



UGC

University Grants Commission - Sri Lanka

Published Every Four Months

Education comes from living life, following passions, accessing information, observing, reflecting, and being inspired by wise and courageous elders in the community.

Claire Aumonier

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Education/ Higher Education Ministers of the SAARC member states meet for the first time in Colombo



meeting was ceremonially
Democratic Socialist Republic



The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established when its Charter was formally adopted in December, 1985 by the Heads of States or Governments, of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Ministers in-charge of the subject of Higher Education of the member states belonging to SAARC met on 27th March, 2009 at Hilton Hotel, Colombo for the first time since the formal inception of SAARC. The inauguration was performed by the Hon Prime Minister of the of Sri Lanka, Rathnasiri Wickramanayake.

Under the SAARC Charter several inter ministerial committees have already been set up and issues related to various areas of regional interests were addressed during the past two decades. However, although there were several instances where issues concerning higher education were discussed and related committees were set up, there has neither been a common apex forum nor a body created to discuss all such issues by the respective line ministries of each member state. Thus, the Hon Minister of Higher Education of Sri Lanka, Professor Wishwa Warnapala took the initiative in proposing to convene a meeting of the Ministers in charge of Higher Education in the SAARC region to promote inter member state cooperation on all matters related to higher education in the region. One of his prime concerns and interests in convening this meeting is to identify a common policy framework related to higher education within the region recognizing the national needs, regional identity and global trends.

Several activities have already been initiated through some of the committees that were already set up within the SAARC charter in the sphere of higher education such as the

- ✍ Committee of Heads of University Grants Commissions / Equivalent Bodies,
- ✍ SAARC Consortium on Open and Distance Learning (SARCODIL)
- ✍ Formulation of Common Regional Standards for recognition of professional degrees awarded by the member states
- ✍ SAARC chair within the member state universities and
- ✍ Establishment of the South Asian University

Amidst this background, the meeting held in Colombo addressed issues related to developing a common framework for a Regional Policy for Higher Education which was quite timely and long overdue in terms of the

initiatives and major activities that were taken by other regional organizations such as the EU, OAU or ASEAN,

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- UTILISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF FOREIGN FUNDS

Amidst growing financial constraints that we are facing at the higher educational institutions, the availability of foreign funds would definitely provide an opportunity to implement some of the important activities or projects at HEIs. However, it was revealed in many occasions there has been growing concern over the utilization, overall management, and follow up related to the funds obtained through various foreign grants, directly or initially through the proper channels but continued thereafter over several years by-passing the official channels such as the UGC and the Ministry of Higher Education. In many occasions it was revealed that, the relevant documents were not traceable, funds were utilized without following the necessary procedures, equipment purchased were not properly inventorised, duplication of funding through local resources for the same purpose and departments and far more seriously without submitting the outcome reports.

In view of the many instances of quarries that were raised by the Audits as well as the Donor agencies from the UGC or the Ministry of Higher Education concerning the management of foreign grants the need has arisen to streamline procedures adopted in the overall management of such funds. It is emphasized that ultimately, the UGC or MoHE had to face embarrassing situations due to non availability of necessary information. Furthermore, the issue of lack of proper supervision of the disbursement of funds related to foreign grants was also raised at several fora.

On the contrary, on many instances, when there were disputes the UGC or the Ministry of Higher Education were requested to respond by the Donor Agencies or even by the COPE. It also should be recognized that all foreign grants were awarded on the understanding that such funds are being utilized by the state Institutions and the Ministries / Agencies responsible for the supervision of recipient Institutes are in agreement and fully aware of the projects in operation. However, in many instances it has become an accepted practice that due to the false notion since foreign grants were not originating from local budgetary allocations, they need not be channeled through the relevant official government channels especially through the relevant line Ministry.

(Contd-Page 2) SAARC Higher Education ministers.....



In this respect the initiatives taken by Sri Lanka in hosting the inaugural meeting under the guidance of His Excellency the President Mahinda Rajapakse, was more appropriate and was a significant achievement to Sri Lanka especially during the tenure of his chairmanship of SAARC.



In this context it is noteworthy to state that even in Mahinda Chintana, one of the identified priority activities will be the strengthening of the relationships that exists amongst the Asian region in many key areas including education.

