

REVIVE EARTH



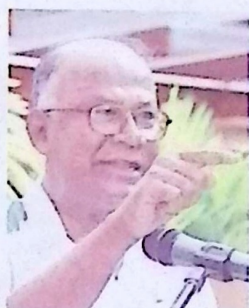
Sarath Kongahage



Joe Bradley



Sampath Seneviratne



Ralph Gunawardena



Deepthi Wickramasinghe



Roshan Mahanama



Wipula Yapa



Sugath Dharmakeerthi



Gotabaya Sumanasena



Chandran Rutnam

given the name of the person who planted the tree. The student will be able to visit the tree years from now, and show his/her grandchildren the tree. It will be a very moving and touching experience.

"The reason that it is called Green Through Cricket, is because cricket is connected to the environment. Bats, balls and wickets all come from the tree. We also have plans for Vihara Maha Devi Park. The members of Vihara Maha Devi Park have decided to create an 'urban forest', at the four corners. They will invite all the Colombo Schools, so that they may create an urban forest within the school premises," Gunawardena said.

PRESERVING ENVIRONMENT

Chairman Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, Sarath Kongahage, called it a commendable effort. He mentioned that it was really launched in Killinochchi with the assistance of the University of Jaffna.



Children planting trees Pictures by Ruwan De Silva

"We saw the planting of 1,500 trees. But due to various logistical reasons we could not take it any further. But today we are re-introducing this concept. SLFI is playing a vital role. I feel that this concept needs to be taken to the people. The message of protecting our environment and preserving it needs to be given to the children. Human beings must act like animals because animals do not destroy nature. Through their behavior they add to nature. That is the simplest way and the only way to protect our environment," he said.

Movie Director, Chandran Rutnam, said that it is important that the next generation also inherit a world that is alive with flora and fauna. "Planting a tree is a gift to the world. We need to play our part and grow

as many trees as possible. We need to make a small contribution. But that contribution made by many people creates a force for good. So it is very important that we start now. Deforestation is alarming and it has terrible consequences. I also feel that we need convince world leaders to all play their part," said Rutnam.

Former Cricketer Roshan Mahanama, said it is essential we rally around and support these causes. "I am the Brand Ambassador for SOS Children's Villages, and they have told me this year, that for World Children's Day, they will be having a low key event, which would be a tree planting event. They will grow trees in six villages. They want to have an event to plant the trees. We need to give the next generation a better world to live in. Being a grandfather myself I understand this necessity. These types of projects can get the message across in a powerful way. We all have a responsibility to protect and preserve mother-nature. We need to rise against deforestation," said Mahanama.

INVOLVING CHILDREN

Ministry of Mahaweli Development, Sugath Dharmakeerthi, stressed that the importance of planting trees should be inculcated in children and that it is essential for the media to take this message out to the public.

"The main objective should be to increase the forest cover of the country up to 32 per cent of the total country land area. To reach the target we need to address many issues. We need to undertake land acquisitions and replant trees in barren lands. The theme of this World Environment Day is to address air pollution. But the theme was changed by the Ministry of Environment so it would be Sustainable Forest Conservation to Address Air Pollution," said Dharmakeerthi.

Entrepreneur, Gotabaya Sumanasena, said this event is a wake-up call for everyone. He stressed that the fight is to preserve and protect our flora and fauna.

"In our urban environment we can feel the need for trees. We can feel the urgency. We can understand the consequences of cutting down trees. In our environment the amount of oxygen is low. We need to grow more trees. I think without throwing away the mango and mangosteen seeds into rubbish bins, they can be thrown on to the sides of the road, where they will plant themselves and grow. This is of course a very productive habit when you are traveling outstation. The trees that grow will be of immense benefit - giving food, shade, oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide," Sumanasena said.

Head Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences, University of Colombo, Deepthi Wickramasinghe, commented on the hidden value of trees, because most often we see what is only above the ground. She pointed out that a tree is nature's infrastructure that gives cooling and shelter.

"Apart from all this, it provides us with the free oxygen that we breathe; it sucks in the Carbon Dioxide. We know that climate change happens due to the ex-

cess Carbon Dioxide concentration in the atmosphere. A tree is a gift of nature absorbing Carbon Dioxide. By planting more trees we can reduce the carbon dioxide concentration. It also performs more eco system services for free. Because of the tree covering the soil beneath it is protected reducing soil erosion. It brings balance to the environment. Planting a tree in your backyard can help to abate climate change, because if we can all do this, that will contribute a lot," Wickramasinghe said.

