

# MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL PRESIDENT



***Professor K P S Chandana Jayaratne***

The Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science is the only scientific body in Sri Lanka with a membership of over 10000 covering all disciplines of science. It is indeed an Association of valuable human resources. The sustainable development of a country is dependent on this large reservoir of talents. SLAAS has done many activities in the past few decades, to promote Science, and to keep a culture of Science and Research alive in our country. Institutions like the ITI, the NSF, and the SLSI, under other names, were established because of the lobbying by SLAAS scientists. At the same time, I need to tell you that this is not enough! if we are going to become a developed and wealthy nation in the foreseeable future, we, as a nation, must embrace science and technology.

If we look at the countries that have pulled themselves out of poverty and become developed nations during the last 50 years, we see that, except for a few countries which were blessed with enormous reserves of oil, they have all done so by application of Science and Technology, by research, innovation, commercialization, and industrialization.

Unfortunately, there is a gradual decline of the number of students offering the science stream in secondary education in Sri Lanka due to a tendency for the best students to select other streams such as Commerce, Arts etc. To fulfil the vision of SLAAS – towards a scientifically advanced nation- and to develop this country with a population of 21 million, we need at least 20,000 scientists and that according to the Minister of Science, Technology and Research we are having only 3500 active scientists. To attract young

brighter students to do science stream subjects at school level to fill-up the gap, in this year the Science and Technology Advisory Committee of SLAAS jointly with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science, Technology and Research is working on a mega-scale plan to Develop skills, talents and specially attitude to do science (i.e. create interest to do science) of students from grade 6-9 by introducing inquiry based STEM education system, and a carrier guidance/carrier path awareness programme for students of grades 10 – 13.

The Theme for this year is “Space Science and Technology Applications for Sustainable Development”. Some proposed new activities for the year 2018 are : acquiring a new vehicle for SLAAS (mainly for science popularization activities and to enhance outreach programmes), initiate the construction of SLAAS new Building, renovation of existing building and face-lifting, start SLAAS Journal of Science, Development of membership database and inform SLAAS activities through email/sms, promotion of SLAAS brand name, Host and conduct the 23rd International Astronomy Olympiad (IAO – 2018) in Sri Lanka apart of the Celebrations of Sri Lanka’s 70 years of Independence, a School Science Conclave during the Annual Session to present research posters and models for O/L and A/L students giving opportunity to exchange ideas with scientists (to develop research culture among school children), Establishment of a school inventors training unit – to establish school inventors’ societies at least in 500 schools and form a federation of such societies, a training unit and a patent help desk to elevate the level of SLAAS all Island School Inventors’ competition. In addition there will be a “**S & T 70 Exhibition**” organized by SLAAS in line with the annual sessions to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee year of Sri Lanka gaining independence – a mega event indicating seventy years of achievements in Science and Technology. The exhibition intends to cover various aspects of the application of basic sciences for the development of technological needs. The inaugural ceremony of the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Sessions is scheduled for 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2018 at the BMICH main hall and the Theme seminar at Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo. Technical sessions will be held at the Premises of Faculty of Science and the UCSC, University of Colombo.