



RASSL

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 21 No. 1

September 2023

Established 1845

Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, No. 96, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha, Colombo 7

Tel: 011-2699249 Email: rassrilanka@gmail.com Web: www.royalasiaticsociety.lk

President Ranil Wickremesinghe visits the RASSL to Celebrate its 178th Anniversary



RASSL Council with President Ranil Wickremesinghe

His Excellency the President Ranil Wickremesinghe's official visit to the Royal Asiatic Society office on 27th of April 2023 was an important event of the recent history of the Society. It was the first visit made by a patron of the Society since late President J.R Jayewardene, who visited the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka in 1985. By the Constitution of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka (RASSL), the Head of the State is the Patron of the Society and the visit of President Ranil Wickremesinghe is a gesture that stands along with that distinguished tradition.

On this occasion Dr Malini Dias as the Hony. President of the RASSL invited H.E. to take the Chair of the Council meeting, as the Patron of the Society being the Head of State. In welcoming His Excellency Ranil Wickremesinghe, the President of Sri Lanka, Dr Malini Dias drew attention to the annals of the past 178 years and 179th year to be a special one with such a visit taking place after a lapse of 38 years.

The Past President, Architect Ashley de Vos making a presentation of the history of the Society also highlighted some of the glaring issues, which need urgent intervention. He also mentioned the 175th anniversary action plan, which could not be implemented due to the COVID-19 epidemic.



Dr Malini Dias, H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe and Mr Ashley de Vos

After the introduction of the Council members by Dr Punsara Amarasinghe, the Jt. Secretary, a brief highlight of the activities and the library collections were presented by Dr Mallika Karunaratne and Mr Dhanesh Wisumperuma, followed by written fact sheets handed over to H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe, the President.

This special event was marked by presenting the 175th Anniversary Medal to H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe by Dr Malini Dias. The following research publications were gifted to H.E. to mark the occasion: two volumes of RASSL Journals by the former Editor and Asst. Editor, Dr Wijeratne Bohingamuwa and Ms Hasula Wickramasinghe; the three-volume set of Science, History and Technology based on Commentaries of Tripitaka by Dr Chandana Jayawardana, and two archaeology publications of Dr Malini Dias.

Followed by this, Dr Malini Dias invited His Excellency Ranil Wickremesinghe to address the Council. Recognizing the importance of the RASSL, President mentioned the yeoman service rendered by the distinguished scholars of the Society to preserve the historical studies of Sri Lanka, and highlighted how studying the history of Sri Lanka through *Mahavamsa* enabled colonial archaeologists to trace the history of India as well. H.E. mentioned that the required funding could be arranged from the President's Office and to submit the proposals. President shared his intentions to establish the Institute of History with the aim of bringing together the National Museum, Department of Archaeology and the Central Cultural Triangle Fund and the Universities with the RASSL as the focal point. President was much concerned about the severe issues faced by the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka and pledged the government's support to carry out future activities, and the conservation of the library.

Vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Punsara Amarasinghe, the Jt. Secretary. H.E. visited the Library and inspected the rare collections displayed in the reference section. This was followed by posing for a photograph with the Council members. To mark the occasion, H.E. kindly signed the Visitor's Book of the Society.

(More photographs of the event are available on page 8)

Visit of the Maldivian Delegation



Maldivian delegation with the RASSL representatives

A Delegation from the Republic of Maldives visited the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka on 11th July, 2023. The delegation included Hon. Ms Yumna Maumoon (Minister of Arts, Culture, and Heritage), Hon. Mr Mohamed Thariq (Minister of State for Arts, Culture and Heritage), Mr Shamun Hameed (Permanent Secretary), Mr Ali Faseel (Senior Executive Director),

Ms Aishath Shiba (Senior Administrative Officer) H.E. Ali Faiz (High Commissioner), Ms Aminath Warudha (Second Secretary) and Mr Abbas Ibrahim (Advisor to the Minister).

