



SLAAS

Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science

NEWSLETTER

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SLAAS and NASSL Partner to Rebuild Public Trust in Science

The Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS) and the National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka (NASSL) have launched a collaborative three-year initiative titled “Rebuild Trust in Science in Sri Lanka,” aimed at restoring public confidence in science and promoting innovation. The agreement was signed on 1st May 2025 by SLAAS General President Prof. Udeni Nawagamuwa and NASSL President Prof. Ajit Abeysekera, with NASSL pledging LKR 30 million to support the programme.

During Years 1 and 2, the focus will be on raising awareness and building capacity through a wide range of initiatives, including Science Day programmes, donations of lab equipment, undergraduate competitions, teacher training, hackathons, and innovation-focused workshops. These activities are designed to foster a culture of scientific inquiry and entrepreneurship among students and educators.

Year 3 will showcase the impact through five provincial or national conferences featuring student-led presentations, project exhibitions, expert panels, and public policy forums. This final phase aims to enhance visibility, promote stakeholder engagement, and align youth-led innovations with national development goals. This partnership marks a milestone in advancing science literacy and empowering the next generation of Sri Lankan scientists and innovators.

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Enhancing Science Education Through Lab Equipment Donations

The Laboratory Equipment and Consumables Donation Programme, led by SLAAS Section E2 with the Committee for Popularization of Science, aims to uplift under-resourced schools by improving their lab facilities. Following an open application process, 21 schools from 14 districts were selected. The first donation was ceremonially handed over to Embaraluwa Mihindu Kanishta Vidyalaya, Weliveriya, on 30th July 2025 at SLAAS Headquarters. The event was graced by distinguished guests from the Ministry of Education, SLAAS, NASSL, and funding partners. Supported by generous local and international donors, the programme promotes equitable access to quality science education across Sri Lanka.

Promoting Health and Science Awareness



SLAAS Section A conducted a series of impactful webinars, awareness sessions, and school-based activities from March to July 2025, reaching over 600 participants, including healthcare professionals, students, development officers, and the general public.

Six webinars were held via Zoom, starting with “Exploring Vitamin D Deficiency Among Adults in Sri Lanka” on 19th March, led by Dr. Ruwanika Seneviratne, with 109 participants. Other topics included Chronic Kidney Disease (Dr. Nadeeka Perera, 35 attendees), Orthodontic Health (Dr. Niroshana Gunatissa and Dr. Varshini Ragaganesh, 33 attendees), Injury Prevention (Dr. Samitha Siritunga, 40 attendees), Food Safety (Dr. Hemali Jayasekara, 35 attendees), and Chikungunya Updates (Dr. H.K.D. Kasun Prabasara, 44 attendees).

These were coordinated by Dr. Nimali Wijegoonewardene, Dr. Sinha de Silva, Dr. Rasika Ekanayaka, and others.

In collaboration with various institutions, several public awareness programmes were organized. Notably, “Yoga for Healthy Living” (20 participants), a public lecture on Natural Product Development by Prof. P.K. Perera, and a hands-on nutrition session for 35 cleaning staff at Wayamba University promoted practical knowledge and healthy living. Sexual health and HIV/AIDS awareness sessions reached over 170 participants, including 153 undergraduates.

School outreach included a medicinal plant home gardening workshop for 80 students at Samudra Devi Balika Vidyalaya, led by Prof. S.D. Hapuarachchi, and a food and nutrition literacy quiz at Daraluwa Maha Vidyalaya, coordinated by Dr. A.M.N.T. Adikari and Dr. Thilanka Ranathunga.

The Little Mycologist Program Inspires Future Scientists Across Sri Lanka



Hands-on science education, focus on mycology, outreach to rural schools, student assessments, awards for excellence, promoting research interest, regional engagement, and fostering young scientific talent.

Section B of SLAAS, in collaboration with the Committee for the Popularization of Science, successfully conducted The Little Mycologist Program, an initiative aimed at nurturing scientific curiosity and introducing school students to the fascinating field of mycology. Conceptualized and led by Prof. R. M. Dharmadasa, Past President of SLAAS Section B, the program was coordinated with the dedicated support of Ms. M.M. Nipunika and Ms. Dinusha Rathnayake.

