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Architecture in Sri Lanka is of the highest standard - President, Royal Institute of British Architects



Economic Development Minister, Basil Rajapaksa inaugurated 'Architect 2011', the 29th Annual Sessions of the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA), coinciding with the unveiling of Architects' Work and Trade Exhibition at the BMICH.

The exhibition has witnessed significant growth over the past three decades, and this year it showcased 315 stalls, with around 260 construction-related companies offering their goods and services to the public and 90 architectural practices displaying their creations.

President of SLIA, Architect Chandana Edirisuriya, said the exhibition and annual sessions creates greater awareness of the architecture sector and its new creations.

"Once a year, we create a platform for architects, members of the construction industry, trade and the public to interact. Through this, we create and try to maintain the momentum in the construction industry so that it benefits those who are in the industry as well as the public," he noted.

Country Director's Message



Once a year during the month of February or March the Hindu's celebrate this important and unique festival which is called Maha Shivaratri, which falls on March 2nd this year. This is not a time of great celebrations but fasting and religious devotions.

The medical seminar will be held at Sun View and the medical camp at the Morontuduwa temple, all medical volunteer's are invited and it will be a good experience.

Projects Abroads monthly get together will be held at The Harmony Beach Restaurant Hikkadduwa and we will organising beach games etc please join in the fun.

The outreach for the month will be at the Sukitha Girls Orphanage and the day will be spent doing lots of painting and cleaning and we will be doing some activities with the children.

I would like all volunteers who are with Projects Abroad to give us an article about your experience in Sri Lanka to publish in our monthly newsletter.

Enjoy reading this edition.

Shyamalee Wijesinghe
Country Director
Sri Lanka

"We need to emphasise that architects have a major role to play", he said.

"Our architects have been providing services in every nook and corner of the country, community housing in many remote areas, schools, professional training centres, community centres and small hospitals", Edirisuriya explained.

This year's inauguration, under the theme 'Architecture for all: City and Community', was attended by Indian Deputy High Commissioner, Shri Vikram Mishri and the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Ms. Ruth Reed as guests of honour, alongside members of the local and global architectural fraternity.



The theme aimed to focus on issues facing architects in fulfilling their task of giving expression to the values and objectives of the community.

Ms. Reed said that the architecture work in Sri Lanka is of the highest standard. "We hope to set up a student exchange program between Sri Lanka and Britain," she said.

The keynote speaker, Gold Medalist architect Professor Raj Rawal, has made a significant impact on Indian cities and the community. His humanist approach to architecture responds to the complexities of rapid urbanisation, the demands of climate, cultural traditions and building crafts and technologies. His most recent publication is entitled 'Humane Habitat at Low Cost'.

"Asian cities are going through a fantastic change and we have a green future," Prof. Rawal stressed.

A key feature of the evening was the presentation of scrolls and awards. Scrolls were awarded to new members who entered the profession, while several awards, including the Design Award, Colour Award and Research and Publication Award, were presented in recognition of creativity and the work carried out by members of the architectural fraternity in the past year.

The Young Architect of the Year Award appreciated emerging talent, while local industries and products were given a boost through the Product Award. Several local architects were conferred with honours during the inauguration in recognition of their service and contribution to the profession. A publication titled '50 Years of Architecture in Sri Lanka' was also launched during the ceremonial inauguration.

The Inauguration was the first of the many key components of the Annual Sessions, which also included the National Conference Architects' Work and Trade Exhibition, the Annual General Meeting and the Fellowship Night.

By Nadine Wardell - Projects Abroad Journalism Volunteer

Article appeared in the national newspaper Sunday Island.

Medical Camp - Morenthuduwa Temple, Wadduwa, Sri Lanka

Another successful medical camp was organised at the Morenthuduwa Temple, Wadduwa on 28th March 2011. The event was very successful and was attended by many society leaders including Buddhist monks and officers from Sri Lanka Police Department. The cover page photo was taken at this event.



NEW AFTERNOON ENGLISH CLASSES IN MALAMULLA

Projects Abroad started news afternoon English class to help improve English skills of attendees at Malamulla Community Centre. Projects Abroad volunteers have been teaching in Malamulla Montessori for the past few years.