The meeting of the Ministers in charge of Higher Education in the region has many responsibilities and issues that need to be addressed. Furthermore it has already generated intense interest within the region as well as outside the region as a forum for easy cross regional dialogue on Higher Education. Therefore, the meeting focused on issues that would be practical, relevant and recognizing the regional diversity inclusive of national identities whilst conforming to global trends.

The formal meeting of the Ministers which was held on the 27th March, 2009 was preceded by the meeting of the higher officials of Higher Education held on 26th March, chaired by Ms Malini Peiris, Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education. The higher officials meeting was attended by the secretaries of the relevant Ministries of Education/Higher Education and the Heads or representatives of the University Grants Commissions or Equivalent bodies of the SAARC member states. The meeting was formally concluded with a Dinner hosted by the Hon Minister of Higher Education to all the distinguished delegates.



The Evolution of Lanka Education And Research Network (LEARN)

Prof. MJM Jiffry - Vice Chairman/UGC

Formation

The establishment of the Lanka Education And Research Network (LEARN), was initiated by the Sri Lanka Inter University Committee on Computing (SLIUCC) of the UGC with the sole objective of facilitating networking of the higher educational Institutions in Sri Lanka. Thereafter, UGC has provided an initial grant of Rs 3 million to establish links amongst three Universities, namely, Colombo, Moratuwa and OUSL and a management committee was formed in 1996 having representations from all Universities and chaired by a Commission Member. The technical operations were supervised by the representative from University of Moratuwa. Subsequently, the network was further reinforced during 1999 and after, by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

Present Status

Presently the representative from University of Peradeniya is supervising the technical operations, as the Technical Manager and the Colombo School of Computing is managing the finances, by operating through a separate bank account. The LEARN management committee meets regularly to review its activities and manage the finances.

Present Services Provided by LEARN

At present, LEARN provides internet services to all the Universities including the Ministry of Higher Education and the UGC, together with five other Research Institutions. It provides internet access by purchasing such services in bulk and the member Institutions are charged for services provided.

Benefits of the LEARN services

The major benefit is the low cost involved in comparison to the other service providers from the private sector. It also has the benefit of accessing unused bandwidth of internet use during off-peak hours. The LEARN also provides some specific services such as technical assistance, conducting workshops for familiarization and filtering facilities for SPAM.

Incorporation LEARN as an Association (a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act)

Although that the LEARN has been functioning as described above the legal status of the LEARN has restricted its activities, especially to overcome the competitiveness faced with those of other service providers in the private sector. The present status also posed many threats amongst which the limitation on attractive salaries payable to qualified personnel is one of prime issues the LEARN has faced. Thus, creating an independent non-profit making institution owned by all Universities under the legal provisions available within the Companies Act was found to be the best option available. The LEARN thus registered would serve the entire University system and any funds accumulated will be distributed for enhancement of the network and the services to the member Institutions as decided by the Board of Management.

The objectives of the LEARN under the proposed management structure are as follows;

1. To develop and promote the use of a high quality network infrastructure for the benefit of education and research community in Sri Lanka
2. To develop and promote the use of advanced networking applications/services for the benefit of education and research community in Sri Lanka
3. To provide technical leadership, guidance and training to education and research community in Sri Lanka to develop high performance local area networks
4. To provide cost-competitive and reliable Internet services to member institutions
5. To establish relationships and connectivity with networks with similar objectives in the country, the Asia Pacific region and the world
6. To be an advocate for advanced network applications and technology in Sri Lanka
7. To do any other activity that may be deemed necessary in furtherance of the above objects

The Finance Department of the UGC operates with 40 staff members, and is headed by the Financial Controller, and assisted by four other Accountants.

The main tasks and responsibilities of the Finance Department include the following:-