The program reached 200 students from 16 schools across the Sabaragamuwa, Northwestern, and Uva provinces. Through hands-on learning and guided assessments, students explored fungal diversity, its ecological roles, and its significance in everyday life.

Following evaluations, 19 students were awarded Gold status, 17 Silver, and 8 Bronze for their outstanding performance. Notably, four schools from the Kegalle District stood out for their achievements. Kg/Dehi/Pallekanugala Kanista Vidyalaya received the highest number of Gold awards, followed by Newsmiyar Ihala Maha Vidyalaya, Haloluwa Kanista Vidyalaya, and Swarna Jayanthi Maha Vidyalaya.

Advancing Scientific Literacy Through Engineering and Technology



Section C hosted webinars, film screenings, international lectures, and workshops covering AI, sustainability, maritime security, and education technology to promote science and engineering literacy.

On 21st March 2025, Eng. (Dr) Rukshima Dabare from The Open University of Sri Lanka delivered a webinar on “Artificial Intelligence Techniques for Crop Science in Agriculture,” highlighting the role of AI in enhancing productivity and sustainability in agriculture.

Eng. (Dr) Gehan Anthonys led a session on 25th April 2025 titled “Tech for All,” focusing on inclusive technology for social equity.

A feature film screening on “Visual Pollution & Aesthetic Sustainability” was held on 15th March 2025, directed by Eng. (Dr) Chandana Kulasooriya, followed by a panel discussion featuring Eng. Pathali Champika Ranawaka and Eng. (Dr) Chandana Jayawardana.

On 23rd May 2025, Rear Admiral (Rtd) Eng. Wiraj Leelarathna conducted a webinar on Maritime Security and Domain Awareness. Dr. Poorna Vidanage presented “Microbial Black Boxes in Water Treatment” on 20th June 2025, showcasing bioinformatics in wastewater management.

Section C also contributed to a two-day teacher workshop on digital tools at the South Asian Centre for Teacher Development, Meepe, and partnered with the University of East London and London South Bank University for guest lectures on coastal infrastructure resilience.

Promoting Environmental Awareness and Action



A multidisciplinary workshop gathered 30 experts and stakeholders to find sustainable, community-focused solutions to human-wildlife conflict, emphasizing policy, education, and collaborative conservation.

A workshop on "Finding Sustainable Solutions for the Human-Wildlife Conflict" was held on 8th April 2025 at the HARTI Auditorium, organized collaboratively by the Institute of Biology Sri Lanka, SLAAS Section D, the Environmental Committee of SLAAS, and the National Science Foundation. Moderated by Dr. Kalinga Padmalal, the event featured a distinguished panel of experts including Prof. Sampath Seneviratne, Dr. Lukshman Pieris, Dr. Dulan Jayasekara, Prof. Chamalei Nahallage,

Dr. Shamen Vidanage, Prof. A.L. Sandika, Dr. Chathura de Silva, and Mr. Hemantha Withanage. The 30 participants engaged in rich dialogue on biodiversity, land use, environmental economics, and community-based conservation. The workshop emphasized cross-sector collaboration, urban-rural planning integration, and grassroots involvement to address escalating human-wildlife conflict. Sirasa TV provided media coverage, helping disseminate key insights to a wider audience. The workshop had a strong impact on shaping future strategies through expert input and stakeholder engagement, marking a vital step toward sustainable coexistence with wildlife.

Empowering Minds Through Science and Technology



Section E1 delivered dynamic workshops across Python, mathematics, computational science, and teacher training, impacting hundreds of students, educators, and professionals to enhance scientific capability nationwide.

The three-day online workshop on Data Analysis with Python (17–19 March), coordinated by Dr. W. A. M. Madhavi, featured Mr. Milash Hyen, a Computational Physics graduate, mentoring seven participants in foundational Python techniques.

On 2 April, to mark International Mathematics Day, a training for 35 Directors of Science, Maths, and IT from the Central Province was delivered by Dr. A.K. Amarasinghe, emphasizing research education and leadership.

