20th General Convocation of the University of Ruhuna is scheduled to be held on 17th and 18th May 2013

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Shared Understanding of Asian Religio-Cultural Problems – Sri Lankan Experience

By Senior Professor Gamini Senanayake, Vice Chancellor

Sri Lanka is a multi ethnic and multi religious country. Sri Lanka's population practices a variety of religions. 70% of Sri Lankans are Theravada Buddhists, 15% are Hindus, 7.5 % are Muslims and another 7.5 % are Christians. Sri Lanka was ranked the 3rd most religious country in the world by a 2008 Gallup poll, with 99% of Sri Lankans saying religion is an important part of their daily life. There are many commonalities of two main religions; Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka. Both religions believe in the process of reincarnation based on the deeds of the present life, the concept of karma and the transmigration of souls. Both emphasize the compassion and non -violence towards all living beings. Both consider the desire and the greed as the main causes of suffering. Both believe the detachment and abandonment of worldly life as a precondition to enter the spiritual life. There are certain differences between these two religions. But, they have no significant impact on the central dogma of these two religions. Therefore, Buddhism and Hinduism coexist in harmony in Sri Lanka from ancient time. In the Sri Lankan history, there are many examples for Hindu kings from South India becoming Buddhists and ruling over both Hindus and Buddhists in the country. Great Sinhala Buddhist kings such as Nissanka Malla, had a Tamil ancestry and was born Hindus. This practice continued in time to time till the elapse of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815 due to British invasion. Vishnu, one of the most powerful three Hindu gods is worshiped by majority of Sri Lankan Buddhists. It is a norm for Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka to have shrines to Hindu Gods such as Skanda, Vishnu and Ganesha, who have now become a part of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon. Vishnu is considered to be one of the four "Guardian deities" of Sri Lanka and the protector of Buddhism on the land. Therefore, the chambers of worship in Sri Lankan homes are full of Buddhist and Hindu Gods alone with the Buddha's statue and they were respected in same way. It is common to see many bus and lorry drivers have placed framed pictures of Buddha, Shiva, Nat Raj, Vishnu. Ganesha and Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth) in above front of driving seat without any contrast. Another classic example to illustrate the harmony of two religions is the multiethnic shrine of Kataragama located in the Southern part of Sri Lanka. Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims gather to this shrine and they worship the deity Skanda (or Murukan) together. This multi-ethnic shrine of Kataragama has

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"The undisputed fact is that whatever religion each pilgrim belonged to, the religious devotional feeling of all of them are identical and lasting."

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helped a lot to quell the mistrust and to create a cultural bond of common identity between Hindus and Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Another example for multi-religious worship place in Sri Lanka is the world famous Sri Pada or Adams Peak. This mountain has gained so much publicity due to its sanctity believed by all four main religion devotees namely, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Islamists. The undisputed fact is that whatever religion each pilgrim belonged to, the religious devotional feeling of all of them are identical and lasting. All these are examples to prove that Sri Lankans in general respect and practice each other's religio-cultural values. In another words, Sri Lankans are practicing a kind of innovative culture.

Though Sri Lankans respect each other's religiocultural values, still there are certain problems among them. These problems are mainly due to different religiocultural and socio-cultural boundaries created in the mindset of the people. These boundaries are mainly created by the British during the colonial period. Colonialism first created a conflict between intrusive Western religioculture and Sri Lankan religions mainly the Buddhism. It drastically changed the traditional link between state and religion. The traditional, more than 2500 years old, bond lost its foundation and disestab-

lished the Buddhist heritage. This change affiliated with the colonial penetration of Sri Lanka led to changes of a structural dimension. These changes affected the way people of different religiocultural groups interacted with each other. The traditional hierarchies were severely challenged or replaced. The traditional economic and religio-cultural systems were drastically modified. This is the best time for Sri Lanka to understand its religio-cultural problems and revert back to its traditional culture of respecting each other which is unique to multi-religious and multi-ethnic Sri Lanka.

New Vice Chancellor, Senior Professor Gamini Senanayake assumed duties at the University of Ruhuna

Senior Professor Gamini Senanayake was appointed as the 6th Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna by His Excellency the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. He assumed duties on 11th March 2013 at a simple ceremony

held at the office of the Vice Chancellor in the presence of the Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna, Most Venerable Pallaththara Sumanajothi

Nayake Thero and the former Vice Chancellor, Senior Professor Susirith Mendis. Before assuming duties as the Vice Chancellor, Senior Professor Senanayake was serving as the Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna for almost 6 years.



