



Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya
Greater Toronto Area and Suburbs

Newsletter

November 2020 Issue

"Sarvasva Locanam Sasthram"

Knowledge is the Eye unto All



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Tharindu Gardiyawasam (Sc)

Newsletter Contacts:

Upul Herath: upulprherath@gmail.com

Lilika Molligoda: lilikamolligoda@gmail.com

Message from the Board of Management (BOM)

Since March, all of us were compelled to adjust to hitherto an unknown, evolving and risky living environment. As a result, we had to abandon the physical activity plan and focus more on hardships everyone has been facing. The danger is still looming, although there is a ray of hope due to recent news on vaccine research.

Owing to the long delay in obtaining Vice Chancellor's approval to use the university name and logo by us, the Association registration has hardly moved on. Ongoing efforts are being made to obtain it.

Since hosting 'EngNet' in February, in April we initiated a donation campaign for the Ontario Food Bank to augment their fast depleting stocks. Instead of hosting our flagship public event 'Back to Hantana 2020' in April, we released a tribute video in memory of the legendary Peradeniya alumni, the late Dr. Jayalath Manorathne to coincide with the three months remembrance of his death. The annual Inter University Alumni Cricket Tournament & Family Get-together and Summer Event in August had to be cancelled too. We have invited member families to contribute to our publications – so far, a moderate response has been received.

However, we made use of the lull to solidify our relationship with the Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka. Happy to announce, this effort resulted in them accepting a proposal made by us (*please see pages 2-3*) to advance the alumni activities and start jointly pursuing them. We now have a permanent seat at the Executive Committee and can join their monthly meetings.

We request you to stay in touch and help us with your inputs to the alumni publications. Please continue to follow COVID-19 guidelines and stay safe and healthy. We assure you that we will remain in 'Peradeniya Spirit' and continue our effort to advance the Alumni Association.

NEW! Starting with this Newsletter, we will be publishing contributions from alumni and their families, including children. Please see from page 7 onwards!

Send in more! Guidelines are in page 4.

NEW! Please visit our revamped website with a new look at:

<https://www.peradeniyaalumnigta.com/>



University of Peradeniya – GTA & Suburbs (Toronto, Canada) to AAUP – Sri Lanka

Considering the fact The Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya is (if not, should be) the **largest, most diverse and independent professional body** in Sri Lanka, we consider its initiatives should be more strategic and compelling, and contributing to the University and to the society at large at a higher plane.

REDEFINE THE ROLE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BEYOND CURRENT OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOP APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP

- Expand the objectives to include playing a strategic and professional role in the **higher education** system of the country.
- Redefine the Exco to have wider mandatory representation, reflecting diversity of professions with appropriate leadership capabilities/experience to drive the association agenda including influencing policy makers at the highest level (The President, Higher Education minister, UGC etc.), as necessary.
- Incorporate Exco succession plan (e.g. Minimum 30% of new faces) to ensure vibrant leadership.
- Gain **University administration (University Council, VC, Deans)** to accept **AAUP at strategic level** representing aspirations of the large membership of professionals.
- Clarify the roles of each faculty Alumni Associations and need to work in unison for a common purpose.
- In order to achieve these, amendment to the constitution is necessary and approval from Grant Commission may be required.

GETTING A PERMENANT 'SEAT' FOR THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AT THE HIGHEST DECISION-MAKING FORA (RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE)

- Obtaining permanent position with voting right in the **University Council** will enable proper representation of the alumni to critical decisions affecting the University.
- Obtaining permanent position at the **faculty boards** so that they can get proper **external perspective and neutral contributions** to the decisions.
- Formal representation at every **Graduation ceremony** to ensure new graduates aware of the association (**Alumni speech, distribution of membership form etc.**)

GOVERNANCE OF THE ASSOCIATION (TRANSPARENCY, CREDIBILITY, DIVERSITY)

- Term of the executive committee to be extended to **two years** enabling a proper work program can be carried out.
- Specific role/s to be established in the Executive committee with a mandate to **engage** with other chapters within the country and outside the country.
- Executive committee to have mandated diversity (e.g. representation from every era, each faculty etc.)

COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (KEEP ENGAGED)

- Establish a **two-way system** to disseminate alumni (local & away), University and Higher education related information. This will be one of the most effective ways to keep the alumni engaged and interested in the University emotionally and professionally.

HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT CHARTER (PROVIDING NEW KNOWLEDGE)

- Establish a formal structured system to get the benefit of the modern knowledge of the large group of alumni living in and outside Sri Lanka for the benefit current students and staff.
- Develop structured approach (One-Stop-Shop portal) to help the student looking for higher education opportunities.

NEW APPROACH TO MEMBERSHIP DRIVE (NUMBERS IS A STRENGTH)

- For some reason any of the University alumni show little interest in Alumni activities (in contrast to school OGA/OBA/PP associations though they are in far better position to contribute). Needs to devise new ways to reach out to them formally and informally using modern technology etc. (e.g. Probably every branch of the Govt banks have at least one Peradeniya alumni but not association members. Those can be our ambassadors. One of the Peradeniya alumni Face Book groups have over 25,000 followers).

MAKE PERADENIYA ATTRACTIVE PLACE FOR HOLISTIC EDUCATION (IVOR JENNING'S VISION) – (DEVELOPING BALANCE HUMAN BEINGS)

- Due to various internal and external reason students do not seem to be getting/taking advantage of unique Peradeniya environment and its diversity. Alumni association may be able to play a greater role with some planned activities (Designated alumni day/week, Role at first year orientation etc.). Worth pursuing to restore 'Peradeniya spirit' – the unique fact Peradeniya alumni set apart from rest of the Sri Lankan university alumni.

We are pleased to notify, the Executive committee of the Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya - Sri Lanka has endorsed our recommendations and are in the process of making arrangements to implement them. Some of them require extensive engagement with relevant authorities and amendment to the current constitution.



Source: Region of Peel

Guidelines for topics and content of materiel/creations to be published under the banner, Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya – GTA and Suburbs

1. *These guidelines have been developed to provide opportunity for alumni members and the families to contribute with their creativity and knowledge to the publications of the Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya – GTA & Suburbs whilst ensuring credibility of the association.*
2. *Types of publications may include, but not be restricted to, the Newsletter, event magazines, magazines on special topics or general topics, arts, collections, scientific journals, photos and video publications, contest results, informative documents, interviews etc.*
3. *The decision to publish or not will be determined by the Association's editorial board (President, Secretary, Past President & 02 Communication Leads of BOM) and their decision will be final. If needed, the Association may appoint a specialized editorial board depending on the theme/subject matter.*
4. *The material can be in the form of write-up, poem, quiz, cartoons, photographs, pictorials or any other similar material, but should not be excessive in length, size etc. It is desirable to have themes associated with the University of Peradeniya or higher education, but this condition does not restrict materials of any other relevant topics. Time to time the Association may invite contributions to suggested themes/topics.*
5. *The articles can be written in English, Sinhalese or Tamil.*
6. *The material should not promote/support any political or religious views/activities OR any social activity that can directly or indirectly lead to engagement, promotion or participation of any political or religious activity or incite friction or violence.*
7. *As far as possible the material should be original and it is the responsibility of the author to retain evidence pertaining to any reference, quotations etc. made in the material. The author also undertakes to produce such material if requested by the editorial board.*
8. *The material should not be self-promoting or directly/indirectly, discrediting/disrespecting any individual/s living or dead or promoting hate behaviour, violence etc.*
9. *Once received, the Association retains the right to use the material for promotion of the Association or its activities.*
10. *Whilst the Association will make every effort to publish all the material conforming to the above terms, due to exceptional reasons, including decisions of the editorial board etc., some material may not be published in the alumni publications. Any such material will be returned to the author as soon as practical.*
11. *Any other governance rules issued time to time by the Association will supersede content of this document*

These guidelines are not intended to restrict creativity, but have been developed in the spirit of transparent working principles of the Association. We therefore request your cooperation in adhering to them in the right 'Peradeniya Spirit'.

