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Vol 19 no 1

# SLAAS NEWS

Newsletter of the Sri Lanka Association for the  
Advancement of Science

## General President's Message

From way back in time scientific discoveries have profoundly transformed our world and impacted our lives. However, while science has provided many solutions to major problems, its applications, sometimes indiscriminately, have created new ones. For example, in the health sector, while the discovery of Penicillin laid the foundation for the development of other antibiotics thereby saving countless lives, their excessive and indiscriminate use over time has resulted in antibiotic resistance, which has become a major problem worldwide, with the WHO predicting that it would be the biggest cause of deaths by 2050. New approaches that do not involve traditional antibiotics have now become a must.

Burning of fossil fuels which enabled us to obtain energy on demand is the main contributor to climate change, the most talked about global environmental issue today. This has created the need to develop alternative sources of energy, which allow for energy capture and storage. Thus, novel battery technologies that meet the rising demand for clean, sustainable, safe, and affordable efficient energy storage solutions on a large scale is an urgent need of the day. Science can play a major role in achieving this goal.

Advances in the communication sector and electronic industry, while having made life more comfortable for us have also caused a set of problems related to e-waste management and disposal. However, the e-waste recycling industry presents an opportunity to not only make a positive impact on the environment but also to benefit financially from the valuable materials contained in e-waste. It is noteworthy that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also include targets related to e-waste management.

Plastics and microplastics have created another major environmental challenge, where the global reduction of the plastic footprint has now become a priority. With UNEP at the helm, many agencies worldwide have joined hands to mitigate plastic pollution. Drastic lifestyle changes are necessary to reduce the impacts of plastics and microplastics on environmental and human health.

Artificial intelligence (AI), the current buzz word, has witnessed unprecedented growth and innovation in recent years, impacting virtually all sectors. While AI has been transformative with limitless potential, it also raises another set of challenges and a multitude of ethical dilemmas.

SLAAS with its diverse membership, is the foremost scientific organization in our country. Popularizing science and creating awareness in the community - from schools to adult education and organizing citizen science programmes, are important activities that SLAAS should undertake, particularly in the current challenges highlighted above. SLAAS could also play a central role in bringing together the relevant stakeholders to address any emerging issues, and in recognizing excellence in research and innovation through awards and competitions. Clearly, an inter-disciplinary approach should be encouraged to face the challenges of the modern era. I believe that the diverse expertise of our members could be harnessed to make a difference in line with the theme for 2024.

**"HARNESSING THE POWER OF SCIENCES FOR SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION"**

As we celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SLAAS this year, let us join hands and work towards a productive and rewarding 2024.

*"We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference."*

Nelson Mandela

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### Special points of interest

- General President's Message
- Council 2024 & Induction of General President 2024
- Cybersphere'24 - Cyber Security Tech-Talk
- Science Talks - Podcast Series
- CPS YouTube Shorts



**Professor Ramanee D Wijesekera**  
General President of SLAAS

Department of Chemistry  
Faculty of Science  
University of Colombo

## Induction of General President 2024

Professor Ramanee D. Wijesekera, Senior Professor in Chemistry, University of Colombo, was inducted as the 83<sup>rd</sup> General President of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS) at an elaborated ceremony held on 08<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at the Gall Face Hotel, Colombo 02.

Dr. Lalini Rajapaksa, Past General President of SLAAS, graced the occasion as the chief guest and Dr. Sujatha Hewage, Former Head, Department of Chemistry, University of Colombo, was the guest of honour of this elegant occasion.

YouTube link for the ceremony: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyCy-mkzANE>



# Council 2024

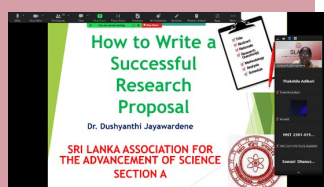
Name	Position	Name	Position
Prof. Ramanee D. Wijesekera	General President	Prof. W A P J Premaratne	Elected Member
Prof. Udeni Nawagamuwa	General President - Elect	Prof. Theshini Perera	Elected Member
Prof. Ranjith Senaratne	Immediate Past General President	Dr. A M Mubarak	Elected Member
Prof. Sumedha Jayanetti	Chairman, BOT	Dr. D M S Jayawardene	President, Section A
Dr. Russel De Silva	General Secretary	Prof. R M Dharmadasa	President, Section B
Dr. Lakmal Weerawarne	General Secretary	Dr. R S M Samarasekara	President, Section C
Prof. Dilrukshi Wijayarathna	Treasurer	Dr. Ureshani Karunarathna	President, Section D
Dr. Menaka Ranasinghe	Asst. Treasurer	Eng. Gihan Weerasekara	President, Section E1
Dr. S M Vithanarachchi	Editor	Dr. R L P Weerasinghe	President, Section E2
Dr. Champa Magalle	Asst. Editor	Dr. Supunmali Ahangama	President, Section E3
Prof. Mayuri Wijesinghe	Secretary, Int. Relations	Dr. Menuka Udugama	President, Section F
Prof. K P S Chandana Jayaratne	Elected Member	Prof. Shiromi Karunaratne	Chairperson , GRC
Dr. Lochandaka Ranathunga	Elected Member	Dr. M R Lamabadusuriya	Chairperson, EC
Dr. R D Guneratne	Elected Member	Prof. Aashani Tillekaratne	Chairperson, CPS
Dr. R Chinthaka L De Silva	Elected Member	Prof. Kapila Kumara	Sabaragamuwa Chapter
Prof. Chamari Hettiarachchi	Elected Member	Prof. Sunanda Kodikara	Ruhuna Chapter
Prof. M N Kaumal	Elected Member	Dr. K Prasannath	Eastern Chapter

