

SLAAS NEWS



Newsletter of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science

Vol. 6 No. 1 January - April 2011

Message from the General President



I would like to begin this message by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Past General Presidents, Council and the General Membership of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science for the confidence and trust that they have placed in me by electing me to the position of the General President of the Association for the year 2011.

With regard to the broad direction along which SLAAS may be steered this year, I would like to see the advisory role played by the SLAAS to the government being strengthened as the government is planning to embark on several new projects for which views of the scientists are of extreme importance. Going for nuclear power for the future energy requirements of the country, harnessing the maximum benefits from resources in the sea area that we are poised get according to the United Nations Convention of the Law

of the Sea and working towards a better science education framework are just a few of them.

Bringing science closer to the general public making it an integral part of their lives, promoting development-focused research, enhancing the confidence of the general public towards science, building up a powerful and responsible scientific fraternity by networking the scientists scattered throughout the country, are some of the other long term goals that I would like to achieve.

Sri Lanka is a relatively small island with a land area of about 67 000 square kilometers. It is, however, surrounded by the Indian Ocean, and according to the United Nations Convention of Law of the Sea, Sri Lanka will be the rightful owner of a sea area probably as large as twenty three times of its land territory. This sea area covers a large part of the Bay of Bengal and also an equally large part of the Bengal fan and is full of living and non-living resources that can be used for the economic development of our country. In fact, the future economic development of the country will depend to a large extent on the proper utilization of this vast pool of resources. It is therefore essential to educate our younger generation about these resources, encourage and provide opportunities for scientists to become actively involved in research that will lead to better understanding the ocean around Sri Lanka and the resources therein, and advice the authorities on harnessing resources while paying serious attention on their conservation and related environmental issues. Considering this background I have selected the theme **“Understanding, Harnessing and Conserving the Ocean around Sri Lanka: Role of the Scientist”** for the year 2011. I believe that this theme has the potential to draw expertise from varied disciplines and open up opportunities for collaborative studies.

Prof. Dhammika A. Tantrigoda

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Edited by Prof. Nilanthi De Silva

Typeset by Kasun Jayasinghe

Printed by Ananda Press

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Members Contact Details

If you have changed your postal address, telephone numbers, e-mail address etc, please inform
SLAAS Headquarters by letter or email: haslaas@gmail.com

Submission of Papers for Presentation at Annual Sessions 2011

The deadline for submission of **Friday, 3 June 2011, 16.00 h** will be adhered to very strictly, and documents received after the given date and time due to any reasons, including postal delays, will not be accepted.

Three hard copies of both the Abstract and the Extended Abstract must be submitted under registered post, or sent by courier or delivered in person, before the closing date, together with one copy each of the Title Page and duly completed Original Declaration Form. **Electronic versions, E-mail, Fax etc. are not acceptable in the first submission of abstracts.**

If the submission is hand delivered, please obtain a slip with a date stamp on it, at the time of handing over the documents to the SLAAS office.

All submissions should be addressed to the General Secretary, Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science, 120/10, Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo 7.

Condolences

Prof. R.H Wijenayake: It is with deep regret that we learnt of the demise of Professor R. H Wijayanayake on January 03, 2011. He was the founder Professor of Chemistry, the founder Dean of the Faculty of Science, and a former Director of Ruhuna University College. He joined the pioneering academic staff of the Ruhuna University College at its inception in 1978 and served for 23 years, overcoming many challenges in bringing the institution up to its present status. As a great teacher, a dedicated researcher and a successful administrator, he will be missed by university academics, past students and the entire country.

Prof. Sirimanna: We also learnt of the demise of Prof. Sirimanna on January 01, 2010, with deep regret. He was a graduate of University of Peradeniya, specialized in Chemistry in 1977. He joined the Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine of University of Colombo in 2001 after a stint in the USA, and was promoted Professor in 2008. He will be missed by the university academic community as well as present and past students.

Message from the General President 2010

Dear Members,



You may remember that at the beginning of 2010, I wrote to the general membership appealing for funds. Many of you made personal contributions while many others helped us to find sponsorship. I write to thank each and every one of you for rallying round at a time of need.

Your good wishes and support was our strength.

Thank you once again.

