

CSR/Events

Hemas and Wildlife Department launch website for Elephant Transit Home in Udawalawe

AN official website for the Elephant Transit Home (ETH) in Udawalawe, hosted through the Department of Wildlife and Conservation (DWC), and developed and sponsored by the Hemas Holding was launched at the Hemas House among a distinguished gathering from the Ministry of Wildlife, the Department of Wildlife and the Directors of Hemas. This follows a dire need to bring greater awareness among both the local and international community of this world renowned rehabilitation program.

Elephant Transit Home (ETH) in Udawalawe is the first and one of its kind in Asia, and the second such rehabilitation program in the world for orphaned little elephants. The ETH gives an opportunity to these orphaned little elephants to continue living free. The Elephant Transit Home (ETH) situated close to the Udawalawe National Park, was opened in 1995 as a rehabilitation centre for orphaned little elephants in Sri Lanka. The first little elephant inmate was named Komali. Since its inception this transit home has been a shelter for around 300 orphaned elephants.

They are brought from different parts of the island and looked after at the ETH until they are of an age or fit to survive on their own and then released back into the wilds - to where they belong. While at the ETH, they are nourished, comforted and looked after with love and care, while at the same time with minimum human contact to facilitate easy re-integration into the wilds. This is due to the fact that the ETH's ultimate goal is that, once released, these elephants need to be able to join a herd and live a life as any other elephant born in the wilds would enjoy.

This website www.eth.dwc.gov.lk which was solely developed and sponsored by the members of Hemas Green Club showcases a gallery of four short videos sponsored by Hemas Leisure, Travel and Aviation. This is a 'must see', for everyone with a soft corner for elephants. It gives an insight into the working of the ETH since its inception, a few success stories of the rehabilitation, and what goes on behind the scenes to maintain and look after these little elephants. A special page has been allocated to Namal, the five



year-old elephant who lives at the ETH. Namal is very unique since he is the first ever elephant in the world to have a prosthetic hind leg. Once again the ETH creates history by providing a prosthetic hind leg and giving this elephant a second chance in life.

Once you have browsed this site, we have no doubt that you will look for the Donation Page, for ways and means by which one can contribute towards this worthy cause. Sponsorship of orphaned elephants, donations in cash, equipment for the ETH or volunteer service is listed in the 'Wish List' of the ETH.

Hemas, through its Green Club, has taken it upon itself to sponsor a little orphaned elephant named 'Abiman'. Little 'Abiman', now aged two years, is still under the safe protection at the ETH. His name is derived from 'Abimana' which is the Hemas core value program for its staff. The Hemas Green Club comprises a dedicated

team of staff members whose main focus is to protect our environment in whatever way we can. Along with the sponsorship of little 'Abiman', they have also successfully embarked on tree planting, recycling of e-waste and many other initiatives including nature treks to encourage their membership.

Rehabilitation programs such as the ETH, and conservation efforts in Sri Lanka will be given a boost with the launch of this official website. The Hemas Green Club is proud to be associated with this project and thankful to the Department for giving them this opportunity to help a worthy cause.

Please visit the website www.eth.dwc.gov.lk. If passing Udawalawe please drop in at the ETH and experience heart-warming scenes of the feeding of milk to these little elephants which takes place at 9 a.m., 12 noon, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. daily.

'Goodwill journey' to Jaffna by

By RALPH GUNAWARDENA

LAST year's environment commemoration program prompted the Colombo University Zoology Department (BEEZ) to counter climate change and global warming. It was decided to start the project in Jaffna with the University of Jaffna, Zoology Department, not only to create awareness on climate change and global warming but also to promote the goodwill and harmony between the two universities and communities.

When Colombo University sent an invitation to Jaffna University requesting for a joint program, Jaffna University readily agreed as both Vice Chancellors knew the value of the program in terms of the climate change, goodwill and harmony. The two chancellors' blessings went a long way for the success of the journey. Originally it was planned to take place in September 2016 but postponed twice and finally it came true in February 2017 thanks to Colombo University Zoology Department Head Prof. Wipula Yapa and Jaffna University Zoology Department's Dr. Abeyrami Sivaruban who coordinated the entire event in Jaffna.

Both universities made several sacrifices especially not to have lectures for two days on 16 and 17 February as it was planned to have the program on a week day in order to get the maximum support from the schools in Jaffna. As a pilot project it was decided to plant trees in 50 schools in five zones namely Vadamarachchi, Thenmarachchi, Valikamam, Nallur and Islands in Jaffna.