## Section A

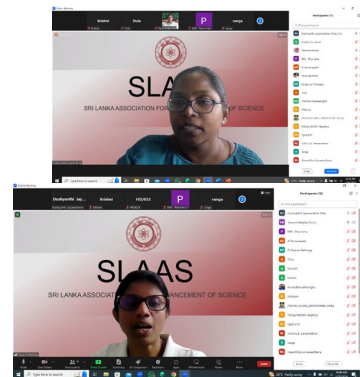
### Webinars

A Research methodology webinar was conducted for postgraduate students following research degrees in Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo (UCFM) on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024 from 9 am to 12 noon. The resource persons were Dr. Yasaswi Walpita who delivered a session on “Aligning Research findings and Objectives” and Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardene who delivered a session on “How to compile the research report”. The workshop was attended by 20 postgraduate students and the activity was coordinated by Dr. Yasaswi Walpita.

Another two research methodology webinars were conducted for postgraduate students following research degrees in the Wayamba University, on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2024 from 7:00–9:30 pm. The resource person for both sessions was Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardene, Senior Lecturer, Department of Community Medicine, Colombo, who delivered a session on “How to write a successful research proposal” and “Ethics in Research” respectively in the two webinars. The workshops were attended by 50 postgraduate students on each occasion. This activity was coordinated by Ms. Thakshila Adikari.

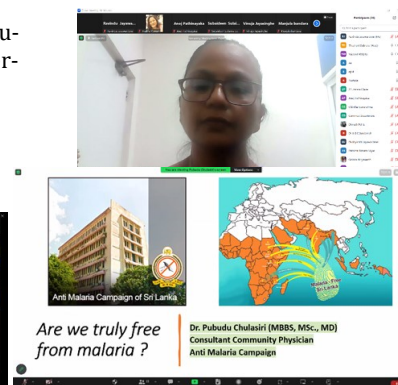
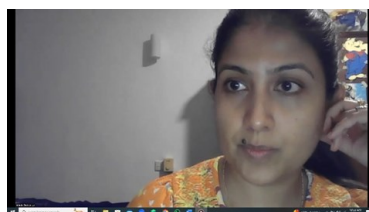


A webinar on ‘Leptospirosis’ was conducted on the 29<sup>th</sup> February from 12:15–1:00 pm with Dr. Thushani Dabrera, Consultant Community Physician, Focal Point for Leptospirosis Prevention and Control, Epidemiology Unit, Colombo as the resource person. There were 35 participants. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Yasaswi Walpita.



A webinar on Malaria was conducted on the 26<sup>th</sup> February from 12–1 pm with Dr. Pubudu Chulasiri, Consultant Community Physician, Anti Malaria Campaign, Colombo as the resource person. There were 30 participants. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardene.

A webinar on “Forge Ahead; Shed the Weight. Obesity; How do we tackle it?” was conducted on the 20<sup>th</sup> March from 6–7 pm with Dr. Lushanthi Kannangara, Consultant Physician in Elderly Medicine, Dementia and Delirium Lead, Northampton General Hospital, Northampton as the resource person. There were 30 participants. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Chamari Kannangara.



### Lunch time talks

A lunch time talk on “STD in Health Care” was conducted in collaboration with the Auyrvedha Teaching Hospital Borella on the 20<sup>th</sup> February from 12:15–1:30 pm at the auditorium, National Ayurvedha Teaching Hospital Borella, with Dr. Nalaka Kulatunga, Registrar in Venereology from the Central STD Clinic Colombo as a resource person. There were around 50 participants. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Nirmala Senaratna, Dr. Jeewani Dahanayake and Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardene.



A lunch time talk on “Work Life Balance of Women in the Health Sector” was conducted in collaboration with the Auyrvedha Teaching Hospital Borella on the 14<sup>th</sup> March from 12:15–1:30 pm at the auditorium, National Ayurvedha Teaching Hospital Borella, with Dr. Kaumadi Karunagoda, Consultant in Sthree Roga Prasuthithanthra and Senior Lecturer from the Faculty of Indigenous Medicine as the resource person. There were around 50 participants. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Nirmala Senaratne and Dr. Jeewani Dahanayake.



