



SAARC Cultural Centre NEWSLETTER

December 2021 | Vol. 11 | No. 2



SAARC Cultural Centre celebrates SAARC Children's Day 2021

Date : 20-23 December 2021

Venue: Royal Academy of Performing Arts, Bhutan

SAARC Children's Day 2021 was celebrated in Thimphu Bhutan in association with the Department of Culture, Ministry of Home and Cultural affairs, Bhutan from 20-23 December 2021 at the Royal Academy of Performing Arts, Thimphu, Bhutan. The programme being non-participatory in nature was organized with the objective of bringing awareness on the issues that are faced by our children in the society, and to reach out to the global community with the message on the need to

safeguard their rights, privileges and to ascertain the morals and values to empower children with their fullest scope of capabilities

The programme was exclusively proposed at the 11th Governing Board meeting of the SAARC Cultural Centre and eventually witnessed in this year due to the fact that all the programs that were proposed for the year 2021 was postponed to the year 2022. The participation was very encouraging with students from various schools in Thimphu, especially due to the fact that

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they got the opportunity to celebrate and enjoy as much as possible after a long spell of lock down. Students were given the opportunity to interact, share thoughts and witness the excitements throughout the programme. Not only the programme delivered the excitement but also remained a learning platform endorsing the traditional dance forms and the instrumental music which kept intact with the objectives. Students participated in several workshops that were organized as part of the celebrations. Chham (Mask Dance) of Bhutan was among the highlights since most of the students had the opportunity to wear a mask and dance during the event. Meanwhile, there were also instrumental music sessions and singing workshops held for children to get some hands-on experience.

All events of this programme were held at the Royal Academy of Performing Arts, Thimphu, Bhutan in a benefitting manner in accordance with the health guidelines imposed by the Government of Bhutan, and the organizers were well aware to ensure the well- being of the attendees.

An exclusive photo booth was setup at the venue for children to take pictures and capture their memories of excitement and fun. Guests too were engaged in the photo session at the designated photo booth stalls and joined the multi-purpose hall to watch an MTV video which was exclusively released to mark the SAARC Children's Day 2021. Children were presented a goody bag each consisting of drawing book, crayons, sketch pen, color pencil and a mask as a token of appreciation for their participation in the programme. Finally, all events came to an end with the feedback sessions and suggestions by guests and children at the expression stall regarding the day's program.

Programme was presided by Hon'ble Minister Lyonpo Ugyen Dorji, Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs, Bhutan along with



distinguished representatives and officials from the Ministry, officials from the SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other relevant senior government officials and officials from different agencies. The SAARC Cultural Centre is grateful to the officials of Department of Culture, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs Thimphu, Bhutan for extending their

support in expediting this programme on schedule amidst the challenging timeframe particularly in making this event a success. The program was successfully conducted and all the guests and children enjoyed the day, and the appreciation poured in to thank the SAARC Cultural Centre and the host member state.

Editorial

We are in the eve of year 2021, a year full of calendar of activities for the SAARC cultural Centre which were not being implemented due to the health restrictions for COVID 19 imposed by the Member States of the SAARC Region. The top-level administrators of the SAARC were keen on the health assurance of the respective Member States since all the Member States of the Region were affected by the pandemic of COVID 19 which started in the early quarter of the year 2020. Since then the Social, Economic and Cultural development of the Region went down drastically. Amidst all such, the New Year 2022 is a great challenge for the Region for food security. Thus it is the need and the challenge for the entire world to take some measures for the protection of food and health or otherwise the world will have to face another calamity beyond the pandemic of COVID 19. In this crucial situation, we, the peoples from the SAARC Region must be aware that the basic needs of people in the South Asian region are so significant due to the poverty and the less health care and welfare facilities. According to the statistics provided by Asian Development

Bank, South Asia hits the second largest poverty ration next to sub-Saharan Africa amounting to the international poverty rate of 15.09% with a figure approximately 256.24 million extremely poor number of population in the region.