The Alumni Association of the University of Peradeniya – GTA & Suburbs

Version 1: 10 July 2020





EngNet: Engineering Networking and Fellowship Evening

In February we undertook a new initiative – the first of its kind in Canada.

Having realized the need to create an opportunity for all Engineering professionals of Sri Lankan origin, we developed a program to host an evening titled 'EngNet'. It was an open forum for all Engineering professionals of Sri Lankan origin to meet under one roof and build their network to benefit from each other's experiences.

The program had three parts:

1. Five input sessions delivered by prominent Engineering professionals.
2. Fellowship time in a relaxed environment with a banquet dinner.
3. Launch of a formal 'Mentoring Program' facilitated by us.

**professional contacts in industry
are key to your career success**

Networking & Fellowship Night
For Sri Lankan - Canadians in Engineering profession

Take the first step to get READY and RE-ALIGN your career!

- meet with over 100 engineering professionals, make contacts and learn about new opportunities
- network with peers from various industries, senior professionals and entrepreneurs for valuable insights
- connect with employers, HR professionals and recruiters and learn job market trends and expectations
- learn about PEO licensing, OSPE member benefits and Education and Training

Keynote Speakers:

01 Prof Chan Wirasinghe
Founding Dean (Emeritus) -Schulich School of Engineering
University of Calgary

02 Prof Xavier Fernando
Director of Ryerson Communications Lab
Ryerson University





There were over 140 participants of different engineering disciplines and with varying experiences. The participants left with a hope to meet up again. The Mentorship Program was well subscribed and is progressing although slowed down due to COVID-19 restrictions.

You can participate in the **Mentorship program** as a mentee or mentor by filling up the online form available at: <https://www.peradeniyaalumnigta.com/index.php/642-2/>

Since this was our first attempt, we too gained valuable experience. The event gave us confidence to create similar opportunity for a wider group of professional in the future.



Ontario Food Bank Support - Donations Appeal

Thank you for your generosity!

This was one of our responses to support the community we live in, going beyond and above our usual alumni work.

Having seen the appeal for urgent donation to augment fast depleting food stocks at the Ontario Food Banks, the BOM agreed to support Feed Ontario's efforts to urge quick responses from the public for donations.

To speed up the process and provide the best benefits from our donations, we chose to follow donation route instead of food items path. Leveraging their suppliers, Feed Ontario was able to purchase \$100 worth pack of food items for \$30. The program we launched in April was closed in May 2020, with several people subscribing to raise over \$2,500.

We want to thank you for showing '*Peradeniya Spirit*' to the society in the hour of need under a global calamity.



Visit by prominent Sinhalese scholar Aththanayaka M Herath

Mr. Aththanayaka M Herath, a well-known Peradeniya alumnus of the 70's and a leading public speaker in Sri Lanka was visiting Toronto in March for a public engagement. The BOM got an opportunity to host him for a dinner. It was a fun-filled evening with his entertaining comments, views on the language and Peradeniya old stories. When presented, he was pleasantly surprised by the activities of the AAUP - GTA & Suburbs, particularly the attachment displayed by the alumni members towards the University even after several decades.

Drinking Tea – A Companion for Healthy Life

Kapila Zoysa

Anyone who has an interest on tea, no matter how new or how small, cannot fail to recognize the fascinating links between modern tea drinking and its origins. Tea probably originated in China and the story weaves its ways so back through Chinese history – 2737 BC. The tea bush is a member of an extensive family *Theaceae* which groups together 30 genera of plants. Tea (*Camella sinensis*) belongs to genus *Camellia*. Stories and legends have grown up to the discovery, early cultivation, and consumption of this life-enhancing beverage. British started cultivating tea in their colony of India in 1834. The first Commercial planting of tea in Sri Lanka was undertaken by a Scot named James Taylor in 1867 at Loolecondera estate, Hewaheta. This was carried out with idea of testing tea as a possible alternative for coffee which was facing an economic slump and proved be a timely venture as coffee leaf rust disease eventually destroyed the entire coffee industry with in 25 years of its first appearance. Now tea is extensively planted in many countries in the world and Sri Lanka is a major player in the global tea industry and it is one of the largest tea producers in the world having a major export share of the global market.