A discussion was conducted on the research done by the RASSL and its members on Maldives, which dates back

to the 19th century. The importance of the research and potential partnerships were also discussed. The delegation inspected the collection of publications and manuscripts available at RASSL Library including the report prepared by H.C.P. Bell in 1883. Mr Ashley de Vos (Immediate Past President of RASSL) took the lead in organizing this discussion and the RASSL team headed by Dr Malini Dias included a number of Council

members, Ms Shereen Amendra, Mr Muditha Karunamuni, Prof. Nimal de Silva, Mr Dhanesh Wisumperuma, Ms Sandalekha Lawanya Ranasingha and Dr Chandana Jayawardana.

As a result of the above visit, two Maldivian scholars, namely Ahmed Alaa and Muhammad Naajih, visited the RASSL on 31st August 2023 and had a discussion.

Discussion with the UNESCO Sri Lanka Office

A meeting with the officials of the UNESCO Sri Lanka Office and the Presidential Secretariat was held on 22nd August 2023 at the Council room of the RASSL to search for funding avenues for the activities of the RASSL.

Dr. Malini Dias, Hony. President, welcomed the visiting officials and introduced the Council members of RASSL. A brief presentation on the RASSL was made by her, highlighting urgent funding requirements for the current year and the needs of the Society.

Dr Sirimali Fernando, Secretary General of UNESCO Sri Lanka, expressed the importance of the RASSL and agreed to explore the possibility of accommodating activities such as research projects and activities such as the History of Science and Technology and Revisiting Mahavamsa, within the purview of National Heritage and Micro-historic studies on indigenous knowledge etc. A project for school children to raise awareness on national heritage was also discussed. The importance of preservation of library assets was discussed too.



Mr H. M. Thilakarathne, Deputy Director of the Presidential Secretariat also agreed to explore funding sources for the maintenance of the premises and securing the annual grant. Other officials contributed to the discussion, pointing to the novel research plans and prospects of the RASSL.

Mr Ashley de Vos, Dr Mallika Karunaratne, Ms Shereen Amendra, Mr Muditha Karunamuni, Mr Dhanesh Wisumperuma, Ms Sandalekha Lawanya Ranasingha and Prof. P. B. Mandawala participated this meeting.

Annual General Meeting 2023 & the List of Office Bearers and Council Members Elected

The 178th Annual General Meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka was held on 25th March 2023 at the RASSL premises. The Office Bearers and Council Members elected to serve the Council for the next two years are as follows:

Position	Name of the Member
Hony. President	Dr (Ms) Malini Dias
Hony. Vice President	Archd. (Ms) Shereen Amendra
Hony. Vice President	Prof. (Ms) Virajini Karunaratna
Hony. Joint Secretary	Dr (Ms) Mallika Karunaratne
Hony. Joint Secretary	Dr Punsara Amarasinghe
Hony. Treasurer	Mr Muditha Karunamuni

Hony. Editor
Hony. Librarian
Hony. Asst. Secretary External Affairs
Hony. Asst. Editor
Hony. Immediate Past President
Hony. Members of the Council

Dr K. A. D. Hemasiri Kuruppu
Prof T.K. Nimal P. de Silva
Mr Anuradha Piyadasa
Mr W.A. Dhanesh I. Wisumperuma
Archt. Ashley de Vos
Prof. Prashantha B. Mandawala
Ms Sandalekha Lawanya Ranasingha
Mr Senaka Weeraratna
Dr D. S. Kalana Mendis
Mr H. M. Chryshane Mendis
Dr Pathmakumara Jayasingha
Ms Piyumi Embuldeniya
Mr Siri A. Perera
Dr Danister L. Perera
Eng. Dr Chandana Jayawardena
Mr D.D. Mahesh
Archt. A. D. W. Pathinayaka
L. Arct. Ms Sujani Premawardena
Ms A. M. Ondaatjie

Public Lecture Series (April- September 2023)

Public Lecture series are now being held in person at the RASSL premises on the last Monday of the month since May 2023. A parallel live Zoom and YouTube coverage is conducted for the benefit of the members who cannot attend. Lecture notices are sent via the Google group of members, posted on the RASSL Facebook page and newspapers.