### Activities carried out to promote health and disseminate knowledge among the general public

A live discussion on the topic “Physiotherapy for Healthy Living” was carried out by Dr. KRM Chandrathileke on the programme “Aadaraneeya Jeevithaya” on Siyatha TV on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 from 9:00–9:30 am. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardene.



A TV discussion was carried out by Dr. Jeewani Dahanayake on “Medicinal Plants the Cure” on Shradha TV on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 from 10:00–10:30 am. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Jeewani Dahanayake.



A radio programme was conducted on “Ayurvedic Treatment for Uterine Conditions” by Dr. Nirmala Senaratna for the Suwasetha programme on Swadeshiya Sewaya Radio channel on 06<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 1:25 pm. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Nirmala Senaratne

### Activities carried out to fulfil the responsibility towards society

A dental screening programme for both adults and children and an oral health awareness programme was conducted in collaboration with the Colombo Public Library on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm at the Colombo Public Library with Dr. Nilantha Rathnayake, Dr. Rasika Ekanayake and Dr. Amirthavarshini Sriskanthan as the resource persons. The programme was well attended by public with around 40 attendees. This activity was coordinated by Dr. Rasika Ekanayake, Dr. Amirthavarshini Sriskanthan, and Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardene

A cancer awareness programme was conducted in collaboration with the Colombo Public Library and the National Cancer Control Programme Sri Lanka on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024 from 10 am to 12 pm at the Colombo Public Library with Dr Dulanjali Laxamana from the National Cancer Control Unit as the resource person. Booklets/leaflets and posters were also distributed to the public who attended. The programme was well attended by the public with around 50 attendees. This programme was coordinated by Dr Dushyanthi Jayawardene



A physiotherapy awareness programme, along with a practice session was conducted in collaboration with the Colombo Public Library on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 from 10 am to 12 pm at the Colombo Public Library



with Dr. Asha Wettasinghe, Senior Lecturer, Department of Allied Health Sciences and Dr. KRM Chandrathilaka, Lecturer, Department of Allied Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo as the resource persons.

The programme was well attended by the public with around 40 attendees. This programme was coordinated by Dr. KRM Chandrathilaka and Dr. Dushyanthi Jayawardene

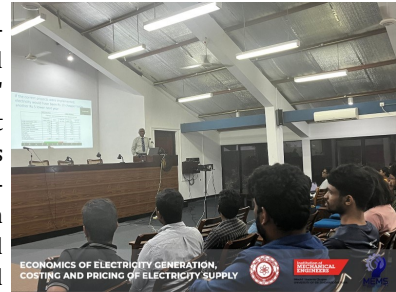


## Section C

### Guest Lectures

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Dr. Thilak Siyabalapitiya, the Managing Director of Resource Management Associates (Pvt) Ltd., delivered a guest lecture titled "Economics of Electricity Generation, Costing, and Pricing of Electricity Supply." The session was open to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and it emphasized the importance of comprehending the intricacies of electricity costs and prices in Sri Lanka. Dr. Siyabalapitiya expertly navigated through topics including the expansion of supply options, costing provisions, the transition from costs to prices, and the bridge between theoretical pricing concepts and practical implementation, while contemplating the future grid landscape. This insightful session was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the SLAAS-Section C and the IMECHE Student Chapter & the Mechanical Engineers Members Society of the University of Sri Jayawardenepura.

Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/ZOEkuY4fxoY>



### Workshops

A workshop entitled "Unlocking Impact: Elevating your UG/PG/Industry Research beyond the Thesis" was conducted on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 by Prof. Mahesh Jayaweera and Dr. Dhanushka Udayanga. The workshop was hosted at SLAAS headquarters and catered to the aspiring researchers eager to elevate their new findings into scientific publications. Dr. Dhanushka Udayanga shared valuable insights into navigating success in journal publications while Prof. Mahesh Jayaweera shared his expertise on crafting compelling newsletter articles. The workshop, organized by SLAAS-Section C in collaboration with SLAAS GRC, provided participants with a certificate recognizing their participation.

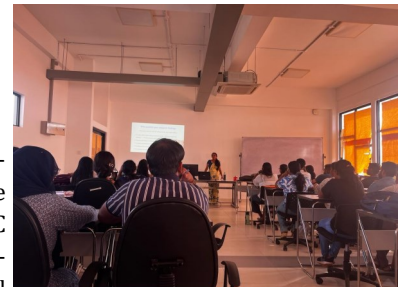


### Panel Discussions

A panel discussion titled "Strategic Compliance: Elevating Ballast Water and Bio-fouling Management in the Maritime Realm" took place on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Panel members included Capt. Nish Wijayakulathilaka, Dr. Kalpani Marasinghe, Mr. Jagath Gunasekara, and Eng. Manjula Hettiarachchi, with Dr. Sameera Samarasakara moderating the session. The panel discussion delved into the complexities of strategic compliance, focusing on elevating ballast water and bio-fouling management in the maritime sector. Expert panelists explored regulatory frameworks, technological advancements, and industry best practices, offering valuable insights to address emerging challenges and ensure environmental sustainability in maritime operations. The event was jointly organized by the Library and Publications Committee of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka (IESL), the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), and SLAAS - Section C. The discussion focused on addressing challenges and strategies related to maritime compliance, particularly in ballast water and bio-fouling management.

