

## **A new Dimension for Commonwealth Scholarships**

Professor I M Dharmadasa (Dharme) from the Faculty of Arts, Computing, Engineering and Sciences at Sheffield Hallam University recently attended a reception at Marlborough House, the headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, to celebrate the Commonwealth Scholarships 50th anniversary endowment fund. Around 100 guests were in attendance, including current Commonwealth Scholars, alumni and supporters of the fund. HRH The Prince of Wales, who is patron of the fund, was the guest of honour.

In 2009, which marked the 50th anniversary of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), a new endowment fund was established to support scholarships hosted by low and middle income Commonwealth countries. Contributions from over 150 governments, alumni and other supporters have so far raised nearly £2 million for this new fund.

Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General, welcomed guests to the reception and reminded them of the great success of Commonwealth Scholarships, describing them as ‘one of the most immediately recognised and respected Commonwealth brands – along with the Commonwealth Games, and, I would say, the Head of the Commonwealth, Her Majesty The Queen’.



Dharme, a former Commonwealth Scholar, studied for a PhD in Solid State Electronics at Durham University from 1977-1980. Over the past three decades, his scientific research has focussed on solar energy conversion, and he has worked tirelessly to introduce this new technology for social development and the reduction of poverty, mainly in deprived communities which do not have electricity from the national grid. Dharme designed and successfully piloted the Solar Village project to rapidly develop disadvantaged communities, and he is now in the process of replicating this project in Sri Lanka. Dharme had the opportunity to discuss the solar village project with His Royal Highness.

As the current President of the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL-UK), Dharme is working with around 500 professionals from all sectors on various sustainability projects. His dream is to replicate the Solar Village project, wherever necessary, by networking with other former Commonwealth Scholars and Fellows all over the world.

For more information about the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan and the 50th anniversary endowment fund, visit [www.csfp-online.org](http://www.csfp-online.org).

For further details about the Solar Village project, visit:  
<http://apsl.org.uk/dharme/Featuring%20Articles/Solar%20Villages.pdf>