The world of tea offers consumers as much variety and choice as that of wine. For centuries, the production of this wonderfully healthy beverage has grown and evolved, and today over 55 countries practice the art of tea manufacture, crafting a wealth of flavors and aromas to suit all occasions and times of day. From the gentle, subtle character to the robust mouth filling strength, there now exists a tea to seduce and tantalize every palate.

The beverages we daily consume, are an important component of our diet. Inappropriate beverage consumption could lead to excessive intake of calories and minerals such as sodium, which predispose individuals to high blood pressure (hypertension) and obesity. New bio-medical research clearly showed tea is a safe beverage for regular consumption and also helps to improve health and reduce risk of certain diseases.

The important component giving health benefits in tea comes with the amount of water-soluble mater that comes into the cup on brewing. Many factors affect the amount of tea components come to the cup, such as type and amount of tea taken for brewing, temperature, amount of water added duration. A typical tea brew contains about 0.35% tea solids in water. The tea solids are rich in catechins, theaflavins, flavonols and other polyphenols, amino acids, proteins organic acids, carbohydrates, lipids caffeine, minerals and trace amounts of volatile compounds.

Many studies confirmed tea drinking helps in hydration of the body. Tea without milk or sugar does not contain significant amounts of compounds which provide energy. The calorific value of a cup of tea is about 1kcal. Therefore, energy contribution from daily tea intake of a healthy male adult (2550 kcal) is negligible, making it an ideal drink for modern day calorie conscious consumers. Compared with other minerals, manganese from tea drinking makes the largest contribution (45%) to daily dietary intake. There was debate whether tea consumption could lead to excessive Al intakes causing aluminum toxicity. This is due to accumulation of large concentration of Al in mature tea leaves. Only tender leaves are harvested for tea manufacturing and those leaves contain low levels of Al. Further, the entire amount of Al in made tea does not come into the brew.

Unlike many other beverages, sodium content in tea is very low and the contribution to daily intake is less than 0.05%. This makes tea ideal for hypertensive (high blood pressure) individuals and also good for healthy individuals to maintain a healthy life without predisposing themselves to high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Polyphenols and caffeine are the major non-nutrients in tea which have biological activities. Most of the beneficial effects of tea are due to antioxidant activity of polyphenols. Caffeine is the well-known stimulant found in tea. Caffeine acts on central nervous system and increases the alertness, mental clarity and reduces the reaction time and fatigue. The antioxidant property of polyphenols in helps to neutralize free radicals. Free radicals are highly reactive molecules which form during normal metabolic body reactions. Additionally, people exposed to free radicals from environment, food and from the air they inhale. Free radicals react with molecules in body tissues and organs leading to initiate lifestyle diseases such as heart problems, stroke and cancer. Many scientific investigations have revealed both green tea polyphenols (catechins) and black tea polyphenols (theaflavins and thearubigins) have the ability to inhibit lipid oxidation and plaque formation and thereby reduce heart disease.

Teeth can absorb fluoride (F) from solutions such as tea which contains high amount of F. Incorporation of F makes teeth harder and resistant to decay. It has been found that not only F, but also the polyphenols in tea could act to reduce tooth decay. Tea polyphenols could inhibit the growth of bacteria, such as *streptococcus mutans* which cause tooth decay and also could act to reduce the ability of bacteria get attached to the tooth surface and damage the teeth. It was found tea could inhibit growth of certain harmful micro-organism in the oral cavity. Black tea inhibits oral fungus species of *Candida* by 30%. The presence of several vitamins such as thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid pantothenic acid, biotin and inositol and vitamin E in tea has been reported.

Activation of the immune system is essential for destroying harmful micro-organisms entering the body and repairing injury. Research work found tea reduces the harmful effects of inflammation by acting as an antioxidant and by regulating the mediators of the inflammatory response.

