



**The High Commissioner and the staff of Sri Lanka High Commission in New Delhi wish to convey to all News Bulletin readers their best wishes for a very Happy, Prosperous and Successful New Year!!!**

### **34<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Board of Directors of India-Sri Lanka Foundation held on 11 December 2017 in Colombo.**

The 34th Board meeting of the India- Sri Lanka Foundation was held in Colombo on 11th December 2017 at the Taj Samudra Hotel in Colombo, Co- Chaired by Chitrangane Wagiswara, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India and Tharanjith Singh Sandhu High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka.

The last board meeting of the ISLF was held in New Delhi on 10 March 2017, wherein it was decided by the Board Members to have the next session in Colombo. In the ensuing period both the Secretariats had received up to 40 applications from Sri Lanka and 31 applications from India seeking funding support.

In between the board meetings, the two Co-Chairpersons had approved urgent requests, from academics and scholars seeking travel support, to present papers in international conferences that were held in the two countries, besides providing support for other cultural activities/events. The Board reviewed such projects and ratified the expenditure already incurred through the discretionary authority of the two Co-Chairs.

Further, the Board also reviewed the status of on-going projects which were approved in its past sessions and the expenses incurred on such projects and other pending issues.

During the year 2018, the Foundation proposes to provide support for more art and cultural activities in order to highlight two decades of the India-Sri Lanka Foundation, promoting people to people relations.

The Board also agreed to have its next session in New Delhi in May/ June 2018 to review the activities of the Foundation.

### **Sri Lanka Delegation attended the International Arogya 2017 – 1<sup>st</sup> International Exhibition & Conference, 4-7<sup>th</sup> December, New Delhi.**

Ministry of AYUSH, along with Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry & Pharmexcil organized the first International AROGYA 2017, an international Exhibition & Conference on AYUSH & Wellness in New Delhi from 4-7<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The Event was a platform to showcase the strengths of AYUSH systems and the inevitable linkages with industry.

Forty one countries including Sri Lanka participated at the International Conference. A Six member delegation led by the Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine of Sri Lanka together with five manufacturing and exporting companies attended the International Arogya 2017 held in New Delhi from 4-7<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

### **The passing away of Ven . G.Prajnananda Thero-Patron, of the Mahabodhi society of India.**

Ven. Galagedara Prajnananda Thero, Patron, Maha Bodhi Society of India passed away on 30th November 2017.

Ven. Prajnananda Thero, who was also the Bhikku-in-charge of the Buddha Vihara in Lucknow was 90 years old at the time of his passing away. Ven. Prajnananda Thero arrived in India at the age of 13 and he was respected as the senior-most Sri Lankan priest on Dharmadutha service in India. Ven. Prajnananda Thero,



was the last surviving member of the Buddhist priests who were present at the ceremony on 15 October 1956 in Nagpur where the Social reformer and the architect of the Indian Constitution Dr. B.R. Ambedkar with some 500,000 of his followers embraced Buddhism, by way of observing the five precepts. The event is considered the initiation of a significant religious and social revolution in modern India.

The Funeral in Lucknow was attended by Hon. Ramnath Kovind, President of India, Yogi Adityanath Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Former Chief Minister Mayawathi. Cremation of Ven. Prjnanda Thero was held in Sravasthi on 17 December with State honours. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale represented the Government of India and Minister for Labour, Employment and Coordination Swami Prasad Maurya represented the Government of the state of Uttar Pradesh at the cremation ceremony.



Hon. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera , Minister of Buddha Sasana and senior Buddhist priests from both India and Sri Lanka and the Deputy High Commissioner Mr. M.R.K. Lenagala attended the funeral. H.E the President, Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and the High Commissioner sent condolence messages on the passing away of Ven .Prajnananda thero.

**Film by Dr Somarathne Dissanayake won the best film for “Across the border Award” at the Delhi International Film festival.**

The film ‘Underpants Thief’ by Dr. Somarathne Dissanayake won the Best Film for “Across the Border Award” at the 6th Delhi international Film festival which was held from 4th – 9th December 2017. DIFF is a

weeklong festival, generally held in December, which showcases all genres of cinema by screening close to 250 films, exhibiting 250 selected art works and featuring 50 literary works by NRI and Indian poets. This is possibly the only film festival in the world that, not only features films, but also other artistic branches. DIFF has hosted hundreds of guests, delegates, film makers, jury members, political personalities, diplomats, artists, film celebrities and other prominent personalities since its inception and is moving on with preparations for its next edition.

DIFF is conceptualized to commemorate a hundred years of association of Delhi with Indian films. The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), with the support from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry of India which started the DIFF in 2012, has now grown into a global platform joining hands to collaborate with a multitude of film festivals in many countries and offers support to a host of upcoming festivals across the world.