The drawback is obvious as the whole world is witnessing the fact with regard to the socio-political and sustainable development; however, the most dreadful situations are expected when the emotional stress is not encountered by the responsible authorities, especially with regard to the youngsters, teenagers and school children. The fact is that the children of each age lost their school time and their peer relationships, resultantly making them isolated from the society. The repercussions are forecasted as the society will not be aware of the social responsibilities and the due obligations, and scrumptiously inhibited soft power will not sustain in the future human society. Instead, they will interact with electronic devices and tools, build relationship with animated figures or robots etc., which will result in some mental imbalance and disorders. Thus, the youngsters, being the future of any nation, the South Asian nation will have to take very strong measures to evade such situations, since South Asia is comprised with the 24.89% of the world population. That is where we have to take serious measures and means to develop, establish and promote 'CULTURE' as the tool to inculcate 'soft power.' SAARC Cultural Centre, having understood the impact of Culture in terms of transforming the society, are prepared to extend its hands to entreat the entire region and the whole SAARC Organization as well as to the SAARC Region despite the COVID 19 pandemic had washed away the strength of the whole region.

The SAARC Cultural Center presents its Newsletter Volume II: July-December for the year 2021 with a slight disappointment for not being able to implement the calendar of activities for the year 2021 in its full strength for two years at a stretch due to COVID 19 insurgence.

This volume of the SCC newsletter will bring the latest achievements of the year 2021 and announcements for the year 2022 of SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka. The highlight of our activities during the six-month period includes;

1. 37th SAARC Charter Day
2. Resume of construction of SAARC Cultural Centre in Nawimana Matara
3. Participation and contribution towards cultural events took place in Sri Lanka

Most of activities planned to be held in the year 2021 were ready with the quorum from all member states. The SAARC Cultural Centre is taking all the measures to implement the Calendar of Activities for the year 2022 adhering to the rules and regulations of the SAARC Secretariat and the respective Member States imposed on COVID 19 from a new perspective, particularly to provide more opportunities for non-participatory activities particularly in the prevailing situation. The SAARC Cultural Center has already forwarded its future Work Plan for the Year 2022 for the due approval of its Members and the endorsement by the SAARC Secretariat.

We wish all the happiness, good health and peace for all our readers in the New Year 2022 and ahead!!

A MOMENTUM FOR THE YEAR 2022!!

We are at the door step of the New Year 2022 with a long spent year 2021 with some positive and impressive thinking, to move ahead amidst the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. As it was first identified in Wuhan, in China, the novel virus called SARS-CoV-2 was a highly transmissible pathogen that infected the acute respiratory system making the situation of the individual potentially fatal. With the obnoxious consequences of year 2020, all the member states of the South Asian region were happy to refresh the heart and soul with novel ideas and work plans. It was a happy moment for SAARC Cultural Center because it had prepared all the concept papers and related documentation for the first half of the year 2021 as approved by the 12th Governing Board and granted by the 58th Programme Committee meeting held in the year 2020. SAARC member states were so happy to receive the authentication and the due endorsement to showcase their cultural assets and make the member states and beyond to enjoy the serenity. However, the expectations were not satisfactorily achieved as the year 2021 was constantly obstructed with the 2nd and 3rd wave of the same pandemic in varying degrees that affected and obstructed its way ahead for another whole year.

Within such a dilemma, the World Health Organization declared taking every protective means to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and associated morbidity (more precisely the mortality), and lockdowns and protective behaviors have been instituted by various countries in order to restrict the spread of COVID-19. It is imperative to quantify that

the entire world followed different protective behaviors and means: either imposed by the respective governments, or individually accustomed behavior patterns. The most interesting in this scenario is the adherence to norms and beliefs which drove an individual's commitment to enact in a manner with the hope that it would unconditionally help protect themselves from fatal virus. Herbal medicine and medicinal practices such as steaming through nostrils to release the trachea, spiritual meditation, etc., in addition to prescribed health guidelines such as social distancing, hygienic and sanitary care were immensely helpful in alleviating the severity.