Cricketer from New Zealand, Joe Bradley is on a cricket scholarship from New Zealand and stays in Moratuwa. He met Gunawardena at the Moratuwa stadium.

"I am a volunteer from New Zealand with the Cricket Life Foundation in Moratuwa and I met Ralph. I really liked this programme of his. New Zealand is a very green country. We pride ourselves on our flora and fauna. I really appreciate what Ralph has done. These little steps can make a huge change. I think this is an excellent way to get the message across that we need to protect nature and fight climate change because it is really a terrible issue," said Bradley.

Former Head of Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences, Colombo University, Prof. Wipula Yapa, put things in perspective when he said that trees were here long before humans arrived on the planet.

"Unfortunately our forests are vanishing from the earth because of our actions. The best way to do something about it is to raise awareness. Planting trees is very important. About 100 years ago, 70 per cent of Sri Lanka was covered by forests, and today it has come down to 30 per cent. The rate of our tree planting is not sufficient. We need to work harder and turn the situation around. I am very optimistic about programmes like this. We need to work with our younger generation," said Yapa.

Senior Lecturer in Zoology, Zoology and Environment Sciences Department Colombo University, Dr. Sampath Seneviratne, stated that for a city to be modern, progressive, developed and healthy you need to have trees because they represent real wealth and a good quality of life.

"CO2 is heavy and it stays and accumulates around the city. People and Vehicles all emit CO2. A city badly needs oxygen. CO2 traps the heat from the sun, so with an increased amount of CO2, it is definitely not a healthy environment for people. If you have trees, the temperature naturally comes down since trees absorb CO2. Trees are natural air purifiers and controllers. Colombo needs trees along the roads, canal systems and railway lines. Because of a lack of trees the cities get warmer," said Seneviratne.



Jetwing Hotels, has once again received Certificates of Excellence from the world's largest travel site, TripAdvisor. Having been the regular recipient of these awards for the past few years running, this time around 25 properties; Calamansi Cove Villas by Jetwing, Galle Heritage Villa by Jetwing, Hotel J Ambalangoda, Jetwing Ayurveda Pavilions, Jetwing Beach, Jetwing Colombo Seven, Jetwing Jaffna, Jetwing Kaduruketha, Jetwing Kurulubedda, Jetwing Lagoon, Jetwing Lake, Jetwing Lighthouse, Jetwing Lighthouse Club, Jetwing Sea, Jetwing Surf, Jetwing Vil Uyana, Jetwing Warwick Gardens, Jetwing Yala, Kottukal Beach House by Jetwing, Mermaid Hotel and Club, North Gate by Jetwing, Outlands by Jetwing, Saman Villas, Underneath The Mango Tree by Jetwing, Yathra Houseboat by Jetwing have been recognized for their exceptional service by TripAdvisor. Now in its ninth year, the achievement celebrates businesses that are consistently excellent - having earned great traveler reviews on Tri-

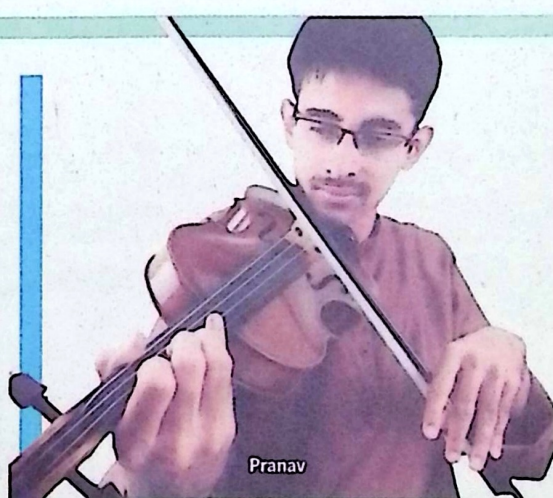
pAdvisor over the past year. Certificate of Excellence recipients include restaurants, accommodations and attractions located all over the world that have continually delivered a quality customer experience.

With over four decades of experience in the hospitality industry, Jetwing Hotels continues to choose rare and exceptionally unique destinations so guests from around the world get the opportunity to immerse themselves in local culture. While each resort and villa will take you to a world of its own coupled with luxurious offerings, unique design and architecture and stunning views of the natural surroundings, the impeccable service offered at Jetwing Hotels is unmatched. Designed by world renowned architect Geoffrey Bawa, the iconic Jetwing Lighthouse - which embodies the best of tropical modernism, elegance and old-world charm is currently undergoing a transformation in its interior design and overall experience with the objective of being positioned as the ultimate luxury boutique resort in Galle. Jetwing Hotels is also set to mark its presence in Kandy

later this year with a new contemporary boutique hotel. Spanning 1.9 acres, the hotel will feature 26 plush rooms and suites with private butler service, exemplary amenities and elegant design with a local touch.

