



# The Professional

The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK

13<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary

UK Registered Charity No 1145786

2017 Autumn Edition

## President's Message



It is with great pleasure that I present my first message since becoming the President of The Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL). I am very pleased to introduce myself and the new executive committee who were appointed at the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2017.

As a charity registered both in the UK and Sri Lanka it is our vision to bring all Sri Lankan communities together to promote unity and professionalism, foster goodwill and cultural relations in the UK and to support relief and development activities in Sri Lanka. With this in mind, today I welcome all of you to the Grange Tower Bridge hotel in London for our 13<sup>th</sup> annual fund raising dinner dance.

In keeping with our promise to support communities in Sri Lanka, today we are launching the **APSL Cancer Relief Fund**. Patients with cancer and their families face both emotional and financial challenges, therefore the APSL Cancer Relief Fund will support needy patients currently undergoing treatment in Sri Lanka. The support provided will include campaigns to increase awareness, funding for much needed medicines, subsistence, accommodation and transport costs related to accessing treatment. Today you will learn more about our new initiative and I hope you will help us to support this worthy cause.

As you are aware, last year we raised funds to build our second solar village project in Sri Lanka. I am pleased to inform you that APSL in collaboration with Hela Sarana, successfully completed the solar village project at Nochchiya village in the Kurunegala district. This was handed over to the village development committee in January 2017. Over the last 13 years, APSL has grown from strength to strength and today we have over five hundred members. The APSL Scholarship Scheme, Solar Village project, Young Professionals event, We Sri Lanka, Eastern Values and Living in the UK and Ask the Expert series are some of the key success stories of APSL.

APSL's philosophy is to collaborate with other like-minded individuals and organisations. When several districts in Sri Lanka were affected by severe floods during the month of May 2017, we demonstrated this by joining with the London Buddhist Vihara to donate school packs to impacted children in the Rathnapura district. Last year APSL also had a very busy schedule of

community engagement projects and knowledge dissemination programs and more information available in the newsletter and on our website [www.apsl.org.uk](http://www.apsl.org.uk)

I believe the strength of APSL lies within its membership and our greatest asset is professional knowledge. Therefore, I am extremely excited about our future activities and projects where we create various platforms and forums for our members and well-wishers to work with us. The proposals include hosting career development workshops for Sri Lankan students studying in the UK, launching a Mentoring Scheme for socially deprived local University Students based in Sri Lanka, initiating Knowledge Transfer and Capacity building projects for impoverished local university graduates in Sri Lanka, and launching a Corporate Training Scheme. A brief description of each project is included in this newsletter and I hope you will take part in these upcoming events.

Finally, I would like to thank our members, friends and well-wishers who have been with us and supported us over the years. A special thanks to the distinguished guests, our Sponsors, my Executive Committee and the Event Organising Committee for their voluntary hard work in making this event a big success.

I am sure you will have a great time and a night to remember!

**Suraj Wijendra**

*President*

*Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK*

## APSL Fund Raising Dinner Dance Programme

- 6.15 pm** Registration
- 7.00 pm** Welcome address – President APSL
- 7.10 pm** Launching the APSL Cancer Relief Fund  
Dr. Dilrini de Silva & Dr. Leshan Uggalla
- 7.25pm** Keynote address – Dr. Faiz Mumtaz  
“Surgery’s past, present and robotic future”
- 7.40 pm** Music
- 8.30 pm** Dinner
- 9.00 pm** Stand-up comedian
- 9.15 pm** Dutch Auction
- 9.30 pm** Music & Dance Floor
- 10.30 pm** Raffle Draw
- 10.45 pm** Music & Dance Floor
- 12.30 am** Vote of Thanks & National Anthems

## APSL Executive Committee 2017-2018



President  
Mr Suraj Wijendra



Vice President  
Mr Thushara Madurasinghe



Vice President  
Dr Mahesh De Silva



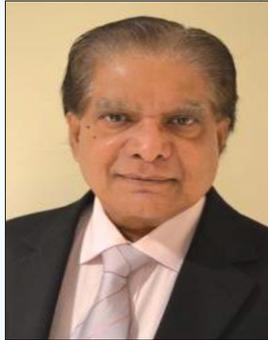
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Dr Mohan Siriwardena