### Seminar

Dr. Anushka Upamali Rajapaksha led a seminar titled 'Guidelines for Undergraduate Research and Effective Communication' on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Hosted at the Faculty of Technology, University of Colombo, and organized by SLAAS Section C in collaboration with SLAAS GRC, the event provided invaluable insights into research methodologies and communication strategies. Attendees gained essential knowledge to excel in undergraduate research endeavors. Dr. Rajapaksha's expertise and the collaborative efforts of SLAAS and the Faculty of Technology of University of Colombo aimed to empower students and promote scholarly en-



## Section D

### Seminars

A seminar on Green Skills: Zero Plastics was held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at the Department of Basic Sciences, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. It was organized by SLAAS-Section D in collaboration with Zero Plastic Movements and the Faculty of Allied Health Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Mr. Nishshanka de Silva served as the main resource person of the seminar.

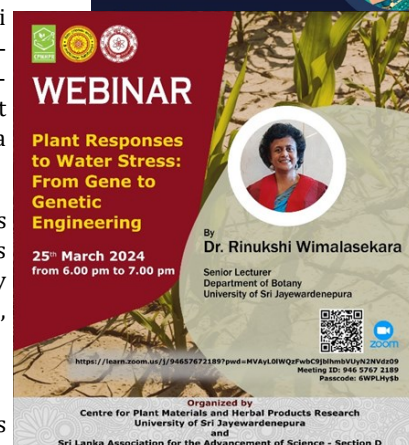


### Webinars

A webinar on "Natural Products Towards a Sustainable Economic Development in Sri Lanka" was held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 from 7–8 pm. It was organized by Section D-SLAAS in collaboration with the Centre for Plant Materials and Herbal Products Research, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Prof. Sugandhika Suresh of the Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medical Sciences of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura served as the resource person.

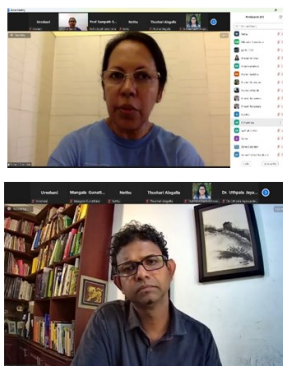


A webinar on "Plant Responses to Water Stress: From Gene to Genetic Engineering" was organized by the SLAAS-Section D in collaboration with the Centre for Plant Materials and Herbal Products Research - University of Sri Jayewardenepura. It was conducted by Dr. Rinukshi Wimalasekara of the Department of Botany, Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024 from 6–7 pm.



### Panel Discussions on Ethics in Animal Sciences

A panel discussion on "Ethics of Research involving Wild animals and Lab animals" was held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 via Zoom. It was organized as a collaborative event by SLAAS-Section D with the Sri Lanka Association for Laboratory Animal Science (SLALAS).



### An awareness programme on "Preventable tragedies: Raising awareness on Avoidable Deaths"

The programme was held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 at the Horizon campus Malabe. It was jointly organized by SLAAS-Section D, University of Colombo, and Sri Lanka Water Partnership. Resource persons were Senior Prof. Deepthi Wickramasinghe, and Dr. Devanmini Halwatura of the Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences of the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo.



### Talk on 'Mobilizing Voices and agency of children and youth for planetary health.'

The talk was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024 at the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo and the speaker was Dr. Julie Trafford, School of Public Health and Interdisciplinary studies, Auckland University of Technology. This event was jointly organized by Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences and Section D, SLAAS.



## Section E2

### Seminars

#### A seminar on "Complex Halide Perovskites"

As the first event of the Section E2/ SLAAS, a seminar was organized in showcasing the achievements of a Sri Lankan chemist, Prof. Hemamala Karunadasa, who is an Associate Professor of Chemistry at Stanford University and a Senior Fellow at the Pre-court Institute for Energy. This event was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, 2023 at 12:30 pm in the Physics Lecture Theatre of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in collaboration with the Chemical Society (Chem Soc) of the Department of Chemistry, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. During her lecture, Prof. Karunadasa described the principles of halide perovskites, highlighting the synthesis and properties of some of key halide perovskites discovered by her research group. Furthermore, Prof. Karunadasa also shared her experience as an undergraduate and graduate in chemistry, which motivated fresh graduates and undergraduates to pursue their higher studies in chemistry. The seminar was successfully held with over fifty participants and was followed by a Q&A session. It was truly a wonderful inspirational experience for the future Sri Lankan Chemists. This event was coordinated by Dr. Laksiri Weerasinghe, the President of Section E2/ SLAAS.