"Winning the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for 25 out of our 40 properties across the island is a true testament to our associates who are deeply committed to delivering the most genuine and personalized guest experience each and every day. We would like to thank all our guests for taking a moment of their valuable time to share the experiences on TripAdvisor. There is no greater seal of approval than being recognized by our guests" Jetwing Hotels Chairman, Shiromal Cooray said.

The Certificate of Excellence accounts for the quality, quantity and recency of reviews submitted by travelers on TripAdvisor over a 12-month period. To qualify, a business must maintain an overall TripAdvisor bubble rating of at least four out of five, have a minimum number of reviews and must have been listed on TripAdvisor for at least 12 months.



An evening of Carnatic Instrumental Music



Shivaraj Nataraj

Venilan Vairavapillai

Pranav Swaroop, an accomplished musician from Bangalore, India will be presenting a Carnatic violin recital accompanied by Venilan Vairavapillai on Mirudangam and Shivaraj Nataraj on percussion on July 17 at 6pm at SVCC auditorium 16/2, Gregory's Road, Colombo 07.

Pranav Swaroop is a disciple of Vidwan M. E. Nataraj and presently is under the tutelage of Vidwan Lalgudi GJR Krishnan. As a national level prize winner and graded artist at All India Radio, Pranav has received numerous awards and recognition such as Kishora Prathibha from Government of Karnataka, Karnataka Sangeetha Nritya Academy fellowship, MHRD scholarship from Government of India to name a few and has performed solo concerts as well as accompanied senior artists across South India and abroad.

Venilan Vairavapillai is an eminent Mridangam player from Colombo and has performed at various prominent Sabhas across the country, in India and abroad and has also accompanied many senior artists. As a much sought after guru, Venilan has been teaching the Indian traditional art form to younger generations and also providing them a platform to nurture their talent.

Shivaraj Nataraj is a multi talented percussionist from Muscat, Oman and has been trained by his father Pushpavaman Nataraj and Vidwan AV Anand. He is credited to infusing the western art of beat boxing into Konnakol and plays the Mridangam and Khanjira too. Shivaraj has been performing across India and abroad along with his Carnatic fusion band, Project Mishram and has had the privilege of accompanying many senior artists across India and abroad. All are cordially invited to participate at this event. Entrance is free.

EVERY TREE COUNTS

The potential for co-existence was manifested at the AUA Youth Forum, resulting in time spent with one another which was productive and satisfactory. This event highlighted the need for coexistence between those of us in society and the need for us to coexist with nature and its fauna through a tree planting campaign.

The AUA Youth Forum (AUAYF) is a flagship program organized by the Asian University Alliance (AUA). Nearly 50 selected undergraduate student leaders from 15 AUA member universities addressed developmental issues in the region, promoting cultural and academic exchange during the interactive five-day program lined up in Sri Lanka. The items of this program included workshops, a cultural event and a tree planting campaign in the Sri Palee Campus premises.

It is essential that the youth understand the seriousness of the situation with conflicts between peoples erupting around the world. Also, we cannot forget nature. No doubt this is why the hierarchy of the University of Colombo Sri Palee Campus decided on including the tree planting campaign in the program. "The existence of our gentle green giants and peace between nations and societies is what is necessary to save the world we are living in. To achieve both these ends, we need men and women with intelligence who with their determination and compassion can protect our youth and our trees, so that future generations can retain that love for flora, fauna and one another. Love for these gentle green giants as well as love for each other is what can save world."

Our youth need to understand that it is estimated that rain forests will disappear within the next 100 years. They need to understand that forests cover 30 percent of the earth's land with two billion depending on it. They need to know that one and half acres of forest is cut down every second. This is how serious the situation is. The youth are intelligent enough to understand what will happen if the rain forests indeed disappear in the next 100 years. The rate of deforestation equals to loss of 28 football field every minute.

Rector Sri Palee Campus, Prof. Ranjan Hettiarachchi, in his address stated that programmes like AUAYF forge bonds between member countries and empower the youth to create change in the region.

"The countries that took part were China, Korea, Singapore, Japan, Kazakhstan, India, Pakistan, Maldives, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and United Arab Emirates. Five to three students represented one country. During that period Vice Chancellors of those universities got together and discussed the challenges, opportunities and Collaborations and also how to network and work as a group to develop the Asian region through education. It is very important to have links between our universities because ultimately it benefits the youth," said Hettiarachchi.