A virtual outreach on 16 May for over 50 students, parents, and educators, featuring Prof. Wasantha Daundasekera, Prof. Gehan Jayasuriya, and Dr. (Eng.) Pasan Bandara;

A Teacher Training in Nuclear Science & Astronomy on 18 June for 4 A/L teachers, led by Dr. Muditha Bandara and Dr. Janaka Adassuriya;

A two-day Science for Technology training (19–20 July) for around 100 A/L teachers in the North-Western Province, coordinated by Dr. Gaya Jayakody with Prof. Chamari Hettarachchi, Dr. Rajitha M Silva, and Dr. Vikum Premalal;

Dr. A.K. Amarasinghe, in collaboration with Section E1, organized two successful mathematics workshops: one on matrices for O/L students at Uruwala Kanishta Vidyalaya on 19th May 2025, and another on complex numbers for A/L students on 23rd June 2025 at the Gurudeniya Training Centre, engaging around 60 students.

A probability workshop on 25 June in Minuwangoda with 276 students and 11 teachers led by Dr. Rajitha M. Silva.

On 7 April, a Science Education Programme at St. Mary's College, Hambantota, benefited 100 A/L and O/L students and teachers, featuring experts Prof. Jayantha Welihinda, Dr. Gaya Jayakody, Dr. Pasan Bandara, Dr. Supunmali, and IEEE representatives.

A Probability Workshop on 9 April at Isipathana College drew 75 A/L Combined Mathematics students, led by Dr. Rajitha M. Silva, Dr. Chitraka Wickramarachchi, and Mr. Thilina Withanage.

A five-day advanced DFT Workshop (20–24 April) at the University of Colombo attracted 24 attendees (17 undergraduates, 4 postgraduates, 3 academics), facilitated by international experts Dr. Prasenjit Ghosh, Prof. V. Srinivasan, Dr. Wasanthi de Silva, and Dr. Laalitha Liyanage.

On 23 April, 140 Combined Mathematics A/L students attended a one-day session at Dhammissara National College led by Dr. Rajitha M. Silva.

Fostering Chemistry and Science Careers



March to July 2025, SLAAS Section E2 hosted a diverse array of seminars, competitions, workshops, and online events to nurture scientific learning, collaboration, and professional development.

On 30 March, Prof. Pathirage Kamal Perera led a seminar on “Recent Advances in Natural Product Development” at the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon, drawing over 70 students. The session was coordinated by Dr. S. Ranmal Gunatilake.

The Inter-University Undergraduate Poster Competition on 24 May saw participation from 9 universities, themed around Nanotechnology in Textiles and Chemistry’s Role in Economic Development. Awards included thematic honors and Green Poster Awards for environmental excellence.

On 3 June, Prof. Indika Arachchige from Virginia Commonwealth University delivered an engaging webinar on “Nanoscale Materials for Optical, Electronic, and Energy Applications,” with over 80 participants.

The Inter-University Chemistry Quiz held its preliminary round on 14 June with 9 institutions and culminated in a final round on 5 July, where the Institute of Chemistry Ceylon emerged champion.

Section E2 launched the ChemXplorer Workshop on 28 June for 27 young learners (aged 10–14), featuring fun, interactive chemistry experiments.

On 8 July, a workshop at Maliyadeva College covered electrochemistry and career pathways, led by Prof. Hasini Perera and Dr. Duleepa Pathiraja.

A CPD workshop on 12 July guided 25 academic members on teaching, research, and ethics, supported by a panel of distinguished educators.

A seminar titled “Academic Journey of an Analytical Chemist” was delivered by Prof. Sanjeewa Gamagedara on 2nd July at NSBM Green University, attracting over 100 attendees.

The YouTube discussion series debuted on 16 June, featuring Prof. Udeni Nawagamuwa discussing equal opportunities in chemical sciences.

Finally, on 26 July, a Laboratory Safety Workshop presented best practices by Drs. Sumudu Mapa, Rohan Dassanayake, and Sankalya Ambagaspitiya, followed by a Donation Programme enhancing school lab facilities on 30 July.

<https://www.slaas.lk>

Advancing Digital Literacy and Career Skills



Section E3 empowered over 1,600 participants through AI, cloud computing, research, and IT career workshops, enhancing skills and digital literacy from school to professional levels.

SLAAS Section E3 delivered a series of impactful educational and professional development activities from April to July 2025, reaching over 1,600 participants across schools, universities, and professional bodies.

