducted two workshops on World Heritage Sites Management in South Asia in Pakistan (2013) and Nepal (2014). For 2021, a workshop on the intangible cultural heritage of South Asian architecture has been proposed to be held in Pakistan. This workshop will discuss the traditions related to architecture especially the traditions still practiced in the Region and will also try to identify the best practices of architecture which has survived for centuries and promote the reasoning behind for sustainable architecture. As these traditional architectural practices are still in use and are a part of the living heritage of the people and their contemporary life, discussion and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to these traditions is of high importance to present and future generations.

Meetings and Courtesy Calls

During the COVID 19 pandemic, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda met with Mr. Gamini Senarath, Secretary to the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka at Temple Trees, the Prime Minister's Office. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss about the proposed SAARC Cultural Center at Navimana, Matara.

Director SCC also met the Ambassador Mr. M. Ashraf Haidari, at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Colombo, (following extract was published in the Afghanistan Embassy web site-www.colombo.mfa.af), High Commissioner of Maldives His Excellency Omar Abdul Razzak, High



Commissioner of Bangladesh Mr. Tareq Md Ariful Islam, the Charge d' Affaires a.i./Second Secretary on behalf of the Ambassador to the Royal Nepal, Mr. Biswash Bhatta, Press Attache Ms. Kalsoom Qaiser on behalf of the High Commissioner of Pakistan at her courtesy visit to their missionary offices. She paid attention



to their requests to be amalgamated in the activity plans of the cultural Center. One of the important factors was to share the details and visions of the SCC with the Cultural Centers belonged to esteemed member states and to take part and contribute to the cultural events hosted by respective Cultural Centers.

Special Announcement

We are glad to inform you that SAARC Cultural Centre is the Strategic Partner for 2nd International Conference on Archaeology, History and Heritage 2021 (ICAHH 2021) scheduled to be held on 03rd – 04th June 2021 in Virtual Platform. As strategic partner, the members of SAARC Cultural Centre will be getting special discount rates and partial scholarship opportunities.

Up to 25% discounted rates for the registration fee for the participants of SAARC Cultural Centre, Through the 'TIKIM Scholarship Program' students (Undergraduate & Graduate) will be able to get up to 40% scholarships according to the quality of the abstract. Selected students will be getting these scholarships.



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