Thus, it is so vital to understand the role played by the culture in eradicating the evil circumstances that were faced by the community for so long and we believe that the present day society must take in to consideration the depth and breadth of the concerns of our ancestral community to safeguard the life of their brethren. Primarily defined as the beliefs, attitudes, practices and all sorts of arts and crafts, the abode of culture has proved again to date that it can play a key role in the adoption of protective behaviours in critical situations. The scientific methods and approaches are so vast with regard to the particular society that the culture and its elements has impacted to sooth the physical and mental wellbeing of the individual simultaneously. This includes alleviating the evil including the mitigation of diseases, pandemics, epidemics and expecting the fertility for the entire society with a catharsis impact in each individual. This is one of the reasons that the researchers

have continuously argued: the contentment of the role of culture in disease control as many factors that are culturally variant, and can relate to minimize the spread of the virus i.e. the styles of greeting, kisses vs handshakes vs bows, and social practices. Psychologists have also postulated that cultural characteristics can influence human behaviour for COVID-19 pandemic responses: in special situations, the healing rituals, chanting/ recital of religious slokas paritta etc., and various kinds of incarnations through the blessed power of religious leaders have impacted to overcome the mental stress of people. Additionally, culture can influence the degree to which ourselves and potentially incorporate our individual needs to achieve the collective goals, with reduction measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With all such experience that we have gained from our history to date, with our commitments and good hopes for a better tomorrow, the SAARC Cultural Center extends the best wishes for a HAPPY NEW YEAR 2022 for all with the utmost hope that the world will be able to alleviate the pandemics by taking the norms, values, customs and practices of vast spectrum of culture that have been imparted from our ancestors to the present day society with its dynamic aspects and worthies!!

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2022!!



Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda
Director, SAARC Cultural Centre



Commemoration of 37th SAARC Charter Day, 8th December 2021

The commemoration of 37th SAARC Charter Day in 2021 took place on 8th December 2021 with complementary messages by H.E. Gotabhaya Rajapakse, the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Hon. Mahinda Rajapakse, the Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Hon. Prof. G.L. Peiris, Foreign Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr. Esala Werakoon, Secretary General for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Prof. (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda, Director of SAARC Cultural Centre.

The SAARC Charter was adopted by the Heads of States of the seven Member States of the South Asia viz; Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Dhaka on 8th December 1985. The seven Heads of States signed and agreed upon the SAARC Charter to work collectively to promote the welfare of the peoples of the SAARC Region and to improve their living standard through social progress and economic development in the

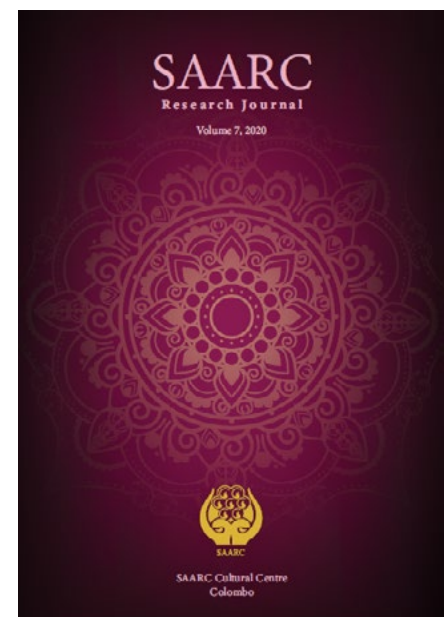
region. During the COVID 19 pandemic, the Heads of States of the Member States of SAARC Region held a meeting online and formed a fund for the overcome the outburst of COVID 19 pandemic in the region in 2020. As such the regional cooperation of SAARC has paved the way for the wellbeing of the peoples of the region.

Whole the SAARC Region celebrated 37th SAARC Charter Day across the region with ceremonious events and complementary messages from the Heads of States, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers. After the establishment of the SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo, commemoration of SAARC Charter Day was celebrated ceremoniously with the participation of Member States and other distinguished invitees every year. This year due to the pandemic COVID 19, the SAARC Charter Day celebration was not held under the instructions of the SAARC Secretariat. The well wishes from all the leaders were aimed for the well-being of the peoples of the SAARC Region to be free from the COVID 19 pandemic.