FOOD PROGRAMME

A programme to provide food to children at Dutch Annes' Montessori inaugurated by **Projects Abroad** in March with the help of projects Abroad volunteers.



Certificate Awarding

Mawala IT Centre

Another bunch of graduates collected their certificates from Projects Abroad's Mawala IT Centre.

Dominic and Katelyn were there to give the honours. Dominic and Katelyn have been working hard at the IT Centre over the past couple of months, teaching the children basic Word, Xcel and internet skills which they can use for life. We would like to thank the boys and teacher, Kaushalya, for their hard work once again!



MEDICAL LECTURES

Medical Lectures conducted by Sri Lankan doctors becoming increasingly popular among Projects Abroad volunteers. In addition to medical camps, medical lectures provide a better environment for volunteers to get grey areas cleared in their work/study scope.



Donations

- **Donations**

Projects Abroad donated Rs 20,000/= worth of roofing sheets to the Niggaha School in Bulathsinghala

Projects Abroad appreciates the donations from Theresa Failer & Kaya Behrens who donated cubicle curtains for the labour room in the Kethumathi Hospital.

- **Janet Tate**

Monthly sponsorship for the children at Kalutara Tsunami Camp

FAQS

WHAT TO WEAR

Light cotton dresses which is appropriate to the placement and town. Comfortable shoes/sandals. Volunteers should be decently clad when visiting any place of worship. Beach wear is NOT suitable for temples and shrines. All visitors to Buddhist and Hindu temples are expected to be unshod and have their heads uncovered. Ladies - it is better to cover shoulders and up to knees

CURRENCY

One Sri Lankan rupee is made up of 100 cents. Currency notes are in the denominations of Rs.10, Rs.20, Rs.50, Rs.100, Rs.200, Rs.500, Rs.1000 and Rs.2000. Coins are in the following denominations: 50 cents, one rupee, two rupees, five rupees and ten rupees.

BANKING HOURS

National banking hours are from 0900 hrs. to 1500 hrs on weekdays. Banking hours may be different at private banks. Further teller machines (ATM) are operated through out the day.

CREDIT CARDS

Reputed credit and charge cards are widely accepted by shops in Sri Lanka. In some cases the shops may try to add a surcharge to the price of the merchandise purchased.

TIME DIFFERENCE

Sri Lanka standard time is 6 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

VOLTAGE

230-240 volts 50 cycles A.C.

HOLIDAYS

In addition to Saturday and Sunday, the full moon day (Poya Day) of each month is a holiday in Sri Lanka. On Poya Days all places of entertainment are closed and no liquor is sold. Hotels make special arrangements for customers to order their liquor the day before Poya holiday.

Upcoming Volunteers' Corner

Hello all,

For a while the newsletter with stories of people who introduce themselves and write what they do or have done in Sri Lanka passed. I liked it a lot to read the stories and could not imagine that I would write in that same newsletter.

I will introduce myself. My name is Jolinka Feenstra and I'm 21 years old and come from the Netherlands. I study Social Work. I'm in the last year of my study and that means I have to do a research project.

Together with Jenny, Anne-Marijn and Ilse, I'm going to stay for three months in Sri Lanka. We will be working on Sukitha Children's Orphanage in Galpahta. We will work three days a week as volunteers at the orphanage and the training school. Also we are going to do a research project. I'm going to make one with Jenny. We're going to find out how the guidance is on Sukitha and maybe we can give some advice for guidance the children.

It is my dream come true for extended periods abroad to work.

I love being in this way to help my relatives and bring my knowledge to the people of Sri Lanka. I hope I can give some advice to guidance the children at Sukitha. I expect that the trip will be very informative, interesting but especially very nice! I hope my knowledge can be used in Sri Lanka.

I'm really looking forward to Sri Lanka, the final preparations and then it will be true... We're coming to Sri Lanka!

Greetings, Jolinka Feenstra

Hi everybody,

Time flies! It seems how closer it comes, how faster the time goes! However most of the preparations are complete and on 18th February I will actually arrive in Sri Lanka. I am very excited!

Before I go further I will introduce myself... my name is Ilse Leusink and I am 22 years old. I live with my parents in a small village in the Netherlands. I have one older brother who lives on his own.

Currently I study Social Work, I am in the last year which means that I have to do research, it is one of the last school assignments. I will do this research at Sukitha Children's Orphanage with Anne-Marijn Batterink, another volunteer. Besides that I will do volunteer work at Sukitha Children's Orphanage.