Myriad of scientific investigations carried out around the world showed tea drinking could contribute to reduce the risk of certain diseases. The antioxidant property in tea phenols emerges as the most important property in reducing the risk of those diseases, and both black and green tea are equally effective action. Tea is the least-expensive beverage next to water and readily available throughout the globe and the findings with modern science with regards to therapeutic value makes tea ideal drink of our times.

(Kapila Zoysa is an alumnus of the University of Peradeniya)

Sustainable Wireless Sensing and Communications

Xavier Fernando and Fatima Hussain Ryerson

Communications Lab

Wireless access technologies have become ubiquitous and it is no-longer about just voice or data or even video communications. Myriad of new value-added wireless services, from wireless sensing based IoT systems to low latency autonomous vehicle guiding, appear every day that has transformed our lives.

A prominent group of these are location-based services (LBS). We have been using them in simple day to day activities such as calling for an Uber vehicle to emergency 911 wireless calls. LBS also plays a critical role in advanced smart city services, intelligent transportation systems and autonomous vehicle maneuvers.

Realizing the importance of LBS, Ryerson Communications Lab (RCL) (www.ee.ryerson.ca/~fernando) has been researching in the realms of wireless positioning technologies for the past many years. Our work in this area started with our collaboration with the mining industry.

Mining contributes tens of billions of dollars to Canadian economy. However, low paid miners, mostly working in remote areas, are exposed to much higher occupational hazards than those in other industrial sectors. RCL has pioneered in providing several solutions to address the issues related to wireless sensing, reliable communications and tracking in underground mines, tunnels, and in other confined spaces [1-2]. RCL has received over \$1.5 Million \$ in research grants for underground communication systems research.

RCL recently collaborated with another Ryerson incubated start-up company in developing accurate indoor positioning solutions using Ultra Wideband radio signals and machine learning algorithms. The developed system is expected to automatically keep track of hundreds of items in an industrial warehouse environment. Tens of centimeter localization accuracy with prolonged battery life for sensors were achieved. RCL received over \$600,000 in research funding for this work and filed two patents for the inventions [3-4].

The Energy Harvesting Myth

One major challenge in wireless sensing is powering the sensor nodes. The cost of maintenance and pollutions due to used batteries exponentially increases with the number of sensors. The network performance would significantly deteriorate with the demise of sensor nodes. RF energy harvesting is often seen as a viable solution to prolong sensor lifetime without additional hardware.

However, our research has shown despite popular belief and numerous publications, *RF energy harvesting from other wireless user-equipment such as cell phones is not feasible* [5]. Collected energy would be too small to make any

practical sense. However, harvesting electromagnetic energy from high power sources such as TV transmitters and radio stations is feasible [5].

Photonics Techniques for Wireless Communications

Optical communication has been traditionally confined to fiber networks and seen as a wired (fixed) solution. However, photonic techniques can greatly enhance wireless communication systems and networks in multiple ways. One approach is the transmission of radio signals over fiber to serve the access front. These radio-over-fiber (ROF) based Fiber-Wireless (Fi-Wi) systems can be great asset to rapid deployment of high capacity Micro and Pico radio cells [6]. Hence, fiber optics is expected play a vital role in upcoming 5G wireless networks.

Another fast emerging optical-wireless technology is the Visible Light Communications (VLC). VLC is growing fast with the widespread deployment of LED based lighting solutions in building, streets, parking lots and especially vehicles. VLC spectrum has a few Tera Hertz of bandwidth and does not cause electromagnetic pollution (interference). VLC will hence play a major role in V2X communications aiding intelligent transport systems and autonomous vehicle maneuver [7]. RCL has also been researching in Fi-Wi and Optical-Wireless Communications for many years.