Lalini Rajapaksa, Immediate Past General President

Commendations in recognition of services to SLAAS in 2010

Mr. Palitha Sarukkali	Prof. H.D. Gunawardhana
Dr. Hema Goonatilake	Dr. Ananda Mallawathanthri
Dr. M.M.M. Najim	Dr. Chrishantha Weerasinghe
Dr. Enoke Corea	Prof. Jayantha Wijeyaratne
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Prof. Preethi Randeniya	Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe
Dr. Dr. J.K. Wijerathna	Dr. Lalini Rajapaksa
Dr. R.D. Gunerathna	Mr. K. Natanasabapathy
Dr. Prashanthi Gunawardena	Prof. Valentine Basnayake

SECTIONAL ACTIVITIES: JAN – APRIL 2011

SECTION A

A seminar on ‘Pandemic Influenza A H1N1 θ ’ was conducted on 18 January 2011 from 4.30 to 5.30 p.m. at the seminar room of the SLAAS. Dr. Lalini Rajapakse (former General President of SLAAS) moderated the seminar while Dr. Ranjan Wijesinghe (Consultant Epidemiologist, Epidemiological Unit) and Dr. Ananda Wijewickrema (Consultant Physician, Infectious Disease Hospital) served as resource persons. The seminar was attended by SLAAS members, postgraduate doctors and the public.



A half day workshop on ‘Scientific Report Writing’ was conducted on 27 January 2011 from 9.00 to 12.00 noon at the Institute of Indigenous Medicine for 30 students of the Postgraduate Diploma course in Unani Medicine. Resource persons of this activity were Drs. Nalika Gunawardena, Carukshi Arambepola and Chrishantha Weerasinghe.

SECTION B

During the period January to April 2011, Section B plans to conduct range of different activities. These include a panel discussion and seminar on mitigation of human-elephant conflict at Wayamba University; launch of a CD on feed formulation, targeting livestock farmers; field days with goat farmers in Tanamalwila, Galgamuwa and Anamaduwa on controlling gastro-intestinal parasites; a training programme for small scale poultry feed formulators in the North West Province on introduction of a simple feed formulation software; training undergraduates at Wayamba University on use of a new user-friendly software for public presentations; as well as awareness programmes for school children on school sanitation, agricultural biotechnology, and water sanitation.

SECTION C

Section C plans to conduct several activities in January - April of this year. They include public lectures on the power sector, and mitigation of urban floods. Minor seminars on the Torrington Square Development Project and management of rainwater disposal at Vidya Mawatha, and on Disaster Preparedness and Management of Post-Disaster Development are also planned.

SECTION D



The SLAAS Section-D Committee organized a half day session on **“Publishing research results in a reputed journal and electronic bibliography”** at the Coconut Research Institute (CRI), Lunuwila on 2 February 2011. Dr Chithrangani Jayasekara, Director, CRI, welcomed the participants who included the Heads of Departments and the Research Officers attached to the laboratories at the CRI. Dr Seetha Wickremasinghe, delivered the introductory remarks and highlighted the reasons for organizing a series of seminars in 2011 on this topic. She addressed the topic of publishing

results and discussed other issues relevant to scientific publication. Dr. Kamal Ranathunga, Committee Member, SLAAS Section-D spoke on electronic bibliography, which was also very useful for academic writing purposes.

Another activity, a Stakeholders Meeting on **“PCB (Polychlorinated biphenyls) and its impact on the environment”** was jointly organized by SLAAS Section D, Institute of Biology and the Centre for Environmental Justice on 10 February 2011 at The Hector Kobbekaduwa Centre, Colombo 07. The event was coordinated by Dr Deepthi Wickramasinghe, Committee Member, SLAAS Section-D. Its objective was to raise awareness on PCBs that are persistent organic pollutants (POPs) that cause severe damage to the environment, biodiversity and humans. The major stakeholders from the media, Universities, the Ministry of Environment, NGOs, Customs, Central Environmental Authority, Ceylon Electricity Board and from private companies were present. Present status of use and disposal of PCB-containing items and products in Sri Lanka and the steps that should be taken to minimize the impact of PCBs were discussed. A series of follow up meetings too would be held. An article appeared in *The Island* newspaper on 12 February 2011, based on information disseminated at the stakeholders meeting.

SECTION E1



A **one-day workshop** for school children will be conducted by Mr. Ananda Perera, Rapporteur, Section E1 on 23 March (World Meteorology Day), in the Eastern Province. At the end of April 2011, a **one day workshop** for the industrial sector will be conducted by Dr. Mahesh Edirisinghe, Vice President of Section E1.