### Webinars

#### A webinar on "Ethical Concerns in Research: A human rights perspective".

The webinar was organized on the topic of "Ethical Concerns in Research: A human rights perspective" on 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 2024 at 3:30 pm via zoom. Prof. N. Selvakkumaran, a Professor from the School of Law, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology and the former Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, served as the resource person for this event. During his speech he elaborated the concepts of ethics, morality, justice and law on human rights perspectives. This event was coordinated by Dr. Charitha Jayaruk, an Executive Committee Member of the Section E2/ SLAAS.

#### A Webinar on "Unveiling the Invisible: A journey into seeing atoms and molecules"

The webinar was organized in collaboration with the Buckyball Society of the Open University of Sri Lanka. Dr. Rangana Warshanamage from the Department of Scientific Computing, Science and Technology Facilities Council, Harwell, Oxford and the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, was invited as the resource person. The event was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2024 at 7:00 pm via zoom. During the talk, Dr. Rangana explained how X-ray crystallographic and cryo-electron spectroscopic data in combination with computational modelling simulations can be used to predict the unseen interactions between many biologically important molecules. Further, Dr. Warshanamage gave some insights to the young undergraduates with his career journey. It was a truly inspirational session for many students and also early career researchers who are looking for opportunities to prosper in their career in scientific research. This event was coordinated by Dr. Sanjeewa Rodrigo, an Executive Committee Member of the Section E2/ SLAAS.



#### A webinar on "Impact of microplastics on soil and plant health"

The webinar on the topic of "Impact of microplastics on soil and plant health" was held on the 03<sup>rd</sup> of April, 2024 at 6:30 pm via zoom. Dr. Surani Chathurika from the Department of Urban Bioresources, University of Sri Jayewardenepura was participated as the resource person. This event was organized in collaboration with Environmental Committee of SLAAS and the GCRF Agriplastic project. During her talk she elaborated the fate of microplastics originating from mulching agro practices in different areas in Sri Lanka, emphasizing their impact on soil characteristics and plant growth. It was a very successful webinar with a few participants from overseas too. This event was coordinated by Dr. Laksiri Weerasinghe, the President of Section E2/ SLAAS.



## Section E3

### Seminars

#### Cybersecurity Seminar: "The Digital Tightrope: Strengthening Cyber Resilience for Modern Industrial Operations"

National Science Foundation, SLAAS (Section E3), University of Sri Jayawardhanapura, and the Sri Lanka Chapter of the IEEE Computer Society collaborated to organize a Cybersecurity Seminar titled "The Digital Tightrope: Strengthening Cyber Resilience for Modern Industrial Operations" on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024, from 3–4 pm at the Prof. Munasinghe Auditorium, FMSC University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Dr. Malka N. Halgamuge, Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Cyber Security Research and Innovation (CCSRI) at RMIT University, Melbourne, conducted the session. With her expertise in IoTs, Data Communications, Cybersecurity, Blockchain, and Machine Learning, Dr. Halgamuge provided valuable insights into bolstering cyber resilience in contemporary industrial settings. Attendees had the opportunity to learn from an esteemed expert in the field and explore innovative strategies for navigating the complexities of cybersecurity in the digital age.



#### Cybersphere'24 - Cyber Security Tech-Talk Series

On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024, SLAAS (Section E3), Edith Cowan University – Australia, IEEE Computer Society Sri Lanka Chapter, and University of Sri Jayewardenepura collaborated to organize CYBERSPHERE'24 - CYBER SECURITY TECH-TALK at the Ven. Soratha Auditorium, Department of Information & Communication Technology, Faculty of Technology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. The event delved into the critical topic of "Live Demo of a Website Compromise, Simple Errors Equal Serious Consequences." Esteemed guest speakers included Professor Paul Haskell-Dowland, Professor of Cyber Security Practice at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia, Dr. Lochandaka Ranathunga, IEEE Computer Society chair and Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Information Technology, University of Moratuwa; and Dr. Supunmali Ahangama, President of SLAAS E3 (Computer Science) section and Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Information Technology, University of Moratuwa. Attendees had the opportunity to gain valuable insights and witness live demonstrations highlighting the importance of cybersecurity measures.



Later on the same day, an insightful Cybersecurity Career Guidance Session took place, covering essential topics including Cybersecurity Career Options, Industry Required Skills, Setting up CV, Setting up LinkedIn, and Preparing for an Interview. Conducted by AION Cyber Security (Pvt), the session featured experienced speakers Mr. Charith De Alwis (Tech Lead) and Mr. Vinuka Senadeera (Business Analyst). The session provided attendees with practical guidance and expert advice to navigate the complexities of the cybersecurity field and pave the way for a fulfilling career in the industry.