CandleAid, a charity organisation made arrangements to send the plants from the Forest Department Plant Nursery in Killinochchi to Jaffna well in advance. The academic staff and the undergraduates of the Colombo



Prof. Wipula Yapa handing over the goodwill tree to acting vice Chancellor Prof. G. Mikunthan

University started the 'goodwill journey' on 16 February early morning with three 'goodwill trees' donated by Colombo University Vice Chancellor Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake, Rupavahini Corporation Chairman Ravi Jayawardena and People's Bank Chairman Hemasiri Fernando.

Most of the undergraduates were making their maiden visit to Jaffna primarily, perhaps to promote the goodwill and harmony. The Colombo group was hosted to a bonfire dinner by the Jaffna University Zoology Department. The acting Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University Prof. G. Mikunthan, the Dean of the Science Faculty Prof. R. Vigneshwaran and the Head of the Zoology Department Dr. Gnaneshwaran graced the occasion. It was a 'Right Royal Welcome' from Jaffna University, which no one anticipated. The place (the university square) was nicely lit and tables were decorated with flowers and candle stands. At the centre of the square was the bonfire and a stage had been erected for a mini show.

The evening started with a Tamil song by a Sinhalese girl who is a 3rd year student at the Jaffna University Zoology Department. By her performances the stage was set for all the students to mingle with each other without any differ-

ences. Then there were a couple of Tamil group songs and a dance item - all by the Jaffna students. The compere then requested the Colombo students to perform, they obliged although they were not prepared.

Dinner was served by the undergraduates of the Jaffna University to their guests - Colombo undergraduates and to the representatives of the sponsors. It was a very well prepared dinner with Jaffna culinary at its best. After the dinner it didn't take time for all undergraduates to start their sing song and dancing. At the start the Jaffna girls were a bit quite but gradually one by one got joined the group and all were together as one set of friends dancing their cares away.

Most probably all were waiting for this moment to set aside their differences and start a new leaf in their lives. There was a white board for students to write their comments and one comment was 'Jaffna we love you, please do come to Colombo' with a sign of a heart. Reluctantly, the organisers had to stop music at 10:45 p.m. to arrange the place for the most important program on the following day otherwise the dancing would have continued till midnight.

The following morning all were welcomed in a traditional Northern way at the opening ceremony. It started with a silent prayer followed by a couple of speeches. Prof. Yapa of Colombo University in his address thanked the two Vice Chancellors for giving their blessings for the meaningful program that bonded the two universities in a unique way. He suggested that both universities should work together in the future to counter climate change and global warming and also to promote the goodwill and harmony.

He extended an invitation to the Jaffna University Zoology Department to come



Acting Vice Chancellor Prof. Lakshman Dissanayake handing the Goodwill Tree top to undergraduates

to Colombo and join them to commemorate the World Environment Day in June 2017. Prof. Yapa did not fail to thank the Zoology Department of Jaffna University for the arrangements made for a successful program specially conducting school competitions for essays and art based on climate change and global warming.

Acting Vice Chancellor of the Jaffna University Prof. G. Mikunthan in his address thanked the Colombo University Zoology Department for initiating such a meaningful program which is very appropriate in today's context. He requested the Colombo undergraduates to see how the Bo-Tree and the Palmyrah Tree grow side by side somewhere in Mankulam and Chedikulam. Though both trees have special features for both communities, in nature both trees grow in harmony side by side and that's a good example for us to follow, he emphasised. Being an agricultural graduate, the Acting Vice Chancellor requested both Zoology Departments to continue what they have started in midst of any obstacles. After the speeches the certificates were distributed for the winners of the art and essay competitions.

The symbolic tree planting took place at the Jaffna University premises. The Acting Vice Chancellor of the

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Winners of schoolchildren's Commonwealth Class Writing Competition announced

SCHOOLCHILDREN between 7 and 14 years of age from India, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom have been named as winners of the Commonwealth Class Writing Competition, an initiative of the Commonwealth Secretariat and British Council.

The international short story writing competition was themed around 'Belonging', with two student categories: a 7-10 year-old class of entrants and a 11-14 year-old class.

First prize in the 7-10 category was awarded to James Balston from Waitakere Primary School, New Zealand, for his imaginative interpretation of 'belonging' through the native animals of New Zealand, a vividly described and wonderfully vibrant story. James will receive a book token worth £100 along with a River of Stories anthology set published by the Commonwealth Education Trust for his school.

Second prize was awarded to Eva Bennet from Churchfields Junior School, United Kingdom, who will receive a £50 book token. She wrote a gracefully paced story of a precious gem subject to many owners over the course of history.