The following six lectures were arranged by the Publications Committee between April and September 2023. All lectures held are available on YouTube. The links are given below. The RASSL acknowledges the assistance of Archaeology.lk for hosting these lectures.

29th May 2023

Iconographic Representation of Bodhisatvas Avalokiteshvara and Maitriya in Sinhalese Buddhism

Vidyajothi Professor Nimal de Silva

Watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TUhCPpVJZI

12th June 2023

Lusitanian Legacy in Sri Lanka

Prof. Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya

Watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDOPaaUmA8

26th June 2023

Monk and the Prime Minister: How Ven. Nyanaponika influenced Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel

Dr Punsara Amarasinghe

Watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2IRU3--sT8

31st July 2023

A Brief History of the Development of Trigonometry in Ancient and Medieval India

Dr S.H. Sathish Indika

Watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=D19lhWVJbTs

28th August 2023

Preservation of the Lesser-known Languages of Sri Lanka

Dr Romola Rassool

Watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLvRn1vajxs

25th September 2023

From Gamanaka Mula to Gamanaka Aga: revisiting the middle class of Sri Lanka

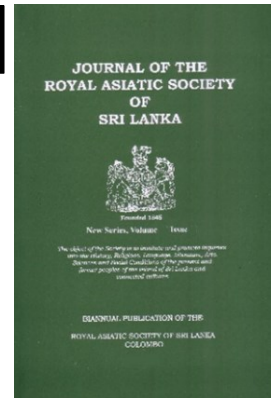
Dr Gunadasa Amarasekara

Watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xyQfrgHtDo

Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka

Five numbers of the volumes of the JRASSL (2019, 2020 and 2021) were published since the publication of the previous newsletter. The list of articles and the prices for members are given below.

These are available for sale at the RASSL office.



Vol. 64 Issue II (2019) – Rs. 600 for members

- Shereen Amendra: The design of the Stupa Pinnacle and Origin of Plaster Bo Leaves on Stupas
- T. G. Kulatunge: Janthaghara within Ancient Buddhist Monasteries
- Reverend Wadinagala Pannaloka: ‘Sacrifice’ in Theravada Buddhist Ethics and Consequentialism
- S. S. A. Senevirathne and S. M. Kariyakarawane: Intervention of Early Leftist Movement in the Culture in Sri Lanka: A reading on ‘Red Poets’

Vol. 65 Issue I (2020) – Rs. 600 for members

- M. W. C. Dharma-wardana: Interactions of the Sinhala language with Dravidian languages, considered within the ‘Linguistic Area’ (Sprachbund) concept
- Samitha Udayanga: Confronting challenges of recent changes in Sri Lankan higher education: the case of social sciences
- H. M. Chryshane Mendis: The last King’s prison cell in Colombo: truth versus fiction
- Ravi Deraniyagala: Tribute to Dr. Chris Uragoda

Vol. 65 Issue II (2020) – Rs. 600 for members

- Gamini Wijesuriya: The future of heritage conservation in Sri Lanka
- Miriswaththe Wimalagnana Thero: Mangul Maha-Vihara’s uncovered Mahayana facet

- Dhanesh Wisumperuma: Evidence for the existence of ‘Ceylon Intelligence’, a periodical in Sri Lanka that predates the Ceylon Government Gazette
- Suranjith Gunasekara and Upali Pannilage: Ethnic polarization in Sri Lanka: Historical roots and political dynamics with special reference to post independence politics