#### Talk: Conducting Research Targeting High Profile Q1 International Conferences: Examples from AI Conferences

SLAAS (Section E3), in collaboration with SLIIT, IEEE Sri Lanka Section, and National Science Foundation (NSF) has hosted a talk titled "Conducting Research Targeting High Profile Q1 International Conferences: Examples from AI Conferences" on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at SLIIT - Malabe. The session provided invaluable guidance on preparing and presenting research at leading international AI conferences. Prof. Saman Halgamuge and Dr. Tamasha Malepathirana from the AI, Optimization, and Pattern Recognition Research Group at the University of Melbourne, Australia, shared their expertise. The event was held in a hybrid mode, combining physical and virtual participation, which ensured accessibility to a wider audience. Attendees gained insights into effective strategies for targeting prestigious conferences, enhancing their research impact on a global scale.



#### Article to "Vidusara" Science Magazine

A scientific article was published in "Vidusara" Science Magazine by Dr. Nuwan Kodagoda and Ms. Narmada Gamage during the month of April 2024.

### "Artificial Intelligence" workshop for school students

SLAAS (Section E3) successfully organized a one-day workshop titled "Artificial Intelligence" on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Aimed at students in grades 9 to 11 eager to deepen their understanding on AI, the event received generous collaboration and support from JRC Software company, both technically and financially. Held at Taxila Central College, Horana,



from 8 am to 5 pm, the workshop featured distinguished resource persons including Dr. Supunmali Ahangama, Dr. Lochandaka Ranathunga, Mr. Chamila Karunathilaka, Ms. Suresha Perera, and Mr. Priyantha from SLAAS Section E3, along with Ms. Sandunika (Faculty of Information Technology, University of Moratuwa), and Prof. Buddhika Jayasekara (Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Moratuwa). Ap-



proximately 60 students from various schools in the Horana educational zone actively participated in the engaging sessions and practical demonstrations.

### Crossword puzzle to "Vidusara" Science Magazine

A crossword puzzle related to ICT aimed at students from grades 6 to 9 was published in the month of March (by Dr. Supunmali Ahangama) and April (by Ms. Suresha Perera).

## Section F

### Forum discussions

Dr. Menuka Udugama and Dr. Dilanthi Koralagama represented Section F at the Virtual International Forum on Climate Change and Food Security in February 2024. This forum, organized by the Observer Research Foundation, brought together experts and researchers from various fields to discuss the challenges and potential solutions regarding climate change impacts on food security. The participation of our esteemed members demonstrates Section F's commitment to global scientific collaboration and addressing pressing environmental issues.

### Workshops

Section F actively contributed to a workshop titled "Teaching as Research: Integrating Teaching, Learning, and Research in Higher Education." This workshop was organized by the Staff Development Unit of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, in collaboration with Section F. The event, held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024, was conducted *via* Zoom by Dr. Thilini Rupasinghe, Adjunct Professor at Bucknell University, Pennsylvania, United States. Participants, including several esteemed academics, engaged in fruitful discussions on integrating research into teaching practices, aiming to enhance the quality of higher education in Sri Lanka.

**TEACHING AS RESEARCH:**  
Integrating Teaching, Learning and Research in Higher Education

Resource Person  
Dr Thilini Rupasinghe  
Adjunct Professor  
Bucknell University  
Pennsylvania  
United States

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024  
From 7.30- 8.30 PM

Meeting ID: 989 8636 8528  
Passcode: sdu@feb24

Organized By,  
The Staff Development Unit of the Faculty of  
Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya in collaboration with  
Section F of Sri Lankan Association of Advancement of Science (SLAAS).



## Environment Committee

### A walk for PET bottles

An awareness walk was organized by Dr. Ureshani Karunaratna around the premises of SLAAS headquarters on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024. The main aim was to inform nearby organizations such as the National Institute of Business Management, National Science Foundation, Institute of Engineers Sri Lanka, and Ministry of Disaster Management about the PET bottle collection bin placed in front of the SLAAS office. EC members were warmly welcomed by all those organisations who readily agreed to join this worthy cause.



### Workshop series on "Statistics for Biologists"

The first session of the workshop series on "Statistics for Biologists" was successfully held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 at the SLAAS headquarters. This was organized in collaboration with SLAAS section D as a fundraising event for the SLAAS sections. The first workshop was on "Fundamentals of Statistics" in which a free statistical software was introduced to the young researchers. All the participants were completely engaged in this very interactive workshop.



### The Chemical Watch Magazine

Abstracts were called for the next issue of Chemical Watch Magazine organized in collaboration with EC and Central Environmental Justice (CEJ). The theme of the issue was the toxic material of children's toy products.