References:

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- [2] ACM <http://cacm.acm.org/news/96717-researcher-develops-underground-wireless-communication-for-mines/comments>
- [3] MOEINI, Peyman; LI, Xiaofeng; FERNANDO, Xavier Navajothy; and JASEEMUDDIN, Muhammad, 'A Mac Layer Protocol for Smart Indoor Inventory Management System' United States Provisional Patent Application No. 62/958,475, Filed: January 8, 2020
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- [5] Arif Obaid, Fatima Hussain and Xavier Fernando, 'Adaptive Switching for Efficient Energy Harvesting in Energy Constraint IoT Devices' Proc. of the IEEE Vehicular Technology Conference, 24-27 Sept. 2017, Toronto, ON, Canada, DOI: 10.1109/VTCFall.2017.8288391
- [6] Xavier Fernando, 'Radio over Fiber for Wireless Access – From Fundamentals to Advanced Topics', ISBN: 978-1-118-79706-8, August 2014
- [7]. Xavier Fernando and Hasan Farahneh, 'Vehicular Applications of Visible Light Communications', IOP Publishing Ltd, Nov. 2020, Online ISBN: 978-0-7503-2284-3; Print ISBN: 978-0-7503-2282-9

(Xavier Fernando is an alumnus of the University of Peradeniya)

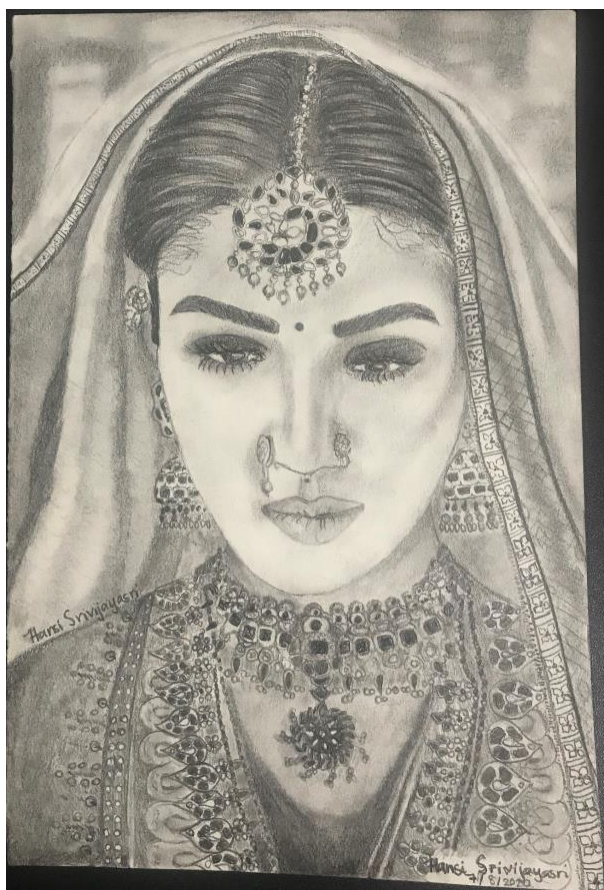
Creative Corner



By Hiru Sumithrarachige



By Saduni Sumithrarachige



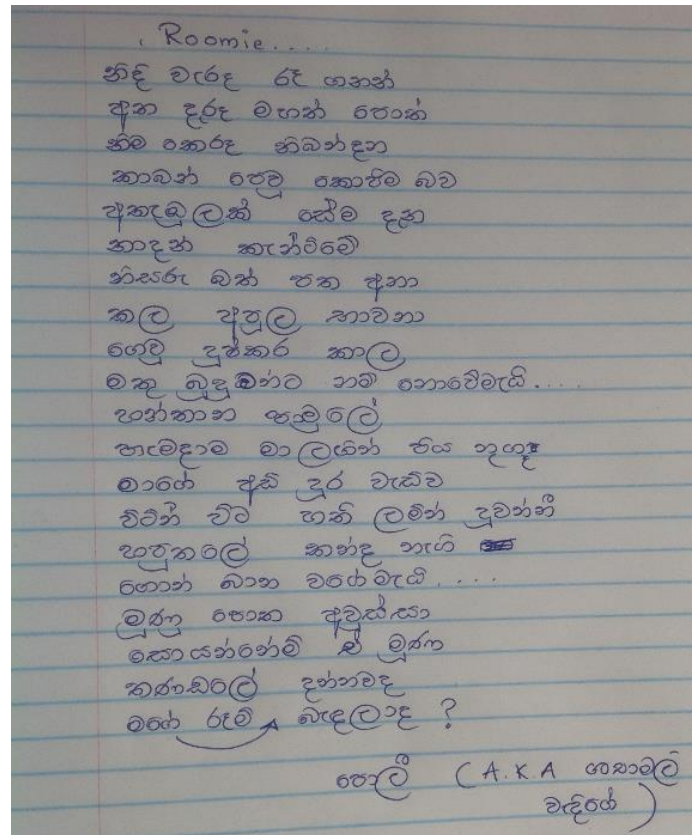
Actress Nayanthara, by Hansi Srivijayasri