The Rector pointed out that the goal of this programme is to facilitate an exchange of ideas and the sharing of knowledge. He further added that we are all living in a world full of change. With technology, times are changing. So right now, at this present juncture in time, bonds need to be strengthened between countries. In the case of some countries these bonds were created hundreds of years ago. Each one of these countries is presently in varying stages of development.

"With these links we are able to keep abreast of the changes in the world. With these links we can be current and also change with the changing world while retaining our national identity. Our mutual target and goal is co-existence. Through this programme the youth can get together and have some dialogue. As the youth they will face barriers and difficulties but our youth are resilient. Together they can overcome. They can contribute to the development of the region. The world is full of challenges with Asia developing rapidly. This programme is indeed a platform for these students," explained Hettiarachchi.

Daily News also spoke to Colombo University, Professor in Zoology Prof. Wipula Yapa who addressed the other side of co-existence - our flora and fauna.

Prof. Yapa points out that when it comes to our environment, we are facing serious problems such as climate change, floods, excessive rainfall followed by long periods of drought. He stated with absolute certainty that all this is because we have changed our environment drastically. Our only option is to try and go back to the way things were.

"So we are trying very hard to improve the forest and green cover by planting trees. Trees have various kinds of benefits. One great service it does is that it increases biodiversity. Today because of what we as humans have done, some animals have gone extinct. If you take some species, their numbers are drastically declining. Certain species need many different kinds of plants for their survival. Will this be a problem for humans? Definitely," said Yapa.



Prof. Ranjan Hettiarachchi



Prof. Wipula Yapa



Aseel Ibrahim



Kanalkada



Pictures by Ruwan De Silva



Fungyiting



Seung Shin Yoon

We are connected to nature. Today we see the disastrous consequences of our actions. If you take fruit trees we need fruits for our health. They are pollinated by bees, insects, bats and birds. If these trees are not there, there will be no pollination resulting in the loss of these trees - no food for us or other animals.

"Trees help us manage the environment, especially the temperature. With every passing year the temperature increases. That is why we have drastically changing weather patterns. With the icebergs melting, the sea levels are rising. One way to combat this heat is by growing trees. If there is a forest cover it will prevent soil erosion and rivers and lakes being filled up with mud," pointed out Yapa.

Daily News also spoke to some young students from the AUAYF on what they thought about the exchanges.

Fungyiting from Hong Kong, said that one item of the program was Mental Health and it was an item that she took an interest in. Through the discourses she gained a deeper understanding of mental health.

"During my stay in Sri Lanka I must say that I was impressed by the culture of the country. Even small events like this tree planting campaign have certain significance to me because all of this gives me a greater understanding of the pulse of the country. I definitely want to come here again. The people are so friendly. The culture is different from the culture in my country, which is why I have really benefited from this visit. Looking at Sri Lanka I see the development. It seems to be really progressing at a rapid pace," said Fungyiting.

Kanalkada from Japan said she was really touched by the warmth of the Sri Lankan people. She stated that they were all made to feel welcome in Sri Lanka.

"The programme is a new experience to me and this is my first visit. I have really enjoyed it because there were so many different kinds of people to meet. I would certainly encourage anyone to visit Sri Lanka because there is so much to take in and such a diverse culture to absorb. I have got the opportunity to look at things from a different point of view. I of course feel that Sri Lankans care about nature and they protect nature. The city I come from, Tokyo, is a really bustling city, so meeting Sri Lankans is, I must say a pleasant experience," said Kanalkada.

Seung Shin Yoon from South Korea, state that she is awestruck by the beauty in Sri Lanka. She stated the scenery was really stunning with so much diversity.

"Our minds have been enriched by looking at matters and topics in a different perspective. Through this we came up with different solutions to the problems that our societies face. We were able to develop sensitivity. Making independent decisions is also an aspect of the program. I also see rapid developments such as the constructions taking place. I am quite sure that in a few years Sri Lanka will become something very special. Through this program I understood diversity. Diversity needs to be celebrated and respected," said Yoon.

Aseel Ibrahim from Malaysia, called the AUA forum an invaluable life experience. He called it a great opportunity for all involved to tackle sensitive issues.

"There is a representation from many countries. It was extremely mind stimulating as we discussed so many critical issues like health and wellbeing. I feel that every generation has a responsibility towards the next generation. Our future generations must be gifted with a world that is safe and peaceful. I find Sri Lanka to be a very colorful place with people from various cultures. The people are so friendly and I love this weather and the greenery. But most of all I like the people. We learnt a lot about health and well-being that maybe we did not pay too much attention to before coming to Sri Lanka. What we learnt will surely help us lead a healthy lifestyle. So what we learnt we will try and apply it in our communities. I will personally inspire my friends to be healthy and think in the long term," said Ibrahim.