The Former Vice Chancellor, Senior Professor Susirith Mendis was appreciated for his valuable service to the University

Senior Professor Susirith Mendis assumed duties as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna with effect from 9th March 2007 and served two full terms until 8th March 2013. He has done a great service to uplift the status of the University to the present level during his 6 year tenure. He also served as the Chairman of the Committee of the Vice Chancellors and Directors during year 2012. Before assuming the duties as the Vice Chancellor, he served 9 years as the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna. In order to

appreciate his dedicated service to the University of Ruhuna, on behalf of the Senate, a special souvenir was awarded to him by the new Vice Chancellor, Senior Professor Gamini Senanayake.



Taking over of the Research Vessel built by Sri Lanka Navy

Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences & Technology (FMST) took over the research vessel built by Sri Lanka Navy at a ceremony held on 4th March 2013 at the SLNS Rangalla, Colombo with the participation of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna, Senior Professor Susirith Menids and the Commander of the Navy, Vice Admiral Jayanath Colombage. Other delegates presented at this historic occasion were Senior Professor Gamini Senanayake, Deputy Vice Chancellor of University of Ruhuna, Deans of all Faculties of the University, Chief of Staff Sri Lanka Navy, Rear Admiral Damayantha Darma-Commander siriwardene. Western Naval Area, Rear Admiral Rohan Amarasinghe, Governing Council Members of the University, Registrar, Librarian, Academic Staff of the Faculty and other Administrative Officers of the University. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna and the Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy addressed the gathering and the vote of thank was delivered by the Dean of the Faculty of FMST. The University of Ruhuna

funded this activity through "Transforming University of Ruhuna to International Status" (TURIS) project considering the need of the Faculty.

The vessel was constructed under the Inshore Patrol Craft Production Project (IPCPP) of Sri Lanka Navy at Ragama as per the technical specifications submitted by the University at free of labour cost as a gesture of goodwill. The vessel is 14.8 meters long and fitted with 350HP Yanmar marine engine and a Hamilton water jet. Also, the vessel is equipped with modern navi-

gation and communication equipment. The vessel will be used for teaching and research purposes of the Faculty. The Faculty of FMST became the first ever Faculty to own a research vessel from among the Faculties in the national university system in Sri Lanka and looking forward to share this facility with the other universities for research and academic activities. The Faculty itself intends to expand its boundaries of research in the fields of fisheries, marine sciences, oceanography and marine geology.

New Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr. A.M.N. Alagiyawanna, assumed duties at the University of Ruhuna

Dr. A.M.N. Alagiyawanna assumed duties on 11th April 2013 as the 4th Deputy Vice Chancellor of the Univesity of Ruhuna at a simple ceremony held at the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor. Previously, he served as the Dean of the Faculty of Engi-

neering for 6 years. He has done a tremendous service to the Faculty of Engineering during his 6 years tenure for uplifting its status to present level. The Faculty Board has appreciated his valuable service awarding a special plaque.



Laying of foundation stone for the Building Complex of the Faculty of Management and Finance

The Faculty of Management and Finance (FMF) marked another milestone on 07th March 2013 by laying the foundation stone for the main building complex at its new premises with the participation of Senior Professor Susirith Mendis, Vice Chancellor, University of Ruhuna as the Chief Guest.

FMF currently offers Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) Degree in four specialization areas; Accounting, Human Resources Management, Marketing Management and Entrepreneurship. Further the faculty offers Diplomas, Post Graduate Diplomas and Master Degrees for employees in public and private sector entities to fulfill their knowledge gaps whilst the Faculty is having a series of curriculum development workshops to restructure the BBA Degree to keep the program relevant to contemporary business needs and whereby explore the avenues to meet the demand in dynamic business environment. It believes that the new building complex will be helpful to the Faculty to achieve its objective of producing graduates with a sound knowledge, skills and attitudes of management and finance to ensure and uplift the socio-economic standards of the country.

International Conference on Management and Economics-2013 (ICME-2013)



The 2nd International Conference on Management and Economics was held on 26th and 27th February 2013 at the University of Ruhuna. The theme of the ICME-2013 was 'Managing Turbulence in Economic Environment through Innovative Management Practices'. The ICME-2013 was an excellent platform for researchers to share their knowledge and experiences with expertise.

A core element of the conference was to develop a network of researchers fed by asian culture and roots in their diversity and their specificities to facilitate, promote and foster the research on both Management and Economics.