The deadline for applying for the island wide **MATHQUIZ 2011** competition is 15.03.2011.

SECTION E2

A popular lecture was delivered by Dr. Dinesh Pandithavidana from University of Georgia USA on 'Design, Synthesis and Reactivity of Cyclopropanone-Containing Ene-diyne Precursors and Synthetic Bacteriochlorins as Photoswitchable Antitumor Agents' on February 03, 2011 at Seminar room, of the Department of Chemistry, University of Kelaniya.

SECTION F

Professor Angela Little, a member of SLAAS, Professor of Education and International Development, London International Development Centre of the Institute of Education, University of London delivered an invited lecture titled 'The Millennium Development Goals and beyond: connecting education and health' during the Annual Sessions in December 2010. The session was chaired by Dr. Prasanthi Gunawardena, the President of the Section F for 2010.

Section F will launch the following workshops from March 2011 onwards.

- ❖ Information search for Social Science research
- ❖ Qualitative research
- ❖ Academic writing in Social Science research

If you are interested on any of the above workshops please email the Sectional Secretary Mr. G. G. T Chandrathilake, thilakawansa@gmail.com for further details.



General Research Committee

SLAAS Awards for Research

General Research Committee wishes to bring to the attention of SLAAS membership, two SLAAS annual awards, namely, a) GRC Award and b) Postgraduate Research Award. Both awards are by application and all SLAAS members are eligible to apply.

The General Research Committee Award is the highest recognition for lifelong contribution of research by a member of SLAAS. The SLAAS Postgraduate Research Award recognizes the best postgraduate work carried out in a Sri Lankan university.

The General Research Committee, which conducts evaluations for both the awards, wishes to raise awareness among the membership about these awards, so they can plan to apply accordingly when the SLAAS issues a call for applications during the second quarter of the year.

Scientific Research for a Better World

GRC welcomes your ideas or concerns about the current status of research in your disciplines and the dimensions to be addressed or improved for practicing science research for a better world. Please contact, Parakrama Weligamage/Chairperson, GRC (e-mail:parakw@gmail.com).

Committee for the Popularization of Science

Public Lectures ó 6 programs are being planned for the year. The first public lecture was held on 21st of January 2011 at 5pm at SLAAS. The title was õApplications of Nanotechnology: the truth and mythö by Dr. Shantha Amarasinghe, Senior Scientist, Sri Lanka Institute of Nanotechnology (SLINTEC). It was well received by the audience. The second lecture will be held on the 11th of March 2011 at 5.30 pm at SLAAS. The title is õVector mosquitoes in Sri Lankaö by Dr. Kithsiri Hector Jayawardena, Senior Lecturer in Zoology, Open University of Sri Lanka.

District School Science Day Programmes: Five Science days in Sinhala medium and 2-3 in Tamil medium are planned to be held in 2011. The districts for the Sinhala medium science days are Matara, Matale, Kalutara, Ratnapura and Polonnaruwa. The Science days in Tamil medium will be held in Mannar, Vavuniya and Trincomalee/Batticaloa.

Nature Diaries Programme: Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Monaragala and Puttalam are the districts that have been selected for the Nature Diaries Programme in 2011.

Radio Programmes: The CPS provides resource persons for the radio programme õVidhulowaö which is broadcast every Friday at 10 pm by the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Service. A radio talk was given by Dr M M Pathmalal, Senior Lecturer in Zoology, University of Sri Jayawardenapura in early February on õEnvironmental water pollution and health problemsö. Another radio talk will be given by Dr. Nawagamuwa on õLandslides & Climate changeö at the end of February.

Science Popularization Awards: CPS will advertise Science Popularization Awards in May to select individuals who have best contributed to popularize and promote science within Sri Lanka in the given year.

Entrepreneurship programmes: These are fee-levying workshops that guide for an entrepreneurship based on science and technology. The first workshop is to be held on end of May 2011 titled õEntrepreneurship based on chemicals and chemistryö.

A Benefit show/ Social activity: The feasibility of having a science based film show or any other social activity at the end of year was being considered.

The 67th Annual Scientific Sessions

December 2011

Theme for the year:

**Understanding, Harnessing and Conserving the Ocean around Sri Lanka: Role of
the Scientist**

Inauguration : 5th December 2011

Theme Seminar: 6th December 2011

Technical Sessions : 7th - 9th December 2011

Venue: University of Sri Jayewardenepura

To

If undelivered, return to:
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Colombo 7