I am very curious about what I will see and learn in three months, the culture, the people, the nature. I hope it will be a wonderful experience, that I can contribute something to the people and that I develop myself.

It is strange to imagine that I will soon know how it really is!

I look forward to it - Ilse



Hi everyone,

My name is Fenna and I'm eighteen years old. I live in Holland in a small city in the north with my parents. I have two sisters, who are older than me. One of them likes to travel a lot and made me curious about discovering the world.

Last summer I graduated high school and where almost all my friends decided to study, I decided to take a gap year. I needed a break from learning and making tests. I didn't want to work a whole year and wanted to go abroad. That's when a friend told me about volunteering and via the internet I came in touch with Projects Abroad. From all the countries Sri Lanka seemed the right one for me and my choice was quickly made!



After working a half year in a supermarket my time in Sri Lanka will start soon. I will be there for four months, doing three months of volunteering at an orphanage in Negombo and then take one month to travel around the country. I've never been so far from home so long, so this will be a big adventure for me. But I'm excited to learn about a totally different culture, to meet new people and realize that the life I live isn't that obvious. I also hope to put a smile on the faces of the children I will work with, because there's nothing more valuable than creating happiness.

Fenna

INTRODUCTION GERALDINE BOUVRY – Volunteer in Journalism Sri Lanka – March 2011

Here I am... Geraldine, born in Champagne (not only a famous beverage, a region too). Couldn't be more French although I was given a traditional Irish name! That might explain why I spent my last 5 years in Ireland. Freshly back to France though, for good.

Let's travel backward: I obtained a Master in Cosmetic/Chemistry in France. Straight after, I got a job in Ireland for a cosmetic company, ORIFLAME. There, I was working in the R&D lab, creating and developing ('formulating' in the cosmetic jargon) skin-care creams mainly. I always wanted to work abroad for the obvious reasons it opens the mind, you get immersed in another culture, meet plenty of people from various horizons, improve your English while getting a professional experience of course.



Scientific profile at first glance? ... Well yes but not only. A growing taste for writing over those last years along with insatiable curiosity; the wish to always understand and report how things work (the 'scientific touch'?!) through the communication with people mainly.

Eventually, after a thorough reflection phase, I am now seriously considering a career change towards Journalism, more particularly Cultural Journalism. Why this type of Journalism? Because I have always been fond of Dance and Art in general. Blending all these ingredients together turned out to be an appealing recipe to me.

Experiencing Journalism in 'real' is the best way to learn, surrounded by experts, and find out what a job looks like. Also a way to unveil its challenges, its good and down sides, etc... That's why I quite naturally thought of volunteering for a journalism project to get a preview before maybe starting off studying again.

Why Sri Lanka? Personal interests in discovering this little gem and smiley people (I quote!), its culture and habits. Also because I am terribly missing living on an island and speaking/writing English on a daily basis. Moreover, this project in Sri Lanka was the trigger to extend my trip in Asia and complete the full 'escapism' needed.

Beyond the professional learning, I expect from this journey an exchange of cultures and knowledge with personal enrichment on both sides hopefully...

So, really looking forward to flying over there!

Treinreis Kalutara – Galle

Een treinreis is een hele ervaring in Sri Lanka! Van Kalutara naar Galle zit je ongeveer twee uur in de trein, maar je verveelt je geen moment. Er is buiten heel erg veel te zien, maar ook binnen gebeurt er van alles. Zo komen er veel bedelaars langs in de trein, maar ook verkopers van koekjes, broodjes, drinken, etc. Ook komen er af en toe muzikanten langs. Die gaan een tijdje trommelen en zingen en vragen dan een kleine bijdrage! Als je naar buiten kijkt kan je genieten van de prachtige natuur en van al het moois van Sri Lanka. Je rijdt langs de stranden, dwars door de natuur en langs allerlei dorpjes en stadjes. Ik heb echt genoten van alles wat ik zag. Ik wist af en toe niet waar ik moest kijken, er is zoveel te zien! Ook lopen er veel geiten over het spoor, dit schijnt hier heel normaal te zijn! Als de trein stil staat kijken ze hoopvol naar de mensen in de trein en 'bedelen' voor wat eten.