Sixty research papers were selected from 224 research papers received from different countries such as United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Norway, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Kuwait and Sri Lanka. Seventy two authors and co-authors participated and presented their papers at the conference.

The inauguration ceremony was held with the participation of the Vice Chancellor, Senior Professor Susirith Mendis and the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Senior Professor Gamini Senanayake as the Chief Guests and the Consul General of Indian High Commission at Hambantota, Mr. R. Ragunathan as the Guest of Honor. Keynote speeches were delivered by Senior Professor Danture Wickramasinghe, Professor

Andreas Falkenberg, Professor Danny Atapattu, Professor Bjørn Willy Åmo and Professor Yasushi Suzuki.

The Faculty of Management and Finance organized the ICME-2013 to mark its 10th Anniversary in collaboration with COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Sahiwal Campus, Islamic Republic of Pakistan; Chinese -German Institute for Intellectual Property, Huazhong University of Science & Technology, P.R. China, University of Nordland, Norway, University of Agder, Norway and StrategizeBlue, USA. The official media sponsors were Derana FM and Derana TV.

9th Ruhuna Science Symposium

The 9th Ruhuna Science Symposium-2012 (RuSciSym) was held on 9th January 2013 at the Alawattagoda Pemadasa Auditorium at the Faculty of Science, University of Ruhuna. It was successfully organized as a national event for the first time by the organizing committee chaired by Professor Suneethe Gunawickrama. The main objective of the event was to provide a platform to share the scientific research findings, and build networks & professional connections with others in their field of interests.

"Transforming University of Ruhuna to International Status" (TURIS) project provided the major funding for the 9th Ruhuna Science Symposium.

The symposium was successfully held with the participation of more than 170 registered participants and a large group of special degree students of the Faculty of Science. The Vice Chancellor of University of Ruhuna, Senior Professor. Susirith Mendis was the Chief Guest and Deputy Vice Chancellor of University of Ruhuna, Senior Professor

Gamini Senanayake was the special guest. The keynote address was delivered by, the Senior Professor Harshalal Seneviratne (Retired) of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo on "Advanced Technologies for Fertility care in Sri Lanka: the future challenges". Twenty nine papers were presented at the symposium. Participation of a delegation from the University of Jaffna for the first time was well appreciated and a special discussion was conducted to start future collaboration among the universities.

The visit of staff from University of Jaffna was financially supported by Sri Lankans living abroad lead by Dr. Varatharasa Thiviyanathan from University of Texas.

Orator of the Year 2013

University of Ruhuna in collaboration with the Indian High Commission annually organizes the Orator of the Year competition among undergraduates of the university. Through this competition, Orators of the Year in Sinhala, Tamil, and English media are selected and awarded as the Orator of the Year in each medium.

Ms. C. S Liyanage of the Faculty of Management and Finance won the Orator of the Year in Sinhala medium and Mr. M.S.M. Najath of the same Faculty won the Orator of the Year in Tamil medium. Orator of the Year in English medium was awarded to Mr. H.S.A. Hettiarachchi of the Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences & Technology.

The Vice Chancellor, Senior Prof. Susirith Mendis and the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Senior Prof. Gamini Senanayake participated as the Chief Guests of the final competition held on 06th March 2013. The Consul General of Indian High Commission in Hambantota, Mr. R. Ragunathan participated as the Guest of Honor of the event.

Field-Visit to Wind & Solar Power Plants

The Department of Electrical and Information Engineering (DEIE) provided an opportunity for its final year students to visit Hambantota wind and solar power plants and study their operations on 13th December 2012. Hambantota wind power plant established in 1998 is the first wind power plant commissioned in Sri Lanka. It consists of five wind towers with NEG Micon M1500-600 wind turbines of 600 kW each. The Hambantota solar power plant is the first flat-panel PV type solar power plant in Sri Lanka.

Boost for country's business sector

The new Diploma Programme in Marketing and Management (Dip.MM) introduced by the Faculty of Management and Finance is designed for marketing managers seeking to enhance their planning and implementation skills, non-marketing managers seeking to gain insight into how marketing's role impacts the overall business success, financial professionals seeking to learn how to quantify and analyze marketing campaigns, and entrepreneurs and other interested in interfacing with marketing. The first batch has successfully completed the first part of the programme. Applications have been called for the 2nd batch and their course will be commenced soon.