1. As the apex body in the University System to ensure that the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) under its charge are funded through the Government grant annually, in liaison with the Ministry and the Treasury, through the coordination and submission of the estimates and allocation of resources.
2. To ensure that all HEIs receive their monthly cash requirements from the Treasury.
3. The UGC Finance Department also monitors the budgets and financial performance of the HEIs.
4. The Finance Department is responsible for the financial administration in the UGC, which includes the payment of salaries, overtime, loans and subsistence of the staff of the Commission, in addition to the payments made for all goods and services supplied to the UGC.
5. Preparation of the annual financial statements of the Commission, and handling the book keeping functions in a computerized environment, is a major responsibility of the Department.
6. Replies to audit queries pertaining to all activities of the Commission are prepared by the Finance Department.
7. Providing funds for student bursaries, and for IT development activities, is handled through the budget of the UGC.
8. The annual appropriation account which reconciles the treasury grants released to all HEIs with the approved grant, is prepared by the Finance Department.
9. The operations of the Universities Provident Fund, with a current membership of 25,000 is centralized at the UGC, and its activities are the responsibility of the Finance Department. Maintenance of member accounts, granting of loans from the Fund, refund of provident fund to retiring members, investing and the fund management, and determining of annual interest rates to be declared to members, are all handled by the Finance Department. The Department also prepares separate financial statements for the provident fund, and issues year end statements to all its members. The Department handles approximately 400 provident fund refunds for a month.
10. The Pension Scheme established in 1999, for employees of the University system, is also operated by a separate unit of the Finance Department. With a current membership of 6100, the pensions unit pays monthly pensions to 67 employees who have retired. Preparation of separate financial statements, investment and the management of the Pensions Fund are also the responsibility of the Finance Department.

Chairman attends the Asia Pacific Sub-Regional Conference for the World Conference on Higher Education New Delhi, India 25-26, February 2009

Mrs. H Samarakkody - PS/Chairman-UGC

Chairman attended the Asia Pacific Sub-Regional Conference for the World Conference on Higher Education New Delhi, India 25-26, February 2009

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized a Regional conference on 'Facing Global and Local Challenges: The New Dynamics of Higher Education' at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, India during 25-26, February 2009



Prof. Gamini Samaranayake, Chairman, UGC participated at this Conference as a member of the Ministerial delegation headed by Hon. Prof. Wiswa Warnapala, Minister of Higher Education and the other members were Mr. P. Ranepura, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education and Mr. Kamal Pathmasiri, Director-General, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technology (SLIATE). Ven. Iththademaliye Indrasara Thero, Mahopadyaya of the Buddhashravaka Bhikku University at Anuradhapura also participated at this Conference.

The objectives of the Conference were; to examine significant trends and their bearing on higher education; understand the role of higher education as a driving force for sustainable development; probe new challenges in terms of achieving 'equity' and 'quality', that would shape the strategic agenda for the development of higher education in the future; discuss mechanisms to deepen transnational collaboration and cooperation in higher education for common benefit of all and adopt a set of recommendations for the forthcoming World Conference on Higher Education in 2009.

Fourteen (14) countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) were represented at this conference and the outcomes from this conference will serve as inputs to the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education scheduled to be held in UNESCO Paris, France from 6-8, July 2009.



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Buttala Unit for EUSL Students

Mr. Nalaka Lankasena - Programmer Cum Systems Analyst, (Head) / Higher Educational IT Division

After the departure of the Applied Science Faculty of the Sabaraganmuwa University, UGC has decided to establish the "Buttala Unit for EUSL Students" at Buttala Gam Udawa Site with the view of catering the demand arisen from the people of Moneragala and Buttala. It will support the economy of this area and will also fill the gap created due to the departure of the Faculty of Applied Sciences. About 150 students of EUSL belonging to the academic year 2008 will commence their academic activities in this location.

Preliminary activities relevant to academic matters and renovation of buildings such as library, computer laboratory, lecture theaters, auditorium, medical centre, and hostels are in progress. Unspent portion of funds from IRQUE Project will be utilized with the approval of the World Bank. A steering committee consisting of Prof Gamini Samaranayaka Chairman, UGC, Mr Tissa Nadasena Secretary, UGC Prof Lakshman Rathnayake Director IRQUE Project, Prof Colin Pieris, QAA Coordinator, Mr Priyantha Premakumara SAS, Admissions Department, Nalaka Lankasena Member Project Monitoring Unit, Mr Jasingha Academic Coordinator, Mr S Jayakody Assistant Bursar was formed to monitor and review the progress of this unit.



The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action.

- Herbert Spencer

Donation of Personal Library Collection

Mr. Crishantha Dilroshan - AS/IUA Department



A ceremony to mark the donation of collection from the personal Library of Mr. W Ananda Jayawardena to the UGC was held on 30th January 2009 at Mr. Jayawardena's residence at Thimbirigasyaya, Colombo 05. At this ceremony Mr. Jayawardena formally handed over his collection of



books, Annual Reports and other documents including newspaper cuttings collected over the last 4 to 5 decades, all relating to university matters, to Mr. Tissa Nandasena, Secretary of the UGC. The Senior Assistant Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of the IUA Department of the UGC also participated at the occasion. At this ceremony Mr. Jayawardena also donated copies of the book titled "Universities in Sri Lanka: handbook for administrators", which he authored and published in 1998.