The tree planting programme was coordinated by Ralph Gunawardena.

Stories for peace

IYAP - International Youth Alliance for Peace founded on 2013 celebrates its sixth year service this year. IYAP was born as a consequence of ambitious vision and enthusiasm of Thirukumar Premakumar, the founder and president of the organization. IYAP began its journey with just six individuals, who unanimously believed in the creation of platform for youth, which allows youth themselves to initiate and lead projects addressing the most urgent issues and concerns of the youth and has now spread its wings to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, India and Myanmar.

Celebrating the sixth anniversary International Youth Alliance for Peace in collaboration with Internews Sri Lanka initiated the project "Storytellers4Peace" in which a series of workshops on storytelling involving 90 young people across the Eastern, Northern and Central provinces, were conducted to train, equip and collect stories.

At the conclusion of the workshops 'Storytellers4Peace showcase' was held in appreciation of the participants of the project. The event was an excellent opportunity to witness the efforts of a group of young individuals who have been committed towards enriching their knowledge on the culture, history and tradition of the island and passing the knowledge to the community.

Storytellers4Peace showcase 2019 was held at Lighthouse auditorium and lawn. The Executive Director Thirukumar Premakumar said Storytellers4Peace is aimed at communicating values, not just providing skills for the young people involved in this initiative.

In his keynote address, Peter D'Almeida focused on the power of storytelling as a political force quoting Howard Gartner, he said, "Stories are the single most powerful weapon in a leader's arsenal." He stressed the need for us to reclaim our stories from the hands of politicians who have used them as a tool to create and spread ill-will, and challenged young people to use storytelling as a means of fostering harmony.

The agenda also consisted of two panel discussions on "history" where the stories which based on histories were presented by the storytellers and the second was on "culture and tradition". Following the discussions



guest speaker Gangulali de Silva, one of the two Sri Lankan Youth Delegates to the United Nations, for the year 2019/2020 gave an inspiring speech.

Certificates were awarded to all participants who were a part of this project and three awards were given

to the storytellers selected out of 45 stories by a jury panel - Best Article Award was won by Vishusha Kethiswara from the Kandy and Best Video story to Mohamed Asfar from Trincomalee and Best Story Award to Logini Jayaseelan from Jaffna.



Enhancing the spirit of Christmas

ANANDA KANNANGARA

Christmas tree is a traditional tree and it has become a ritual in Christian homes. The history reveals that Christmas trees were originally introduced by Germany and it was in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some people in the latter years built even Christmas pyramids of wood and also decorated them with evergreens and candles.

People have a firm belief that Christmas tree is a symbol of a living Christmas spirit and it brings the luck, happiness and joy to their lives. The trees also give a pleasant aroma of the forest. Cypress and fir trees are used to make Christmas trees. The trees are largely grown in cool Northern countries. The trees are tall and straight and have needle shaped leaves, a unique smell adds to the air from leaves.

In Sri Lanka, Cypress plants are used to make Xmas trees. These plants are grown in areas such as Nuwareliya, Bandarawela, Diyatalawa, and Talawakele. During the Xmas season lot of street sellers in Colombo and suburban areas are engaged in the Xmas tree selling business.

These days the green Christmas trees and branches could be easily seen along the main roads in main cities including in Colombo, Mt. La-

vinia, Jaala, Wattala and Negombo.

The Havelock Road (opposite the BRC Grounds) in Colombo has become the very popular place for Christmas trees. The Daily News interviewed few Christmas tree sellers opposite BRC Grounds to have a clear understanding about their business activities.

A long standing Christmas tree seller Isuru Karunathilaka said they make a sacrifice to develop their business every year. He said regular Xmas tree buyers from Colombo visit plantations at Bandarawela, Badulla and many other areas to cut down Xmas tree plants. "We sell only small Xmas tree plants and not branches from big trees," he said.

Another trader Sumanapala Perera said according to rules, after buying the small trees from Cypress plant growers, we have to get the permission from the Department of Forest Reservations and the area Divisional Secretariat, while the transportation of trees are done with the authority of Police.

He said after cutting down trees without uprooting them cultivators start the replanting for next year as their main livelihood is planting cypress in their lands. Forty seven year old Ranasinghe said they carry out the business opposite BRC grounds only before the Christmas festival begins on December 25.