Establishment of DCEE Alumni Association

Ruhuna Alumni Association of Civil and Environmental Engineering Graduates (RACEE) was established on 21st April 2012. The inaugural meeting was held at the Faculty of Engineering with the participation of Dr. A.M.N. Alagiyawanna, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Dr. H.H.J. Keerthisena, Founding Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Dr. H.P. Sooriyaarachchi, Head of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, other Heads of Departments, academic staff and alumni of the Department. This association was formed with the aim of formalizing such strong relationships among the department and its graduates who are practicing as Engineers. It is expected to pave way for active collaborations among the stake holders.

Conference on Marine Environment Protection and Sustainable Development

Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences & Technology together with Marine Environmental Protection Authority (MEPA) has planed to organize the National Conference on Marine Environment Protection and Sustainable Development in June 2013.

ACEPS 2012 Symposium

ACEPS – 2012 Symposium organized and hosted by the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Ruhuna in collaboration with Saitama University, Japan was held at the Faculty of Engineering on 19th March 2012. It was the first of a series of symposia which the organizers hope to hold annually. This symposium was organized to create a venue to discuss advanced sustainable engineering practices that are adopted in developing the region. Despite being its inaugural symposium, the event created a forum of high quality academic discussion achieving its original objectives.

Workshop for Administrative Staff

A workshop was organized for the Administrative and Financial officers of the University on 22nd and 23rd March 2013 at the Kukuleganga Holiday Resort, Mathugama. The objective of this workshop was to ensure an efficient service through capacity development of the Administrative and Financial officers. Mr. Aruna Lokugamage, Senior Consultant, Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) conducted the main session on "a comprehensive approach to the government process" and the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna, Senior Professor Susirith Mendis conducted a session on personality development.

Achievements of Academics

Senior Professor Ruchira Cumaranatunga, Senior Professor of Fisheries Biology attached to the Department of Fisheries & Aquaculture and the founder Dean of the Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences & Technology was inducted as the General President of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS) at the Induction Ceremony held at the Auditorium of the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute on 17th January 2013. Senior Professor Ranjith Senaratne, Vice-Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Chairman of the National Institute for Fisheries & Nautical Engineering and the former Vice-Chancellor of University of Ruhuna who participated as the Chief Guest of the event introduced Senior Professor Ruchira Cumaranatunga to the audients at the Induction Ceremony. Senior Professor Ruchira Cumaranatunga is the 69th General President and 6th Woman General President of

SLAAS. This is the first time, an academic of University of Ruhuna was elected to this prestigious position of SLAAS, which is the premier scientific organization of Sri Lanka with a history of seventy two years and a membership of over five thousand.



Faculty of Science - Career Fair-2012

Career Fair-2012 organized by the Faculty of Science was successfully held at the Faculty premises on 5th January 2013. The organizing committee was chaired by Dr. (Ms.) Vajira Bulugahapitiya and about 150 final year students attended the interviews conducted by reputed companies participated in the fair.

In parallel with this event, several guest lectures were conducted on selected topics like personality and skill development, change of attitudes and opportunities and carrier development in private sector,

with the aim of improving the soft skills of the students.



FMST registered as a Water Quality Testing Laboratory

Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences & Technology (FMST) has been registered

as a water quality testing laboratory under the Central Environmental Authority. This laboratory can issue water quality testing reports to outside beneficiaries for industrial or environmental purposes as a registered institute.

DEIE established a New High Voltage Engineering Laboratory

The Department of Electrical and Information Engineering (DEIE) recently established a new High Voltage Engineering laboratory to conduct laboratory sessions and research work in the area of High Voltage Engineering at a cost of Rs. 36 Million. The laboratory is equipped with state of the art technology for high voltage testing. This will further extend the DEIE's research capability and the industrial collaboration. Funds were provided by the University Grants Commission in year 2011 and 2012.

DEIE Students won the Best Paper Award at IESL (YMS)

A final year undergraduate project presented by the Department of Electrical and Information Engineering (DEIE) won the first place at the Young Member Session (YMS) of the Institute of Engineers Sri Lanka (IESL) held in Oct. 2011. A cash award and a certificate was awarded to the project group. This project "Design of a Micro-Scale RF Energy Harvesting Circuit" was conducted by Ms. Gunatilake W.L.A. De A., Ms. Palihena H.C., Ms. Nisansani M.V.N. and Mr. Lokunarangoda G.I. under the supervision of Dr. K. Pirapaharan.