Een treinreis is dus iets wat je zeker een keer moet meemaken als je naar Sri Lanka gaat. Je kunt genieten van alles wat je buiten ziet en ondertussen genieten van een heerlijk getrommel en gezang op de achtergrond, wat wil je nog meer?! Geweldig toch?!

Jenny Bonda – Holland – Language Dutch

Houd je goed vast....

Enorm veel mensen in Sri Lanka reizen met het openbaar vervoer. Voornamelijk wordt er gebruik gemaakt van de bus. Om als 'vreemde' buitenlander gebruik te kunnen maken van de bus is het handig om te weten waar de bus stopt, hoe je je gedraagt in de bus en hoe je duidelijk maakt dat je bij je eindbestemming bent.

In Sri Lanka rijden erg veel bussen en dit kan erg verwarrend zijn. Toch zit er een soort systeem in. Elke bus heeft een nummer, dit nummer staat op de voor en (meestal) op de achterkant van de bus. Ook staat er bij van en naar welke plaats de bus rijdt. In Sri Lanka zijn er wel bushaltes, sommige kan je duidelijk herkennen aan een 'bushokje' maar dit is niet altijd het geval. Sommige bushaltes zijn bij een lantaarnpaal of een elektriciteitspaal. Voor ons als vrijwilligers dus lastig te herkennen! Als je een bus duidelijk wilt maken dat je er in wilt, hoef je alleen maar te zwaaien met je arm en dan hopen dat de bus stopt. Over het algemeen kan een blanke overal instappen, als je maar met je arm zwaait! Als je in de bus stapt, is het handig om zo snel mogelijk een plaats te zoeken, want de buschauffeurs hebben meestal geen geduld en rijden zo snel mogelijk weer door. Bij het instappen van de bus hoef je geen kaartje te kopen. Er loopt namelijk tijdens de busrit een man door de bus die vraagt waar je heen wilt. Hem vertel je waar je heen wilt en betaal je voor de rit.

Mijn ervaring is dat de bussen in Sri Lanka niet heel voorzichtig rijden en vaak haast hebben. Houd je daarom goed vast en zorg ervoor dat je stevig zit;) Als je aan wilt geven dat je er uit wilt druk je op een knopje of trek je aan een touwtje aan de bovenkant van de bus! Loop alvast naar voren, zodat je als je op de plaats van bestemming bent er meteen uit kan! Dat zal de buschauffeur je in dank afnemen!!

Heel veel succes! Groetjes,

Jolinka Feenstra – Holland – Language Dutch

Vrijwilligerswerk

Vrijwilligerswerk in het buitenland. Van te voren probeer je je een beeld te vormen van hoe het zal zijn. Eenmaal op de plek van bestemming lijkt alles toch net wat anders te zijn. Niet beter of slechter, maar gewoon anders. Ik kan zeggen dat ik enorm geniet van het werken in het buitenland. Zelf werk ik binnen een weeshuis voor verstandelijk gehandicapte meisjes en vrouwen en richt mij in het bijzonder op de vrouwen die overdag op het weeshuis achterblijven en geen dagbesteding krijgen. Elke ochtend word ik wild enthousiast onthaald door de meiden. Iedereen pakt je bij de hand vast, blij dat je er weer bent. Altijd met een lach om de mond. Overdag kleuren we veel, zingen we liedjes met gebaren en doen we balspelletjes. Het maakt niet uit wat je doet; alles vinden ze leuk. Elke dag maak ik ook even tijd vrij om een rondje te lopen door het weeshuis, om de meisjes op te zoeken die achterblijven en geen contact zoeken met de groep om wat voor reden dan ook. Een arm om hen heen en gewoon even rustig zitten. Je ziet hoe de meiden ontspannen en genieten van de aandacht. Hier is een lach genoeg. Werken in het buitenland is dankbaar werk. Een super ervaring om nooit meer te vergeten!

Anne-Marijn Batterink – Holland – Language Dutch

Gastgezin

Hoewel het gastgezin voor iedereen zal verschillen wil ik toch even een klein stukje schrijven over mijn ervaring met het gastgezin. Van te voren had ik mezelf afgevraagd waar ik terecht zou komen. Of de mensen aardig waren, of het eten lekker zou zijn, hoe je kamer eruit zou zien, of je een toilet zou hebben met toiletpapier. Allemaal stomme vragen, waar je pas in het buitenland achter komt.