Third prize was awarded to Himayath Nuzraan from The British School in Colombo, Sri Lanka, who receives a £30 book token. His was a classic tale of rebellion and belonging, with the author using imaginative and true-to-life dialogue to create a narrative with a satisfying resolution.

In the 11-14 year-old category, Ailsa Dixon from the Eilon Academy in the UK won first prize and a £100 book token for her evocative and extremely beautiful



fully written story about finding a sense of belonging that provides an escape from a difficult reality.

Second prize with a £50 book token was Priyadarshini Nag from Modern High School, Kolkata, India, who reflected on the value a street community brings to a neighbourhood. Third prize with a £30 book token was won by Hamsa Madhira from Chirec International School, India, whose story was a tragic tale of family and relationships.

The competition received over three thousand entries from both schoolchildren and teachers from Commonwealth countries around the world. The winners of the teacher's category were announced in December last year.

Cortina Butler, Director of Literature at the British Council and head of the judging panel, commented: "In both age groups there has been a wide ranging and inspiring response to the challenge of writing a story on the theme of belonging."

"We have learned so much from reading everyone's work about the lives of young people growing up in the Commonwealth - both what is common to us all and what is distinct. What all the

entries clearly demonstrate is how important a sense of belonging is to every one of us, wherever we live."

Emma Kerr, Partnerships Officer at the Commonwealth Secretariat, which funds the Commonwealth Class initiative, commented: "The aim of Commonwealth Class is to increase understanding of the values and principles of the Commonwealth such as tolerance, respect and understanding. We have been overwhelmed by the quality of the winning entries and expect that they will inspire both children and adults."

The Commonwealth Class initiative enables schools to take part in online debates, competitions and work on projects with the aim of giving young people a hands-on international learning experience based around the Commonwealth family of countries.

All of the winning stories and illustrations as well as those that were highly commended by the judges can be seen on the British Council's Commonwealth Class website.

Himayath Nuzraan from The British School in Colombo, Sri Lanka, said "There's no place like home! I was pretty nervous about taking part in the Commonwealth Class competition since I knew it was a worldwide competition, but I understood that the most important thing was participating, and not just to win."

Writing tips from former Children's Laureate, Anne Fine, and illustration tips from the New Zealand author, Don Long, can be downloaded by visiting <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/commonwealth-class-story-writing-competition>.



Dettol extends hygiene promise with 'Clean Hands, Clean Nation' message

DETTOL, a household name for over 55 years, will extend its hygiene promise with the launch of the 'Clean Hands, Clean Nation' program. An initiative meant to raise awareness on the societal need for improved understanding and responsibility in waste disposal and management.

The 'Clean Hands, Clean Nation' program is built on the premise that most people in Sri Lanka are conscientious of hand hygiene, as experienced by the brand over multiple generations. However, inappropriate waste disposal and management techniques have led to an unsightly build-up of garbage near a number of popular public and unoccupied spaces.

Reckitt Benckiser Head of Marketing and Trade Marketing Jude Martino said, "According to a report last year, Sri Lanka generates more than five million kilograms of plastic waste per day, and that one-third of the waste is mismanaged; ending up on the side of our roads, drains and waterways ultimately, lead-



ing out to the sea. Dettol's hygiene message has always focused on the family and its immediate living spaces. But now there is an urgent need to extend that message to cover all the places we occupy and enjoy."

Dettol launched its 'Clean Hands, Clean Nation' program at the summit of Adam's Peak in January 2017. And the brand hopes to take its message across Sri Lanka during the year. On the scope of the pro-

ject, Reckitt Benckiser Product Group Manager Harsha Rathnayake said, "We have already mapped out a plan for the year to increase awareness on responsible waste disposal and management techniques. We hope to reduce the incidence of waste mismanagement during the year by educating people that we need a clean nation to truly have clean hands."

Adam's Peak, a sanctuary for many religious beliefs, attracts a large body of tourists and pilgrims each year. Themountain, often scaled from December to May, has seen an increase in plastic waste besetting the historical site. Dettol will continue to place waste bins and plastic collection points along popular routes to the summit. The brand will also hold regular clean-ups and educational programs throughout the year.

Martino added, "We hope our efforts will bring about a positive shift in the way our people deal with waste and reinforce the message that clean hands are only the first step towards creating a clean nation."

People

The tree-planting campaign this year is for Environment and Zoology of Colombo. The project was sponsored by People's Bank, 1,000 plants planted during the campaign. The project was developed in partnership with the University of Jaffna. The aim of the project is to create a clean nation.