On 7th April, Prof. N. Kodagoda conducted a workshop for 53 professionals of the Ceylon Association of Shipping Agents on Generative AI Tools in the Workplace, offering insights into AI's practical applications.

That same day, a Science Education Program was held at St. Mary's National College, Hambantota, organized by Dr. L. Ranathunga with support from IEEE-CSSL and SLIIT, benefiting schoolteachers and students.

Section E3 launched a Career Readiness Workshop Series, beginning with:

- Workshop 1 on 9th July, drawing 300+ students (plus 100 via livestream), led by Ms. Shashiprabha Dangalla (IFS).
- Workshop 2 on 16th July focused on CV/LinkedIn building, attracting 450+ attendees.
- Workshop 3 on 23rd July, led by IFS professionals, highlighted diverse IT career paths to 400+ students.

Other highlights included:

- An AI workshop for 250 schoolchildren (28th May),
- A SmartPLS research workshop with 106 participants (7th July),
- Several teacher training workshops at Meepe, each attended by 15–30 educators, enhancing digital and blended learning pedagogy. These initiatives were primarily organized by Ms. Suresha Nilmini Perera, Dr. Pradeep Kalansooriya, and Ms. Samadara Amarasinghe.

Building Knowledge and Preventing Harm from Financial Awareness to Heritage Preservation



SLAAS Section F hosted webinars on financial literacy, qualitative research, higher education policy, and 3D artifact documentation, reaching over 200 participants across diverse academic fields.

On 28th April, the Financial Literacy Awareness Webinar titled “Be a Vigilant Customer: Avoid Pyramid Schemes” was delivered by Dr. Chatura Liyanage of the University of Kelaniya. Around 50 participants gained crucial insights into identifying financial scams and avoiding fraudulent investment traps.

On 7th May, Prof. H.A.K.N.S. Surangi conducted a lecture titled “Seeing Beyond Numbers: A Journey into Qualitative Exploration”, attracting 115 attendees. This webinar offered practical guidance on qualitative research methods.

A thought-provoking seminar on “Funding and Policy in Higher Education” was held on 19th May with Prof. Sumathy Sivamohan and Prof. Shyamala Kumar, engaging 15 participants in policy dialogue.

Finally, on 11th July, Eng. Anuradha Piyadasa introduced cutting-edge methods in “3D Documentation of Artifacts” through live demonstrations, enriching participants’ understanding of digital heritage preservation.

SLAAS : GRC

RCSOTL 2025

The GRC's Research Conference on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (RCSOTL) 2025 conference and workshops advanced research in pedagogy, assessment, and digital education, empowering educators and researchers across disciplines and institutions.



ACTIVITY SUMMARY

The General Research Committee (GRC), in collaboration with the University of Kelaniya, successfully hosted the Research Conference on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (RCSOTL) 2025 on 27th June 2025. Held under the theme “Exploring New Frontiers: Advancing Research in Teaching and Learning Excellence”, the conference featured scholarly papers across three categories: Teaching and Learning Methodologies, Assessment and Evaluation, and Digital Education. Preceding the event were three impactful workshops led by Prof. H.A.K.N.S. Surangi, Dr. Thilini Rupasinghe, and Prof. Wathsala Madawala, held in May 2025.

Additionally, a joint SmartPLS SEM workshop with Section E3 on 7th July attracted wide participation from both academia and industry.



RCSOTL 2025

<https://conf.kln.ac.lk/rcstl>



RCSOTL
RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

<https://www.slaas.lk>

Inspiring Young Minds Through Science for a Sustainable Future.

The Science Popularization Committee (CPS) of SLAAS, in collaboration with the National Academy of Sciences Sri Lanka (NASSL), organized a series of impactful "School Science Day" programs across multiple regions, reaching over 620 students from 40+ schools.



The 2nd Science Day was held on 9th May 2025 at Attanayala Maha Vidyalaya, Hambantota, with participation from 8 regional schools and nearly 200 students. Science lectures, AI and leadership sessions, robotics demonstrations, and quizzes were delivered by experts including Prof. Udeni Nawagamuwa, Prof. Jayantha Welihinda, and Dr. Gihani Jayaweera. Gonadeniya Maha Vidyalaya won the quiz competition.