Membership Secretary  
Mrs Gayani Senaratne



Treasurer  
Miss Buddhini Liyanage



Immediate Past President  
Mr Leslie Dep



Exec Committee Member  
Dr Leshan Uggalla



Exec Committee Member  
Mr Gihantha Jayasinghe



Exec Committee Member  
Dr Dilrini de Silva



Exec Committee Member  
Prof Terrance Fernando



Exec Committee Member  
Dr Dulini Fernando



Exec Committee Member  
Ms Paola Bethmäge



Exec Committee Member  
Ms Gowri Dep



Exec Committee Member  
Mr Tariq Salih



APSL Representative in Sri Lanka  
Dr Indrajit Coomaraswamy



APSL Representative in Sri Lanka  
Dr Roger Srivasan



Co-opted Senior Member  
Prof Sir S Arulkumaran



Co-opted Senior Member  
Mr Rohan de Alwis



Co-opted Senior Member  
Prof I M Dharmadasa



Co-opted Senior Member  
Dr Marc Dissanayake



Co-opted Senior Member  
Dr Andrew Nayagam



Co-opted Senior Member  
Mr Mervyn Silva

## Launching the APSL Cancer Relief Fund

Cancer has touched all of our lives either directly or through our friends, loved ones and colleagues. Here in the UK, we are fortunate to have advanced medical facilities and numerous ancillary services including mental health services for not only those affected but for their families and caregivers at our disposal. Accessibility to similar services in Sri Lanka is limited and disproportionately affects rural communities who often have to travel to major cities to receive expensive treatment. Over 13,000 individuals in Sri Lanka are diagnosed with cancer each year and APSL decided to launch a Cancer Relief Fund to support those affected and their families. APSL will work with individuals, medical professionals and established cancer charities in Sri Lanka to help patients receive medical treatment, their families to access support services and raise awareness amongst the general public through this fund. Your generous contributions to support our efforts today will have a lasting positive impact on families affected by cancer in Sri Lanka.

## Projects in Sri Lanka

### APSL Scholarship Scheme

**Project leader – Mr. Mervyn Silva**

The APSL Scholarship Scheme launched in 2014 on the initiative shown by Prof Terrance Fernando, University of Salford, UK, to provide financial assistance to gifted but underprivileged school children in Sri Lanka, continued to grow during the year 2016-2017 too, under the leadership of Mr Mervyn Silva. Total number of scholarships now stands at 34. A fundraising dinner dance was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2016 in Manchester. This event was well attended by current sponsors as well as friends and well-wishers.



### APSL Solar Village Project

**Project leader – Prof I M Dharmadasa**

2016-2017 was a land mark year for the APSL Solar Village Project. Using the funds raised through the Dinner Dance and through other donations, APSL managed to commission a APSL Solar Powered Village Development project in Nochchiya, in Kurunegala District, Sri Lanka. This project was delivered in collaboration with Hela Sarana, another UK registered charity, and the Association is grateful for the support extended by Hela Sarana to work together and complete the project. APSL Solar Village Project Team under the leadership of



Prof. I M Dharmadasa is currently monitoring the technical performance and the wider socio-economic impact of this project. Feedback received from the village development council so far is extremely positive, and the publicity provided for this project has now attracted significant attention from policy makers in Sri Lanka.

## Donations, Fundraising Campaigns

### APSL Flood Relief Project

**Project Leader – Mrs. Gayani Senaratne**

When several districts in Sri Lanka were affected by severe floods during the month of May 2017, APSL responded in numerous ways. Firstly, APSL responded to an appeal from the Sri Lankan High Commission and donated 5 packs of Tarpaulins.

Secondly, APSL responded to an appeal from the Education Director of Ratnapura District, to help school children affected by the floods. APSL in collaboration with the London Buddhist Vihara successfully completed a flood relief programme to help children affected by the recent major floods in Sri Lanka.