### Marine Harmony - Phase I Beach Cleanup Programme

A successful beach cleanup programme, "Marine Harmony - Phase I," was successfully held on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024, at Browns Beach, Negombo. Dr. Medha Gunaratna led the event in collaboration with the Humane Society of the University of Kelaniya and SLAAS EC. Special assistance was provided by Negombo Police Station and the Municipal Council of Negombo for the event. The Marine Harmony programme will continue with the aim of nurturing marine habitats across Sri Lanka.



## General Research Committee

### Workshops

The first workshop was for early career researchers and academics on “Unlock the World of Research and Academia - a Workshop for early career researchers and academics”. This was organized by GRC in collaboration with SLIIT, the staff development committee. Prof. Asanga Ratnaweera, Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Peradeniya conducted this as a half-day workshop at the SLAAS Auditorium, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024. It was a fee-levying event with the participation of more than 30 early career academics. This event was coordinated by Prof. Shiromi Karunaratne and Dr. Kumudu Seneviratna.

A workshop entitled “Workshop on Crafting Your Research Proposal: An Activity-Based Approach” was organized by GRC in collaboration with SLIIT, the student development committee. Prof. M.N. Kaumal and Prof. Chamari Hettiarachchi from the Department of Chemistry, University of Colombo were the resource persons for this event, and it was conducted as a half a day workshop at the Faculty of Engineering Auditorium, SLIIT Malabe on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024. It was a well-attended event with the participation of more than 260 undergraduates, graduates, and academics. The participants engaged in developing a research proposal using the activity book written by the presenters. This event was coordi-

nated by Prof. Shiromi Karunaratne.



Another workshop on “Unlocking impact: Elevating your UG/PG/Industry research beyond the Thesis” was organized by SLAAS section C in collaboration with GRC on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024, from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm at the SLAAS Headquarters. Prof. Mahesh Jayaweera and Dr. Dhanushka Udanga were the resource persons for this workshop. There were 15 participants including undergraduate and post-graduate students and academic staff members. This

workshop was organized by Dr. Madusha Ishanthi Sudasinghe.



### A seminar on Scientific Writing: Guidelines for Undergraduate Research and Effective Communication

The seminar was organized by Section C of SLAAS in collaboration with the Faculty of Technology, University of Colombo and the General Research Committee of SLAAS. The resource person for this seminar was Dr. Anushka Upamali Rajapaksha from the Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. This seminar was held on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at the Faculty of Technology, University of Colombo with the participation of 52 undergraduate students. The seminar was organized by Dr. Madusha Ishanthi Sudasinghe.



# Committee for the Popularization of Science

## School Science Day Programmes

The first school science day programme organized by the CPS for the year 2024 was held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at SLIIT Pallekele premises. Around 250 School students representing 12 schools in the Kandy Education Zone participated in this programme. Students were able to listen to exciting presentations about various aspects of science. The programme included presentations on 'Identifying career opportunities for science students' conducted by Dr. Jayaruk Thambiliyagodage, 'Obesity' by Prof. Jayantha Welihinda, 'Domestic animal diseases' by Dr. Prasadi de Silva, and 'Introductory robotics' by Dr. Madhawa Herath and Mr. Bhanuka Dayawansa.

Gothami Balika Vidyalaya, Kandy and Seethadevi Balika Vidyalaya, Kandy were selected as the final contestants of the science quiz competition. After two exciting rounds, Seethadevi Balika Vidyalaya, Kandy emerged as the winners of the competition, and Gothami Balika Vidyalaya, Kandy won the second place. They will be awarded certificates at the ceremonial inauguration of the Annual Sessions of SLAAS in December 2024. The programme was organized as a collaboration between CPS, SLIIT-Pallekele, and Kandy Zonal Education office. Media coverage was given by Newsfirst. The event was coordinated by Dr. Nuwan Kodagoda and Mr. Bhanuka Dayawansa.

The next Science Day programme will be held in Aralaganwila, Polonnaruwa.



## Science Talks – Podcast Series

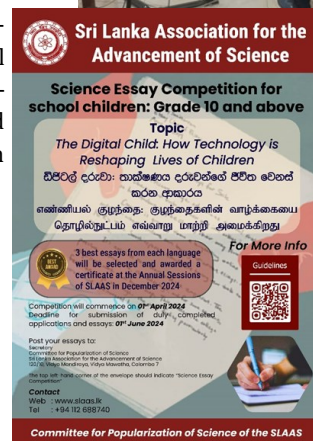
First three episodes of the Science Talks Podcast series presented by the CPS will be released soon on SLAAS YouTube channel. These podcasts were recorded on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at the Faculty of Science, University of Colombo with the technical assistance of FOS Media unit. Science Talks will present the lives of eminent Sri Lankan scientists, in the form of candid discussions hoping to inspire another generation of students, teachers, and general public. Prof. Chandana Jayaratne, Prof. Nalin de Silva, Prof. Rohini De Silva, and Prof. Sampath Seneviratne participated as the resource persons in the recorded episodes. Dr. Pasan Bandara hosted the podcasts. CPS hopes to continue the podcast series with a wide range of resource persons covering various aspects of science in the future.