Mijn ervaring met het leven binnen een gastgezin is erg goed. Ik woon samen met mijn drie klasgenoten in een gastgezin in Kalutara. Ik heb een mama, een papa en een grote broer ;) Ze zijn erg vriendelijk en doen ontzettend hard hun best om het voor ons zo goed mogelijk te maken. Zoals onze vader zei: "Wij behandelen jullie als onze eigen dochters. Is er wat, geef het dan aan. Als jullie blij zijn dan zijn wij ook blij". Een mooier welkom kun je niet wensen.

Het eten binnen het gastgezin is erg goed en gevarieerd. Elke dag eet je rijst met curry, altijd geserveerd met een paar schaalpjes groente of vis. Als toetje ananas, ijs, yoghurt, pudding enzovoort. 's Ochtends vaak cornflakes. 's Avonds tosti's, patatjes, stringhoppers... Het is elke keer weer een verrassing. In Sri Lanka eet men normaal gesproken heel pittig. Gelukkig houdt het gastgezin er rekening mee dat wij die scherpe gerechten niet zo gewend zijn en dus passen ze het aan zodat het voor ons goed te eten is.

We hebben twee slaapkamers, een kledingkast en een eigen badkamer mét toilet ;) Het gastgezin laat ons vrij. We kunnen over het algemeen gaan en staan waar we willen. Je zult wel merken dat je in het begin erg moet aftasten wie het gastgezin is en wat hun gewoontes zijn. Wat is normaal, wat vinden ze goed, zeggen ze het ook als ze iets níet goed vinden, wat voor kleding draag je, kun je in een hemdje naar beneden enzovoort. Dat heeft tijd nodig en hier zul je aan moeten wennen. Maar besteed je aandacht aan het gastgezin en praat je dagelijks even met hen dan bouw je een leuke band op en leer je ze steeds beter kennen! Succes.

Anne-Marijn Batterink

Holland.

Making Rotis in Sri Lankan Style

Similar to the Indian flat breads, but this Sri Lankan version contains fresh grated coconut or, in its absence, desiccated coconut. Serve with curries and sambol. It is popular breakfast in Sri Lanka.

Ingredients : Serves 6-8

| | |
|------------|--|
| 2 cups | Roti flour, self-raising flour or rice flour |
| 1/2 cup | Desiccated coconut |
| 1 teaspoon | Salt |
| 1 cup | Water |
| | Ghee or oil for cooking |



Method

- Mix flour, coconut and salt in a mixing bowl.
- Add enough water to form a soft dough.
- Knead dough until it forms a ball and does not stick to sides of the bowl.
- Rest dough for approximately 30 minutes.
- Shape dough into balls, approximately the size of a golf ball.
- Pat each one out to a circle the size of a saucer.
- Cook on a hot griddle or in a heavy frying pan very lightly greased with ghee or oil.
- Serve hot.

'Turtle Day' at the Hikkaduwa Volunteer Get-Together

Friday 4th March saw a big group of nearly forty of our volunteers get together at the beautiful beach surf resort Hikkaduwa on Sri Lanka's West coast! Projects Abroad organised a blow-out beach barbeque with deliciously fresh fish, cuttle-fish curry and local vegetables being grilled on an open fire-wood and coconut shell log fire.

At around 4pm, the surfers headed out to catch the perfect waves, and many of us gathered on the beach to watch them under the setting sun.

On Saturday, we arranged to take a boat trip to the 'Coral Gardens', and although the waves were choppy, the water was crystal clear and we saw a stunning array of coral, parrot fish, sea cucumbers and barracuda, not to mention an enormous sea turtle atleast a metre wide, whom our guide informed us has been a resident of the Hikkaduwa coral for atleast 60 years.

Later that evening having dinner on the beach, our waiter hurried us over to a small patch of sand that appeared to be moving. After around five minutes, the first tiny flipper appeared and pushed through the sand, and it wasn't long before atleast thirty baby turtles had wriggled and jostled their way out of their underground nest to the surface!

