

## Highlights of the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Sessions of the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon 2006



Prof. A P de Silva, Chief Guest inaugurating the Annual Sessions by lightning the traditional oil lamp

Dr. (Mrs.) S Hewage, President of the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon delivering the Presidential Address



Winning team (Maliyadewa Boys College, Kurunegala) at the All Island Interschool Chemistry Quiz Competition 2005/2006



Prof. A P de Silva, Chief Guest delivering his address at the Annual Sessions

## President's Message



Dear Members,

It is with a high sense of responsibility that I contribute this message to "Chemistry In Sri Lanka" cognizant of the fact that I now belong to a long and distinguished lineage of Presidents, who have held the reins ever since the Chemical Society of Ceylon was founded in 1941. I assume duties as an Industrialist who has spent 35 long years in the polymer industry, fully aware of the fact that most all of the past presidents have been from universities and research institutes. The fundamental difference between an industrialist and an academic is that the former is trained to think statistically and competitively in terms of what he does. Over the years most of our research chemists have worked with little or no incentive to develop the cutting edge in their work. By and large the academic and researcher of universities and institutes of Sri Lanka have been more or less inward looking, with little or no meaningful interaction with the manufacturing industries which are committed to bring about satisfactions in society by offering products which meet their needs and wants. A professional Institute such as ours can play a meaningful role in promoting greater University, Institute and Industry interaction.

The Institute of Chemistry, Ceylon, has so far played a major role in the field of chemical education and continues to do so. Whilst the achievements have been high, accomplishments have not been without criticism. The trying circumstances under which the Institute has marched forward should not be forgotten. Yet for all constructive criticism is most welcome at a time when the Academic Board is overhauling its courses of study with greater facilities at its command. The dominant figure in the affairs of the Institute over the past few decades has been undoubtedly Professor JNO Fernando, a person with a vision and a mission to fulfill, who has jealously safeguarded the Institute's

income from courses of study which has resulted in a majestic edifice and a College of Chemical Sciences that not only enhances the overall image of the Institute but rather, the quality of the course of study. Needless to say such a focus of creating a strong academic environment has created more opportunities for university teachers in chemistry to play a more dominant role in Institute affairs and seems to have marginalized the Professional Community of Sri Lankan Chemists employed elsewhere.

In my brief induction speech, I mentioned that the poor attendance of members at the Annual Sessions required investigation to ascertain what they expected from the Institute. The general feeling among many members to whom I have spoken was that the Institute has neglected its membership and offers very little avenues to them to get greater benefits and professional recognition. Mindful of this gap we would this year endeavour to create a few new branches of activities which hopefully in the years to come will provide the leaves, the flowers and the fruits which our members could benefit from.

The Institute this year plans to conduct a 3 day International Conference from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2007 on the broad theme of "Chemistry, Technology and Innovation for Greater Safety and Economic Growth" with six sub themes. Steps are being taken to get down world class scientists and hopefully to have at least two plenary presentations for each sub-theme. Institute's members and graduateship students will enjoy special subsidized rates which will entitle them to attend the Conference socials as well. Members now have an opportunity to upgrade their research to the standard expected for an International Conference and gain greater recognition. They also have an opportunity to make contacts and build relationships with overseas experts.

I also mentioned in my induction speech that there is a wealth of Sri Lankan chemists employed overseas and that I would make an effort to harness this wealth to give our Institute the professional clout it would do well to acquire fast. I am happy to inform the membership that my efforts so far have been most encouraging and I have already created a database of eighty such chemists and seek your assistance to build a more comprehensive one. We shall reach out to all of them and try our utmost to get them to become members. Some of them have complained bitterly that they have been grossly neglected, and others who are Fellows of our Institute say that they have not even received a notice of the Annual Session. Our Institute has to update the membership data base. After much effort we have still e-mail addresses of only a third of our membership. We do not even have the telephone numbers of the rest. Therefore, I appeal to all members to forward their contact information to the Institute so that we could effectively communicate with you electronically and by telephone.

We also intend to create a new web page for professional Chemists who are members so that they could trade their expertise as consultants. We will also have a separate page for Organizations in the Chemical Industry and will list them as Institutional members of our Institute. I believe this will afford a good opportunity for industry to identify experts who could solve their problems. It will also enable the chemists to identify organizations and offer their consultancy services. I believe that such a web service would be good reason to get the overseas chemists to join our Institute so that we could create a greater awareness of their existence amongst our industry. Needless to say these web pages will also be a source of much needed revenue for the Institute.

The Institute also plans this year to introduce Gold Medal Award Orations to both pay honour to the past Greats and also to stimulate research in Chemical Sciences. A Gold medal of value not less than Rs 20,000/= will be awarded to the orator and the first such oration has been fixed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2007 in honour of the late Professor R.S. Ramakrishna to mark his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. The next gold medal oration will be in honour of the late Professor P.P.G.L. Siriwardene and is scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2007. Such orations hopefully will honour other Greats as well in the future. These orations will serve to grant greater recognition to our members with research strengths and will also develop a competitive spirit in them. I believe once the scheme falls into place as an annual event and dates are announced in advance, we will have applications from Sri Lankan Chemists abroad as well.

Our large membership and many non members as well, who are scattered in many walks of life are silently contributing in various professions and fields of chemical sciences. Many of them who remain unhonoured have made an outstanding contribution towards industrial and economic growth and in keeping

with this year's theme, I shall be recommending to the Council to award each year several such persons merit certificates for outstanding services on the lines other professional Institutes such as the Plastics and Rubber Institute are doing. These are methods by which members can be recognized and recognition must surely be beyond academic attainment. We need to have a method by which a Professional Institute recognizes and honours dedicated teachers of chemistry, outstanding dedicated contributors in laboratory or factory floor settings and others who have given leadership to the growth of the Chemical Industry of Sri Lanka.

The essential difference between Management and Leadership is that whilst the former endeavours to maintain the stability of the existing the latter is bent on shattering the existing and creating the new. In other words, leadership is all about giving new directions and bringing about change. This is always a difficult exercise in an environment of diehards with entrenched feelings that are exalted by one's own passions for what you are comfortable with. Yet for all in a changing world, change is unavoidable and has to be promoted as well. We need to usher in new programmes which will make our members feel that the time they will commit to the Institute is time well spent. Leaders embed culture which is the hybridization of the orbitals of values, beliefs, traditions, superstitions, norms, symbols and rituals which one venerates. Rome was not built in a day, and likewise new cultures to be embedded take time. At the Induction I also promised the membership a culture of decision making by consensus and a culture which promotes new ideas and which respects views and opinions of others. We will try our best this year to scatter a few new seeds that hopefully will germinate and grow to offer a branch and a bit of shade for all of us in the years ahead. I appeal to all our members to participate in the activities of our Institute and I would greatly appreciate receiving any suggestions from you.

With Kind Regards  
Mevan Pieris  
President  
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E-mail: [auplhsm@eol.lk](mailto:auplhsm@eol.lk)



Induction of the President Mr. H S M Pieris by the immediate Past President Dr. (Mrs.) S Hewage

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## COVER PAGE

Sri Lanak is gifted with a rich source of flora and lichens that contain bioactive compounds. The cover page depicts some flora that has yielded bioactive compounds (pages 23 - 25, 29-32). Tea leaves are infected with Blister blight caused by *Exobasidium vexans*. The formation and enhancement of proanthocyanidins in tea leaves occur as defence response after Blister blight attack. (page 26 - 28)



Orientation session for GIC programme and DLTC course held on 28.09.2006 at St. John's College, Panadura