Vol. 66 Issue 1 (2021) – Rs. 600 for members

- Chandana Jayawardana: Subhiksa view vs Irrigation view: Repositioning ancient Sri Lanka waterworks in historical perspectives
- V. Selvakumar: Watercrafts of fisherfolk in cultural context as illustrated in early historic Tamil literature
- Shanti Jayewardena: Hidden gardens in the Giri monasteries of Sri Lanka
- Kaushik Gangopadhyay: Historical relations between Bengal and Sri Lanka: A preliminary reading based on textual sources and archaeological evidence

Vol. 66 Issue II (2021) – Rs. 700 for members

- V. Selvakumar: Current status of the Southern Neolithic Culture and the Iron Age-Early Historic transition in South India and Sri Lanka
- R.L.H.R. Wickremasinghe, T.B.S. Muthunayake, U.R. Wickemasinghe, D.K. Weerakoon, W.P.T.S.de A. Goonatilake, R.A.A.R. Ranatunge, J.G.H. Kiel, N. Perera and A. Wadugodapitiya: Ecology and recovery of *Pethia bandula* (Pisces: Cyprinidae), a globally threatened point endemic freshwater fish in Sri Lanka
- Priyanka Virajini Medagedara Karunaratne: Trading textiles: A historical review in the textiles as a socio- political commodity
- Punsara Amarasinghe: All roads lead to Beijing: A critical overview of China’s usage of historical ‘Silk Route’ as a political project

Notice to Contributors

The Publications Committee of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka welcomes contributions on subjects subscribing to the objects of the Society for the Publication in the Society’s Journal.

Guidelines for Article Contributors to the JRASSL are available at -

www.royalasiaticsociety.lk/article-submission-guidelines/

The objects of the RASSL shall be to institute and promote inquiries into the History, Religion, Languages, Literature, Arts, Sciences and Social Conditions of the present and former peoples of Sri Lanka and connected cultures.

News from the RASSL Library

Catalogues - The following catalogues are available online for members and non-members.

- **Book Catalogue** - The book catalogue now contains information on 13092 books. Access the Book Catalogue via:
 - Website's Home > Library > Search RASSL Library Catalogue
 - Direct link: <https://www.royalasiaticsociety.lk/raslib/LibrarycatalogueList>
- **RASSL journal articles index** - The library has included a searchable RASSL journal article index on the website of the Society. It is updated to the latest issue, New Series Vol. 66 No 2 (2021). Access the Journal Index via:
 - Website's Home > Library > Search RASSL Journal Articles
 - Direct link: www.royalasiaticsociety.lk/raslib/RasjournalarticlesList

Library e-Newsletter - Issue No. 9 was issued in March 2023 and was emailed to the Members. The newsletter contains a list of new acquisitions, journals received in exchange (including contents), donated books and journals received. You can access this and old newsletters at www.royalasiaticsociety.lk/library/newsletter/.

Service Charges Revised - Photocopy and scanning charges were revised due to the increased costs with effect from (2022.08.08)

- Photocopy Charges - for one A4 page-Rs.12/= (single side) and Rs.15/= (double side)
- Scanning Charges - Rs.50/= for one A4 page (or single image)

Details of services available are found at www.royalasiaticsociety.lk/library/services-available/

Acknowledgements

Editors Acknowledge the assistance of Dr Malini Dias, Archt. Shereen Amendra, Dr Punsara Amarasinghe, Archt. Ashley de Vos, Dr Mallika Karunaratne, Prof. Virajini Karunaratne, Ms S. Lawanya Ranasingha, members of the Council of the RASSL and the RASSL office staff in preparing this Newsletter.

Dr Hemasiri Kuruppu
Hony. Editor

Dhanesh Wisumperuma
Hony. Assistant Editor



President of the RASSL presents the RASSL 175 Anniversary Medal to H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe



H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe addresses the Council



The RASSL Council meeting presided by the President H.E. Ranil Wickremesinghe

If undelivered, please return to
Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka
96, Ananda Coomaraswamy Mw.
Colombo 7