The High Commission hosted a dinner reception for Dr. Somaratne Dissanayake and over 60 guests from the film industry.

**Meeting with Mrs Rashmi Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism of the Government of India**

The High Commissioner Chitranganee Wagiswara had a meeting with Mrs Rashmi Verma , Secretary Ministry of Tourism Government of India on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017.

During the meeting, the High Commissioner emphasized the importance of the Indian travel market for Sri Lanka as the highest number of tourists arrivals to Sri Lanka is from India.

High Commissioner Wagiswara also highlighted Sri Lanka’s participation as a Partner country at SATTE International Travel Fair - 2018 to be held in Delhi from 31<sup>st</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 and invited the Secretary Verma to inaugurate the Sri Lanka pavilion.

Secretary Rashmi Verma endorsed the importance of having regular interactions between the travel and tour companies of the two countries to explore new business avenues related to travel & tourism.



## **Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist heritage**

The Ministry of External Affairs of New Delhi organized “Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist heritage” from 8-10 December at Indira Gandhi National Center of Arts, New Delhi.



The aim of organizing this event was to emphasize the shared Buddhist heritage as an enabler to build people-to-people contacts in the BIMSTEC region.

Mr. Mahesh Sharma Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Culture inaugurated the event which included dance performances by member countries.

The dance troupe of Mr. Chandana Wickramasinghe, sponsored by Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, a official from the SLTPB and officials from Sri Lankan High Commission participated at the inauguration ceremony.

### **Meeting with Indian dignitaries**

The High Commissioner Chitrangane Wagiswara accompanied by Ms. Achini Perera had a meeting with Hon. Manishankar Aiyar Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha representing the Indian National Congress.



During the meeting the High Commissioner spoke of the post conflict development in Sri Lanka and briefed the member on the reconciliation mechanisms. Mr. Aiyar recalled his long association with Sri Lanka especially during the period when Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were Prime Ministers of India.

### **SAARC Charter Day -2017 held at the South Asian University, in Chanakypuri, New Delhi**

The South Asian University organized the SAARC Charter Day- 2017 on 09th December 2017 at the South Asian



University. Dr. Kamal Hossain, Academic Senior Advocate and Former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh were the Chief Guest.

Dr. Kavitha Sharma, President of South Asian University and Prof. Sasanka Perera Vice President of South Asian University were present at the event.

Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Colombo Emeritus professor Savithri Gunasekara, Mr. Kalyan Shreshta, Former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Nepal, Ms. Aminath Eenas, President of the Human Rights Commission of Maldives participated as panel members. Mr. M.R.K Lenagala, Deputy High Commissioner of the Mission represented the High Commission at the event.

### **Amity Global School Annual Day Event**

Amity Global School in Gurgaon hosted its Annual Day on Friday 8th December 2017 at the school premises. The High Commissioner was the Chief Guest at the event. Addressing the gathering the High Commissioner noted that today students have the opportunity to look beyond the classroom for knowledge and discover, explore and absorb knowledge through the advanced information technology, available at a press of a button. Travel is another advantage that students of today have, which opens their eyes and mind to the world which helps the students from different backgrounds to understand and appreciate diversity said the High Commissioner. There are many Sri Lankan students attending the Amity Global School. The Sri Lankan students together with the students from many countries performed in the various cultural items.

### **AARDO Meeting with the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka**

The Secretary General of the Asian African Rural Development Organization (AARDO), Eng. Wassfi Hassan El-Sreihin met with High Commissioner and staff on 27th December 2017 and held discussions on matters of common interest, including the need to explore

potential areas of collaboration between AARDO and Sri Lanka.

The AARDO was formulated in 1962 with the aim for Asia and Africa to recognize the need to cooperate among the countries in the field of agriculture and rural development. AARDO which is one of the earliest examples of South-South cooperation in rural development in the Afro-Asian region is an autonomous inter-governmental Organization comprising governments of Africa and Asia. The Organization aims at promoting coordinated efforts, exchange of experiences and cooperative action for furthering the objectives of development of the rural areas in the region. It also promotes collaboration with various international organizations for the economic and social welfare of the rural community.

### **Sri Lanka High Commission participated at Delhi Commonwealth Women's Association Charity Bazaar**

High Commission of Sri Lanka participated at the annual DCWA Charity Bazaar held at the Ashok Hotel premises in New Delhi on 03<sup>rd</sup> December 2017.



There was a high demand for the Export quality garments provided by Brandix Lanka Limited and for Sri Lanka Tea, that was sold in the Sri Lanka High Commission stall. More than 50 Embassies/High Commissions based in New Delhi, participated in the charity bazaar.

The funds raised is donated to several charities in India.