The 3rd Science Day, held at Zahira College, Anuradhapura on 20th June, engaged 220 students from 6 schools. Hon. Governor Mr. Wasantha Jinadasa and SLAAS officials attended. Anuradhapura Central College emerged quiz champions.

The 4th Science Day at SLIIT Kandy Campus on 18th July, hosted 200+ students from 18 schools. Activities included motivational talks, fitness sessions, and robotics hands-on workshops. Prof. Susima Weligamage, Dr. Kamalanath Samarakoon, and others led sessions.

Additionally, public talks, a science outreach session at St. Mary's College, and the Little Mycologist Program in three provinces further expanded CPS's reach and impact.

SLAAS CPS organized School Science Days, outreach programs, and public talks, engaging over 600 students island-wide to promote STEM education through hands-on learning and expert guidance.

<https://www.slaas.lk>



Fostering Environmental Stewardship Through Education, Action, and Sustainable Solutions.



The SLAAS Environmental Committee organized discussions, cleanups, school programs, and workshops, promoting environmental awareness, green entrepreneurship, and sustainability across Sri Lanka in 2025.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

A panel discussion titled “Finding Sustainable Solutions for Human-Wildlife Conflict in Sri Lanka” was held on 8th April at HARTI, coordinated by Dr. Devanmini Halwatura in collaboration with IOBSL, NSF, HARTI, and Section D.

A beach cleanup at Wellawatta Beach on 26th April, organized by Dr. Ureshani Karunarathna and Parley TV, drew student and volunteer participation.

On 5th June, World Environment Day was celebrated at Harischandra College, led by Dr. Menuka Udugama and Prof. Bandunee Athapattu. Additional initiatives included community workshops, environmental education programs, and tree planting across multiple regions.



SLAAS Ethics Committee

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A seminar on Ethical Issues Arising from Emerging Trends in Biotechnology was held on 18th July 2025 in hybrid mode at the SLAAS Auditorium and via Zoom. Prof. Athula Perera highlighted ethical concerns in the safe application of rDNA technology in Sri Lanka, including ecological risks, health impacts, and equitable access. Prof. Saroj Jayasinghe discussed the ethical dilemmas of dual-use research, where scientific advancements can serve both constructive and harmful purposes. Both speakers underscored the urgent need for a well-defined ethical framework to guide biotechnology research in Sri Lanka, ensuring safety, transparency, and public trust in scientific innovation.

Exploring ethical challenges in biotechnology, with a focus on dual-use research and rDNA applications, emphasizing the need for a strong ethical framework in Sri Lanka.

The SLAAS Eastern Chapter conducted several impactful initiatives in mid-2025.

SLAAS

Eastern Chapter



The Eastern Chapter launched an Undergraduate Research Proposal Writing Competition for science stream students at both Eastern and South Eastern Universities, with winners to be announced at the AGM in November 2025.

Eastern Chapter conducted workshops on beekeeping and AI, and launched a student research competition for Eastern and South Eastern Universities, fostering academic growth and innovation.

Beekeeping

"Beekeeping" was held on 21st May in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Batticaloa, and CENSARM, Faculty of Agriculture, Eastern University, Sri Lanka. Prof. R.F. Niranjana, Professor in Agricultural Entomology, served as the resource person.

AI

On 2nd June, Dr. M.A.C. Akmal Jahan, President of Section E3, led a well-attended workshop on Artificial Intelligence for undergraduates at the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka.

The Sabaragamuwa Chapter of SLAAS organized a series of impactful community-focused programs in mid-2025.

SLAAS

S a b a r a g a m u w a C h a p t e r



A workshop on floristry for over 30 flower growers was held on 19th June in Balangoda to boost profitability in floral enterprises.



Sabaragamuwa Chapter held GAP farmer training, a school outreach on nature, and a floristry workshop, empowering rural communities through sustainable agriculture and educational initiatives.

GAP

A 10-day Farmer Training Program on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) was held from 16th to 26th May in Manewa village, Anuradhapura, led by Senior Prof. A.A.Y. Amarasinghe and Prof. G.D. Kapila Kumara, with strong support from students and staff of the Sabaragamuwa University's Faculty of Agricultural Sciences.

Growing with Nature

On 22nd May, the team conducted a school outreach program titled "Growing with Nature" at Manewa Primary School, promoting environmental learning and cultural heritage.