## Science Essay Competition for school children 2024

CPS launched the Science Essay Competition 2024 on 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024. School students in grade 10 and above can now submit their essays under the title "The Digital Child: How Technology is Reshaping Lives of Children". Submissions will be accepted in all three languages and the three best essays in each language will be awarded at the SLAAS Annual Sessions. Further details about the competition can be found on SLAAS website. Dr. Sammera Samarasekara coordinates the essay competition.

Link: <https://test.slaas.lk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Newspaper-Advertistment-English.pdf>



## Committee for the Popularization of Science Cont....

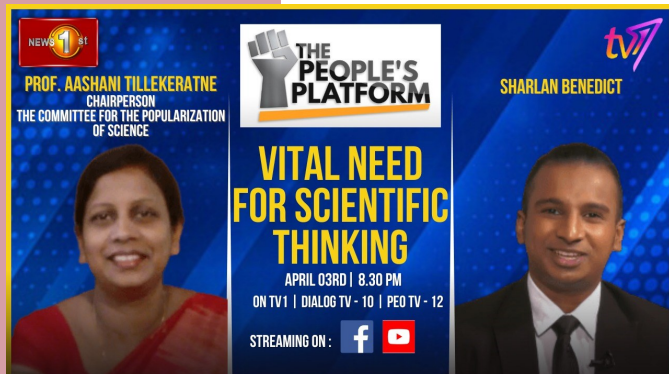
### Training programme for combined mathematics teachers – Sabaragamuwa Province

A Training programme for combined mathematics teachers was held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at the Education Training research and development Centre – Meneripitiya, Rathnapura. This programme was a collaborative effort of MetaHub, SLAAS-CPS, SLAAS-Section E1, and the Ministry of Education. Prof. Shelton Perera and Dr. Gaya Jayakody conducted the programme. Dr. Rajitha Silva coordinated the event from CPS. This is the sixth programme of the series and the organizers are planning to hold such trainings in all nine provinces.



### TV programme to make awareness about CPS and its activities

Chairperson, CPS was invited to the TV programme “People’s Platform” on Newsfirst TV1, which was telecasted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2024. Under the topic “Vital need for scientific thinking”, the Chairperson discussed the activities of CPS planned for the year 2024 while emphasizing on its signature activities, Nature Diaries and School Science Day programmes. The video is available at [https://www.youtube.com/live/93HEVup4jTs?si=rSRcXkVDsKKtD\\_8G](https://www.youtube.com/live/93HEVup4jTs?si=rSRcXkVDsKKtD_8G).



### YouTube Shorts

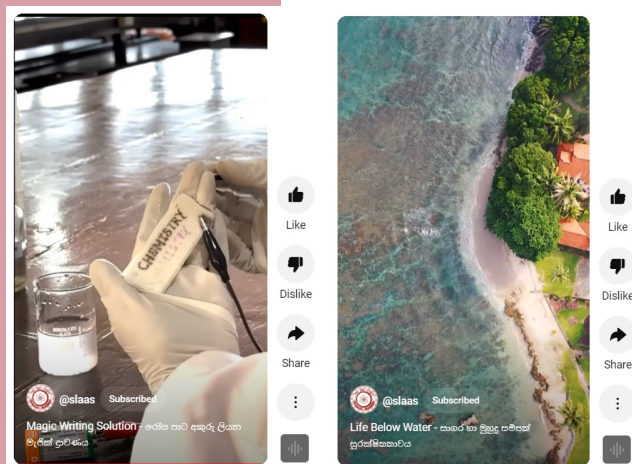
Two new YouTube Shorts were uploaded to the SLAAS YouTube channel. The videos can be viewed at the following links.

Magic writing solution

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/pH1cg1DSvsE>

Life Below Water

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/2RXxHHXUOB8>



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## Chapter News

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### Sabaragamuwa Chapter

#### Field training programme on 'Good Agricultural Practices'

*Conducted by SLAAS- Sabaragamuwa Chapter*

Sabaragamuwa Chapter of SLAAS organized and conducted a field training programme on 'Good Agricultural Practices' with the objective of assisting less-privileged farmers in remote areas. Nugegalayaya in Sewanagala is blessed with appropriate climate, fairly sufficient irrigation water and rich soil for low country vegetables, fruits and coconut cultivation. However, the farmers in this remote village are lacking new knowledge and technologies which are important for the sustainable development of their farm lands. This eight-day field training programme was conducted from 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 by visiting their own farms, with the help of staff members and a group of undergraduates of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. The training programme on 'Good Agricultural Practices' basically included responsible and economical use of pesticides, integrated management of pests and diseases, soil and moisture conservation measures, postharvest management of agricultural produce. The eight-day training programme ended with great satisfaction to all farmers (nearly 20) and the resource persons who participated in it.



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Or contact Dr Laksiri Weerasinghe (mobile: 0775401882)

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