Accordingly 200 school packs were distributed to children at Rathnodaya Maha Vidyalaya, Hangamuwa, Nivitigala in the Ratnapura district on 6th August 2017. Teachers and parents of the children participated at this event. APSL Membership Secretary Mrs. Gayani Senaratne coordinated this work and liaised with the Education Department authorities in the Ratnapura district to successfully distribute the school packs.

We wish to thank and offer our sincere gratitude to Venerable B. Seelawimala, Head Monk of London Buddhist Vihara, the management committee, and the supporters of the London Buddhist Vihara for collaborating with APSL to implement this programme.



## Forthcoming Events/Projects

### Mentoring and University Student Engagement

**Project Leaders – Dr. Dulini Fernando and Mr. Tariq Salih**

Drawing on the array of skills of its professional membership, APSL plans to organise a series of workshops on transferable skills to local university students in Sri Lanka while also offering them group mentorship. The purpose of the former is to increase the employability of local university graduates in the prestigious private sector which is often closed to them, while the latter aims to develop a learning and development partnership with the most vulnerable students offering them career guidance and support. In the case of Sri Lankan university students in the UK, APSL is collaborating with Sri Lankan societies of six Russell group and 94 group universities to offer seminars on 'professional careers' in business, science and engineering. APSL own members and other eminent professionals will serve as speakers at these seminars to introduce students to the range of careers in their field, highlighting what it takes to get in, what it takes to progress and what is it like to work in the particular area of work. The purpose of these initiatives is to help students to make feasible career choices.

## Community Engagement

### England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) Cricket Consultation Workshop

Leslie Dep and Tariq Salih attended the consultation workshop on Engaging South Asian Communities in Cricket, at the Oval Cricket Ground, organised by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Their suggestions to improve community engagement included:

- Educating parents on the health and social benefits of involving their children in cricket
- Improving media coverage of the sport, diversity with better representation of women in the game and accessibility and affordability given the high ticket prices at cricket events
- Adopting a similar model to Festival of Cricket to engage communities
- Using role models such as Moeen Ali to promote cricket in the South Asian community

### Festival Of Cricket (FOC) 2017



Several members of the APSL Ex-co including Rohan, Tariq, Gowri, Suraj, Leslie, Thushara and Dulini represented APSL and enjoyed the lively atmosphere at FOC in London on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017. They engaged with attendees by showcasing the work being carried out by APSL and attracted several new members throughout the day. APSL has maintained a presence at FOC for several years and it continues to be a great event to network with similar associations.

### Meeting with Mr. Kushil Gunasekera, Foundation of Goodness

APSL met with Mr. Kushil Gunasekera, founder and a trustee of "Foundation of Goodness" on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017 to discuss opportunities to collaborate and benefit from each others' strength. Kushil is one of the pioneers in Sri Lanka focusing on sustainable development and humanitarian projects. Other trustees include Kumara Sangakkara, Mahela Jayawardene and Russel Arnold.

### Young Professionals Event



Chesmal, Dilrini and Paola of the APSL Professional Events and Editorial Team led the organisation of the fifth Young Professionals Event on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at the Sri Lanka High Commission, London attended by Her Excellency Ms Amari Wijewardene the High Commissioner. Four dynamic and talented speakers held the audience captive with their personal and professional experiences ranging from Law, Business, Population Health and Leadership. First, Mr. Suranga Jayalath, reading for a PhD in Law at Middlesex University, enlightened us on the fast-changing landscape of the broadcast industry. Next, Dr. Dulini Fernando, Associate Professor at the Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, discussed some key challenges encountered by migrant professionals in the British workplace. Then, Dr. Duleeka Knipe, an epidemiologist at the University of Bristol spoke about her work on analysing trends in suicide and self-harm in Sri Lanka. Finally, Rakhitha Dias, the Founder, Lead Consultant and Senior Developer at Terias IT & Business Consultancy, shared his step-by-step approach to developing a leadership mind-set both in professional and personal life. The party then moved to The Victoria pub nearby for an informal networking session over dinner and drinks.

## 13<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting



The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL), was held on Saturday 06<sup>th</sup> May 2017 at Citadines Holborn – Covent Garden, London, with the participation of the members of the Association.