Mr. Jayawardena's distinguished record as a decision maker and administrator in the university system includes his service as the Registrar of the University of Ceylon in the 1950's and as a University Librarian, his pioneering work in external examinations which formed the background to the establishment of the Open University, his contribution as a senior administrator at Additional Secretary level in the UGC and as a member of a University Council.

The UGC is grateful to him and wishes him a very happy and healthy life.



Twenty three Endowed scholarships offered for 2009

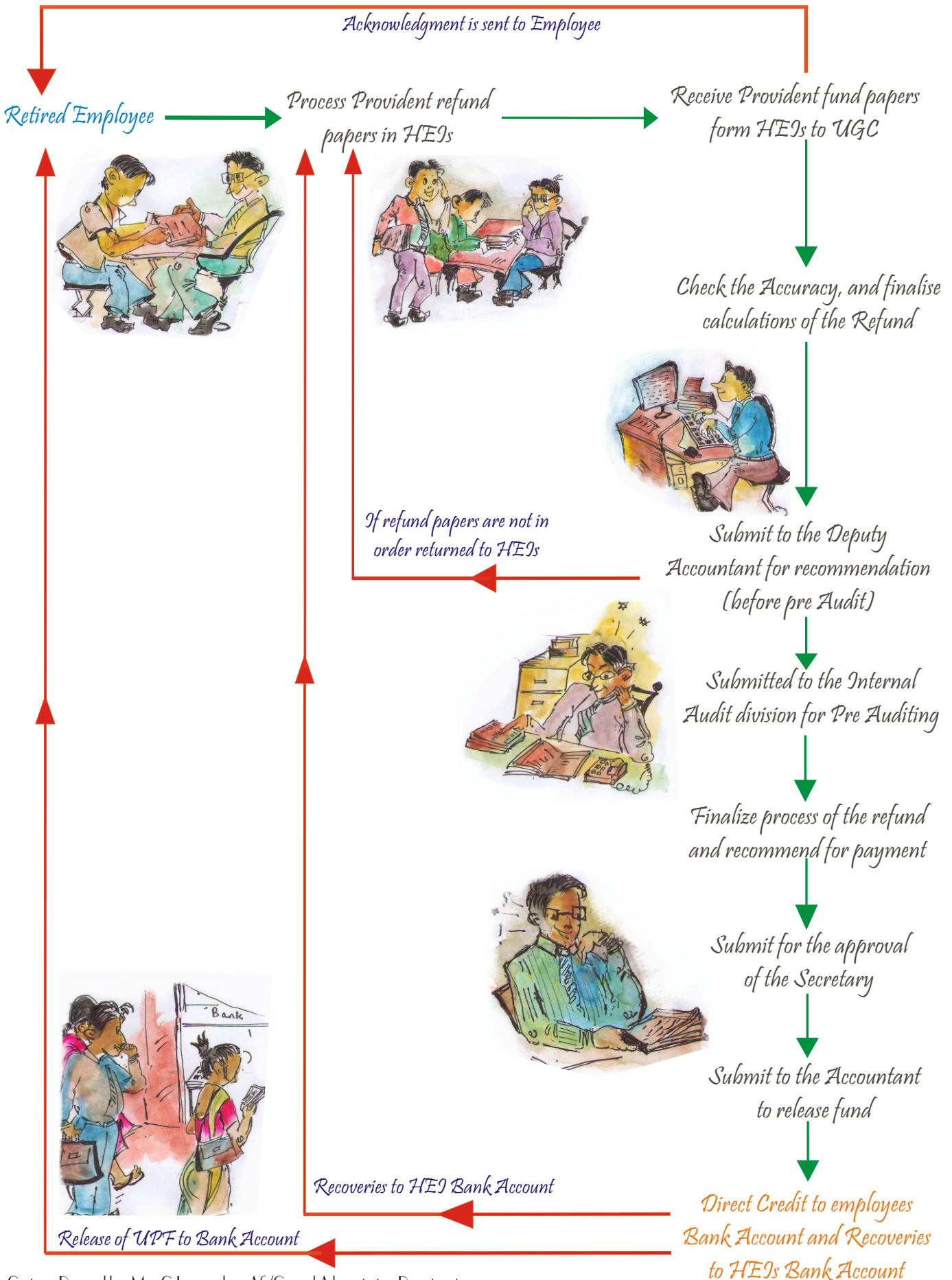
Ms. Priyanthi Daluwatte - S.AS/IUA Department