Baby hatchlings instinctively find their way to the ocean from the nest, however statistically many die before even reaching the water as they fall prey to other animals and birds. Moreover, they are so small and helpless that the tide pushes them back again and again onto the sand where they remain an easy snack. For this reason, the turtles were gathered up into a bucket of sea water and taken down the beach to a turtle sanctuary conservation, run by environmentalists to try and increase the population. Many of us gladly lent a hand to gather them all up from the sand, and their shells still felt soft as their flippers fought and flapped against us!

We all felt extremely lucky to have witnessed in one day both a turtle older than our grandparents, or even our great grandparents! As well as ones barely minutes old, destined to outlive us all!

I wonder how many lucky divers will get a sight of them over the next sixty or a hundred years!





Outreach Programme Sukitha Children's Home

On **Friday, March 25th** we help an **outreach day**, where all volunteers in Sri Lanka joined for **painting and cleaning Sukitha Children's Home**. There are four Dutch volunteers working at the moment and they have selected Sukitha Children's Home as the focus institute for their university research as well. The day was both a lot of fun and very rewarding as many volunteers got involved and contributed their best.



I saw an elephant!

I saw an elephant! We drove down the road to pick up two new French volunteers to take to the volunteer work day (we were painting the outside of a newly constructed kitchen at the Dutch-Anne Preschool outside of a slum in Panadura), and it was just walking in a ho-hum manner alongside the railroad tracks. On the subject of animals, I would also like to point out that there are no seagulls on the beaches, only crows. I have also seen many animals in the streets – ranging from monitor lizards basking on garbage heaps to feral dogs with crippled legs to monkeys fighting on my roof at night. I even saw a cow standing amidst a crowd of people at a bus stop. There are tiny geckos that live in the light sockets, and other such corners, and dart about the walls, croaking at night. There are also extremely large bats. Fortunately, I have only had two minor encounters with snakes, but I have heard stories about rat snakes and cobras from other volunteers – but those are supposed to be relatively “lucky” glimpses.

Anyway, after the painting, the Projects Abroad staff took us over to Mt. Lavinia for dinner. Nobody had informed me of the plan, however, so I didn't know to bring a swimsuit. Instead, I rolled up my jeans (still covered in paint splotches) and decided to walk along the water up the coast. Mt. Lavinia sits as a suburb to Colombo and is one of the closest accessible beaches. The way that the coastline twists, you can see the skyline of the tall city in the mist – just jutting off from a strip of coconut trees. Mt. Lavinia also boasts the oldest original resort in Sri Lanka but the rest of the beach proves to be dirty, capturing some of the waste from the city and speckled with slums.

Trains run past every few minutes – going from Colombo to Galle – bursting with people, hanging out of the doors and windows, especially around rush hour. The gray Indian Ocean sits rather placidly in the background like warm bathwater, the waves a relative calm – not stirring up enough ruckus, leaving the smooth sands without many shells or pebbles.

However, walking along the shore proved to be a mistake, as my foreignness attracted the attention of some local beach boys, who trailed me, dogging me with questions about my country, why my hair was short, and whether I had a boyfriend. That has been one of the biggest obstacles here – not being able to travel independently or even take a walk by myself, as a woman, without the hassle of unwanted attention. But, I persevered -- meandering down the beach and happened across a small group of boys playing cricket beside a waste heap. They all started smiling and waving at me, but then they started calling “Money! Money!” and followed me, reaching out their small hands. The only Westerners that they are ever exposed to are on holiday or are on the big screen.

Volunteerism helps to address these issues – it sends the message to a society that is relatively isolated that Westerners are not all selfish tourists with wayward values but that we are all equivalent parts of humanity and that we should all be compassionate towards one another. This message applies to Western culture, as well. When I left the United States, most of my family, friends, and co-workers had never heard of Sri Lanka – my mother still keeps telling people that I am in India because she doesn't know any better. Personally, I struggle here in a country where very few speak English, and, in turn, teaching formalised lesson plans is nearly impossible. But, volunteerism is the best form of non-isolationism – we connect and improve the understanding of those peoples on both sides of the globe due to the integrity by which we carry ourselves. Our very presence is the biggest influence of all, and it is sometimes in the subtlest of ways – by sitting next to someone on a public bus, for example-- that we can truly influence others.

Katelyn Maloney from USA – IT Project (Mawala – Sri Lanka)