Her Excellency Ms. Amari Wijewardena, High Commissioner for Sri Lanka in the United Kingdom, who is also the Patron of the Association graced the occasion.

The meeting began by all attendees observing a two-minute silence to pay respects to two very active members of the Association, Dr Raj Chandran and Dr Chesmal Siriwardhana, one of the Vice Presidents of APSL and editor of the APSL bi-annual Newsletter “The Professional”, who sadly passed away during the year 2016-2017.

The first session of the meeting began with the welcome address by the outgoing President of APSL, Mr. Leslie Dep. He briefly outlined the excellent progress made during the year. Mr Dep was stepping down as the President after the completion of his two- year term, and he thanked the executive committee, all members and well-wishers who supported him during his tenure.

Mr Leslie Dep’s address was followed by the reading of the minutes of the last AGM by the General Secretary, Dr Mohan Siriwardena. After the adoption of the minutes of the last meeting, Dr. Mohan Siriwardena presented the Annual Report for the year 2016 – 2017. The Treasurer Miss Buddhini Liyanage presented the Annual Statement of Accounts for the year 2016-2017, which was adopted as correct.

The election of the new executive committee for the year 2017-2018 followed next, and Dr Andrew Nayagam presided as the returning officer. In the absence of any other nominations, the proposed list of nominees were elected unanimously to the executive committee 2017-2018.

Mr Suraj Wijendra who was elected as the president of the Association, addressed the gathering and he thanked Her Excellency the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and the office of the Sri Lanka High Commission, all the members and well-wishers, for the support given to the Association from the inception of the Association. He also thanked the members for placing the confidence in him. He outlined his draft programme for APSL and requested everyone to continue to support APSL.

The third and the final session of the day was the keynote address delivered by Dr Saman Perera, Consultant Radiologist at Southend University Hospital on the title “A window into the Brain”. He dedicated his address to late Dr Chesmal Siriwardhana.

The AGM concluded with the Vote of Thanks given by the General Secretary Dr. Mohan Siriwardena.

## In Memory of Dr. Chesmal Siriwardhana



“The flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long.” – Lao Tzu. At the time of his untimely demise in the early hours of 09<sup>th</sup> April 2017 in London, our friend and colleague, Dr. Chesmal Siriwardhana was merely 38. Chesmal, one of the Vice Presidents of the Association of Professional Sri Lankans in the UK (APSL), was serving as an Associate Professor at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) at the time. Chesmal was instrumental in founding the Global Public Health, Migration & Ethics Research Group at Anglia Ruskin University, and was also a founding Co-Chair of Migration Health & Development Initiative (MHADI). Additionally, he was involved in a number of international capacity building initiatives, including qualitative health research courses in Sri Lanka/ South Asia and curriculum development and guest lecturing for a MSc course in Public Health Management in six Eastern Mediterranean universities. Further, he was the co-founder and Honorary Chairman of the not-for-profit think tank Theme Institute in Sri Lanka. To pay tribute to Chesmal’s work, the Centre for Global Mental Health at LSHTM hosted the inaugural annual lecture on topics related to his research interests, on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Sri Lanka and humanity lost a young, intelligent and highly talented person with a bright career ahead of him. Chesmal was a valuable member of APSL and his services rendered will be remembered with much appreciation.

### Join, donate and how you can support our work

If you are interested in contributing to any of our activities, have ideas for fundraisers and suggestions on how we can engage with our wide member base we would like to hear from you. To join us, please email Mohan at [generalsecretary@apsl.org.uk](mailto:generalsecretary@apsl.org.uk), speak to a member of the Ex-Co for a membership form or visit [www.apsl.org.uk](http://www.apsl.org.uk) for further details. Membership costs only £15 per annum. You can also connect with us via our Facebook page - Association of Professional Sri Lankans in UK (APSL). We look forward to hearing from you!

### Cricket Memorabilia auction

A signed cricket ball from Sri Lankan cricket legend Muttiah Muralitharan to commemorate the occasion of achieving the world record of 800 test wickets and a cricket bat signed by the England Test cricket team will be auctioned at the APSL Fundraising Dinner Dance.



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