A ceremony was held on 11th February 2009 at the UGC to award endowed scholarships for the year 2009. Twenty three students received scholarships for 13 endowments. Members of families for the Sunil Sennanayake Scholarship, DS Balasooriya Memorial Scholarship, Pragnaratne Atapattu Scholarship and parents of scholarship winners attended the event. President of Oxford Society of Sri Lanka attended for the Oxford Society of Sri Lanka Scholarship. Welcome address and introductory remarks were delivered by Secretary, UGC and Chairman, UGC respectively.

Students from the following Universities received scholarships. University of Peradeniya (7), Eastern University, Sri Lanka (1), University of Sri Jayawardenepura (5), Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (1), University of Ruhuna (4), Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (1), University of Moratuwa (2), University of Kelaniya (1), Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (1). The scholarships were distributed for Medicine, Agriculture, Management, Engineering, Architecture and Social Sciences.

Endowed scholarships are those that have been established and those that may be established in future by individuals, organizations or associations on such terms and conditions which donors wish to lay down. These scholarships are initiated in memory of a beloved member of the family or to encourage the study of a particular discipline by the undergraduate belonging to the birth place of donors or to commemorate important events. The endowed scholarships are awarded by the UGC according to the conditions stipulated by the donors.



Carloons Designed by: Mrs. CJ wijesinghe- AS/General Administration Department

Education is the progressive realization of our ignorance.

Albert Einstein

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Donation of 14 clutches for disabled war heroes

Mr. Nalaka Lankasena - Programmer Cum Systems Analyst, (Head)
 / Higher Educational IT Division



The Welfare Society of the UGC organized a special project to donate 14 clutches to the war heroes who are disabled in the battlefield during their tireless effort to defend and protect the territorial integrity of

our motherland. This was taken place at "Ranaviru Sevana" Ragama, on 3rd March 2009 with the participation of the members of the Welfare Society.



"දැයට කිරුළ - 2009"

Mr. Priyantha Premakumara - SAS, (Head) / Admission Department



Deyata kirula Exhibition was held concurrently with the National Independence Day 2009 to create awareness in the general public on the developments achieved by the Government in cultural, education, science, technological and other relevant fields.

UGC coordinated the activities of the Exhibition with regard to the university sector in association with the Ministry of Higher Education. The main theme of the Exhibition was "EKA MAWAKAGE DARUWO" which indicates the harmony of all Sri Lankan citizens.

The Universities participated were Colombo, Peradeniya, Sri Jayewardenepura, Kelaniya, Moratuwa, Ruhuna, Open University, South Eastern, Sabaragamuwa, Wayamba, Uwa Wellassa, Visual & Performing Arts together with the UGC and the Ministry of Higher Education.

We take this opportunity to thank Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education and her officials, Vice Chancellors of universities, officers of the UGC & Universities and Students who involved in this exhibition, for their valuable contribution in making this event a success.



The National Higher Education Information System

Mr. Nalaka Lankasena - Programmer Cum Systems Analyst, (Head) / Higher Educational IT Division



The National Higher Education Information System (N-HEMIS) is developed to provide information for planning, monitoring and evaluation for the entire higher education sector in Sri Lanka.

The system is currently implemented in the Ministry of Higher Education (NHEMIS) and in the University Grants Commission (UGC-HEMIS). UGC-HEMIS covers information such as Universities, postgraduate institutes funded by the government.

The Higher Education Information Agency (HIS) of the German Federal Government has agreed to provide technical assistance to set-up the N-HEMIS in Sri Lanka, and their counterpart in Sri Lanka is the University of Colombo School of Computing (UCSC).

Dr. Peter Muessibig Director, HIS conducted a presentation for all staff officers of the UGC on 24th March 2009. The primary objective of this presentation was to create awareness and provide basic guidelines for users on applications of the software.

The N-HEMIS Implementation in Sri Lanka is coordinated by the IRQUE Project and funded by the World Bank. Chairman and Vice Chairman of the UGC too participated at this event.