SAARC Culture Research Journal Vol. 7, 2020

SAARC Cultural Centre was able to publish its annual Research Journal amidst the COVID 19 pandemic. In the year 2020, despite the global pandemic, SAARC Cultural Centre requested the scholars across the South Asian Region to submit their research papers of the new knowledge they gained to share with the peers of the interest. In response to the request, we received seven full paper articles and one review on a theatrical production 'Mahathma@Gandhi' exclusively produced by Senior Chair Professor of Hindi, in the Department of Hindi at University of Kelaniya and the Director, of Center for Contemporary

Indian Studies (CCIS), University of Colombo. Mr. Abdhul Moquim Afghan has written a research article on *The Art of Islamic Calligraphy*. All the articles were reviewed by a selected panel of reviewers and the compilation was previewed by three Academic consultants belonging to various fields of Cultural studies. The full journal can be accessed through the following link; http://saarcculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/journal_vol7_2020.pdf. The SAARC Cultural Center is planning to publish Two Volumes in the year 2022 and make all the efforts to upgrade it to a refereed journal representing the South Asian region.



The 5th South Asian Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals



Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, participated as a panelist at the 5th South Asian Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals which was held on 15th November

2021 at Hilton, Colombo organized by UNESCAP and SAN. partnership with Sustainable Development Council of Sri Lanka. It was an inspiring forum on Sustainable Development Goals in South Asian

Region. The opportunity granted to the South Asian Culture to contribute a development within the culture in the SAARC Region. The forum was held on hybrid mode: virtual+ physical.

The 5th Edition of the South Asia Partnership Summit & Business Awards 2021

The 5th edition of the South Asia Partnership Summit & Business Awards 2021 was staged at the Emerald Isle, The Monarch Imperial, Colombo (www.monarchimperial.lk) on the 10th of December 2021. This historic summit was headed by the Sixth Executive President of Sri Lanka, Honorable Maithreepala

Siriseana joining as the Chief Guest. The event was attended by over 200 leaders from different business fields, professionals, and corporate leaders, as well as academic personalities and representatives from the diplomatic corps. Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre was amongst the invitees at the event.



Resume of construction of SAARC Cultural Centre Establishment in Nawimana Matara



A visit to the Construction site of the proposed SAARC Cultural Centre at Navimana was organized by Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs on 6th October 2021. The objective of the site visit was to re-commence the construction of the SCC establishment which has been stopped temporarily due to the budget constraints. A high Official delegation led by Professor Kapila Gunawardana, Secretary to the Ministry of Buddhasasana, Religious and Cultural Affairs, Prof. Manawadu M.S. Project Architectural Consultant, University of Moratuwa and Prof. Prashanthi Narangoda, Director SAARC Cultural Centre participated at the site visit. Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs requested Prof. Manawadu to prepare the estimated budget for the completion of pending construction work to be forwarded for the Cabinet approval. The 70% construction of the establishment has been completed up to now.



Meetings and Courtesy Calls

Prof (Mrs.) Prashanthi Narangoda, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre, visited Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre to meet Dr. Rewant Singh Director, Indian Cultural Centre Colombo. The upcoming events at SCC were discussed and the Director Dr. Revanth Singh assured the continuous support for the SAARC Cultural Centre. The role and the process of implementation strategies in restoring, exploring and promoting of the South Asian Cultures amidst the COVID 19 was also discussed. Director SAARC Cultural Centre presented the Research Journal to Director Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre as a token of appreciation for all the courage and inspiration rendered for the SAARC Cultural Activities.



Director paid a courtesy visit to the High Commissions of Bangladesh, Maldives, the Embassy of Nepal and Pakistan after resuming the regular office in October. She handed over the copies of the SAARC Research Journal Vol. 07:2020 and paid her courtesy to all the member states for the courage and the kind support provided for SAARC Cultural Center activities.

Further, she had a meeting with the Chairman, University Grant Commission, Sri Lanka Senior Professor Sampath Amarathunga to hand over a courtesy copy of the Journal and to convey the importance of promoting the culture of South Asia through the educational programs, especially introducing degree programs having more focus on regional studies.

During the meeting the Research Project of SAARC Cultural Centre to be implemented were also discussed with the Chairman. The discussion paid more focus on collaborative research with the participation of the UGC as the pioneering body to coordinate with the respective universities and the institutes.

The Director, also visited three Universities: University of Colombo, University of the Visual

and Performing Arts, and Sri Jayawardhanapura to hand over the copies of the Journal. She was able to meet the esteemed Vice Chancellors: Senior Professor Chandrika Wijeyarathna and Senior Professor Rohana Mahaliyanarachchi and Senior Professor Sudantha Liyanage and explained her future plans on developing research on South Asian Culture through SAARC Cultural Centre.



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ISSN 2579-2423

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