Koi Serenity, By Sasandee Herath



By Dinethri Randeniya



By Shyamalie Jayamaha



By Samadi Dilsha Sumithrarachige



Poppies, By Mandil Herath



By Sarani Srivijayasri

Creative project video



CLICK on Yenuka Molligoda's video: http://peradeniyaalumnigta.com/vid_uploads/news_bulletin_1.mp4

Please send in your creative contributions for publishing in next the Newsletter.

Open to alumni and their families.

Kindly refer to Guidelines in page 4.



For more information: <http://www.pgis.pdn.ac.lk/rescon2020/>



For more information: <https://www.pgia.ac.lk/congress/index.php>



8TH PERADENIYA INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM 2020

Theme: "Stimulating economic growth to face economic and social challenges during and post - COVID 19"



Jointly organized by the Department of Economics & Statistics, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and South Asian University (SAU), New Delhi, India

For more information: <http://arts.pdn.ac.lk/econ/piers2020/>

Obituaries

Prof. P. B. Meegaskumbura



Professor P.B.Meegaskumbura, who passed away on the 20th of October after ailing for some time, is well known among Sri Lankan scholars as an academic who has contributed immensely to expand the vistas of Sinhala Studies.

Punchi Banda Meegaskumbura was born in Ravanagoda, Kotmale in 1938. Subsequently he attended the Handunawe Central School and later, the Walala Central School where he mastered the English Language which was the medium of higher education at the time. In 1958, he entered the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya.

Reading for the Special Arts Degree in Sinhala, Meegaskumbura 'topped the batch' at the final examination held in 1962. He was soon recruited to the academic staff. He earned the M.A. (research) in 1966. For his doctoral studies he proceeded to the Deccan College of the University of Pune. He won the doctorate in 1970.

Returning to Peradeniya, Doctor Meegaskumbura was entrusted with the task of teaching the courses in Historical Linguistics. He was a very active teacher in the ISLE Program conducted at Peradeniya in collaboration with several University Colleges in the US. He also worked as Visiting Professor in the Beijing Institute of Foreign Languages in China (1985-86) and in SOAS, University of London (1994-5). In 2018, he was a Visiting Scholar at the Asian Research Institute in Jerusalem, Israel. Being an excellent translator, he has translated into Sinhala several scholarly works.

Prof. Meegaskumbura has been an ideal Guru for over forty generations of students at Peradeniya.

Summary of Objectives of the Association (pursuant to ARTICLE THREE of the Constitution)

- MOBILIZE & DRIVE ALUMNI
- SUPPORT & PROMOTE UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA
- PROVIDE SERVICES AND BENEFITS
- SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OF MEMBERS
- SUPPORT PERADENIYA ALUMNI NEWCOMERS TO CANADA
- RECOGNIZE ACHIEVEMENTS
- COMMUNICATE & INTERACT
- CONTRIBUTE TO ADVANCEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA
- The Association shall not engage or promote or participate in any political or religious activities OR any social activity that can directly or indirectly lead to engagement, promotion or participation of any political or religious activity and/or in conflict with the above objectives. Any exception will be evaluated by the Board of Management based on merits. However, this principle does not aim at restricting any individual choices.