Networking Workshop on Next Generation of Hydrological and Educational Activities

The Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Ruhuna together with International Research Center for River Basin Environment-University of Yamanashi (ICRE-UY) successfully conducted a worshop and training programme from

21st to 24th January 2013 at the Faculty of Engineering. Eleven international participants from 9 institutes and 7 countries participated in the workshop. Ten engineers from 3 different organizations in Sri Lanka also attended in the hydrological modeling training programme.



Sri Lanka's First Ever Regional Newborn Screening Programme for Congenital Hypothyroidism

Congenital Hypothyroidism (CH) is a condition that, if left untreated, can cause life-long suffering as a result of severe learning difficulty (mental retardation) and growth failure. The screening of newborns for CH identifies newborns pre-symptomatically and provides an opportunity to improve the life of affected children and their families.

The Nuclear Medicine Unit

(NMU) of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna conducted a pilot study on Newborn Screening for Congenital Hypothyroidism (NSCH) at the Teaching Hospital, Mahamodara. The results and problems faced were discussed in an article published in Ceylon Medical Journal in March 2009 and Galle Medical Journal in the same year. With these evi-

dences, the National Research Council (NRC-then under the Presidential Secretariat) in 2008 awarded the first ever grant to the Faculty of Medicine to purchase all necessary equipment worth Rs. 4.2 million to have backup system for sample analysis.

Through a circular issued by the Director General of Health Services Sri Lanka, all health institutes in the Southern Province were instructed to implement NSCH with the assistance from NMU. This facility was opened in September 2010 at the Auditorium of the Faculty of Medicine under the patronage of Hon. Minister of Health, Mr. Maithreepala Sirisena.

Duke-Ruhuna Collaborative Research Centre at the Faculty of Medicine

In 2005, Professor Truls Ostbye and Professor Christopher Woods of Duke University, USA and Professor P. L. Ariyananda, Dr. Bilesha Perera and Dr. Champica Bodinayake of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Duke-Ruhuna Collaboration in an effort to facilitate bidirectional research and educational exchanges between

Duke University and University of Ruhuna.

Several research projects in the fields of infectious diseases, health behavior, occupational and mental health were conducted successfully under this collaboration. Recently, a grant was awarded by the National Institute of Health (NIH), USA for a study on cognitive impairment among the elderly people in Southern Sri Lanka.

Seven research papers were published in national and international peer reviewed journals while investigators have presented six papers in national and international conferences.

The Duke-Ruhuna Collaboration also enables Duke medical students to undertake clinical electives at the Teaching Hospital, Karapitiya and Duke postgraduate students to engage in small research projects at the Faculty of Medicine under joint supervision of Duke/Ruhuna Faculty. At present, the Duke-Ruhuna collaboration is making arrangements for the establishment of a molecular laboratory at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna to provide state-of-the art surveillance for emerging pathogens in the rapidly changing landscape of Southern Sri Lanka.



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To:-			

About UoR Highlights

Welcome to the second issue of *UOR Highlights*, the official newsletter of the University of Ruhuna. We publish *UoR Highlights* biannually with the aim of fostering a dialog among our key stakeholders. More specifically, the

UoR Highlights publishes information on recent developments, events, research publications, conferences and collaborative research projects at the University of Ruhuna. In addition, in each issue, we publish feature arti-

cles which address current topic in education and higher education.

Together with other publications at the University of Ruhuna, we believe that *UoR Highlights* will generate interest among our stakeholders by

creating a platform for fostering an effective dialogue.

We welcome your comments and suggestions that will enhance the future directions of *UoR Highlights*. Please contact us with your ideas at pm@admin.ruh.ac.lk.

International Symposium on Agriculture and Environment (ISAE)-2012

International Symposium on Agriculture and Environment (ISAE)-2012, organized by the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna was held on 29th of November 2012 at the Faculty premises. Seven sessions including one poster session were conducted and few key note speeches were

delivered by the invited speakers from national and international Universities and Institutes. Dr. (Ms.) Nilantha De Silva was the Coordinator and Professor K.L. Wasantha Kumara was the Secretary of the organizing committee.

The student session of ISAE -2012 was conducted on 15th March 2013 at the Faculty

premises with the participation of Senior Professor Gamini Senanayake, Vice Chancellor of the University of Ruhuna as the Chief Guest. Dr W. Kumara De Silva, Director General of Department of Animal Production and Health, Ministry of Livestock & Rural Community Development delivered the keynote

address. There were 14 oral presentations and 27 poster presentations in this student session. This event was organized by a committee chaired by Dr. (Ms.) Deepthi L. Wathugala and Ms. A.A.M. Subodinee served as the secretary of the committee.