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Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013

CYF9

10/11/2013

"Dancefloor Diplomacy"



Heads or Tails

#CYF2013

CYF2013 BEGINS



COMMONWEALTH YOUTH FORUM
2013
HAMBANTOTA
SRI LANKA



CYF2013 Begins !

Giving a platform for energetic and vibrant discussions plus many colourful entertaining stuff among friendly interactions, the 9th Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF9) was inaugurated yesterday in a grand scale at the newly opened state-of-the-art Magam Ruhunupura International Convention Centre (MRICC) in Siribopura, Hambantota with the participation of many young delegates from Commonwealth countries across the world.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, First Lady Shiranthi Rajapaksa and Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma graced the occasion as the Chief Guests of this outstanding event of the world calendar.

The CYF9 inauguration marked the beginning of the official agenda of the entire course of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2013 proudly hosted by Sri Lanka. CYF9 is also the first global youth forum ever held in Sri Lanka.

The gathering will unveil the spirit and harmony of Commonwealth Youth in the days to come. The dazzling welcome dance performed by Sri Lanka youth dance crew on the title "Pilgrimage to Sri Pada" depicted the peaceful religious co-existence in the country. Furthermore an inspiring performance on Michael Jackson's famous song "Heal the World" by "Sihinaya Sri Lankan Youth" team comprised of a group of youth with disabilities and the colourful dance item by Sri Lanka Youth at the winding up made the inauguration a memorable experience for the participants.

Youth Affairs and Skills Development Minister and Co-Chair of the CYF Steering Committee Dullas Allahapperuma delivered the welcome address, followed by a speech of Youth Led Task Force Co-Chair Ellie Seckold. The Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma and President Mahinda Rajapaksa made inspiring speeches. Youth Led Task Force Member Aruthra Rajasingham delivered the vote of thanks. The inauguration was followed by a lunch hosted by President Rajapaksa in the honour of Commonwealth Youth Forum delegates.

The forum discussions revolve around the theme "Inclusive Development: Stronger Together". The formal sessions of CYF commenced after the lunch. Despite cross cultural differences and socio-economic disparities, the youth were seen engaging in lively discussions on many challenges surrounding the youth during the formal sessions. The biannual forum provides a platform for youth leaders across the Commonwealth to exchange ideas and cultures, to build skills and networks and to work towards identifying the most vital challenges and opportunities facing young people today.

Foreign delegates to the CYF were accorded a warm welcome at the Ranminithenna Tele-Cinema Park on Saturday night. The welcome reception consisted of a "Perahera" (cultural procession) and a cultural show. Minister Alahapperuma, Co-Chair of the CYF Steering Committee and UPFA MP Namal Rajapaksa and many distinguished guests presided the occasion.

Nipuni Wimalapala

The first thematic session for the Commonwealth Youth Forum included a discussion on Youth and the Post 2015 development agenda. The panel consisted of Mr. Ravi Karkara (UNHABITAT, UMNC and Advisor to the World Conference on Youth 2014), Mr. Lloyd Russell Moyle (Vice President of the European Youth Forum), Ms. Esther Eshiet (Youth representative for the High-level Panel on Post 2015) and Dr. Saman Kalegama (Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies in Sri Lanka). The session was moderated by Ms. Katherine Ellis, Director of Youth Affairs at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Delivering the keynote speech, Mr. Ravi Karkara highlighted the importance and the need of youth participation, deliberating that the 'time is now'. Reflecting on the MYWORLD survey that is currently being conducted by the United Nations, he talked with appreciation as to how young people have actively contributed towards the survey, raising their voices and making sure that what matters to them are heard. He further mentioned the importance of a solid goal on youth devel-

opment and the importance of proper structures and mechanism to ensure youth participation in matters of national, regional and international interest. These structures should not be kept at only the formulation level, but should truly be implemented.

Ravi Karkara also spoke on the World Conference on Youth, which is to be held in Sri Lanka in 2014, highlighting its importance and relevance to youth participation. He claimed that this is indeed the 'best time' for such a Conference due to many reasons, one being the Synthesis Reports that is produced by the United Nations Secretary General in the year 2014. He was of the view that the World Conference on Youth 2014 will be an ideal platform for youth all over the world to come together and to be included in a truly inter-generational and an inclusive dialogue as to what they want to see in the future.

Mr. Lloyd Russell-Moyle then took the stage and focused on how important it is to have a universal development agenda, so that no one is left behind. He further elaborated on how the to-be-formed Commonwealth Youth

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Youth in Post 2015



Council should take the responsibility of being the voice of the entire youth population of the Commonwealth and encouraged them to take part in more discussions not as individuals, but as the Commonwealth. He also encouraged the young participants to come and take part in the World Conference on Youth 2014.

Ms. Esther Eshiet delivered a practical and passionate expression of youth participations. She highlighted that no process towards youth empowerment can go forward if the youth themselves are not truly interested and engaged in the process. Further, she also discussed how important it is that this process be collaborative, inclusive and useful to all young persons in general.

Dr. Kalegama presented a careful analysis on how Sri Lanka has progressed in the Millennium Development

Goals. As was discussed by him, Sri Lanka has customized the conventional MDGs to suit the youth and their needs, and has tried to ensure that youth of the country are benefitted through the progression. He strongly stated that all Nations must take utmost efforts to mainstream youth in to their respective development agendas at all times.

The first plenary session came to an end with a Question and Answer Session, wherein the young delegates were given an opportunity to clarify any doubts and gain further information.

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HEADS or

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Chapa Perera

She is highly energetic and quite excited heading to the

very first session of the 9th Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013. She is Clare Barrell, a youth delegate from United Kingdom. Clare is a graduate and has completed her Masters as well. She revealed the challenges she faced in her education career in an interview with CYF9.



Q - What are the main challenges you have faced within your academic career?

A - Actually the main issue I faced was funding. I went through difficulties since it's expensive and I had to pay it myself. I took a huge loan to carry on my higher education and still I'm paying it. Of course it is an interest free one but it is hard. The biggest barrier we go through is this funding process since we are not offered with free education.

Q - Are you allowed to choose the field you want to excel in education?

A - Yah, there are many options for the students. Those who get through the main exam of school are allowed to choose either university or any other technical college based on the results. Most of the courses are practical and employment based.

Q - Is there any compulsory area in your education system?

A - Schooling is compulsory for every child till 16 in UK. When it comes to higher education, it depends on your performance.

Q - Are there competitive exams in UK's education process?

A - There is a competitive exam at the age of 18. But it never means that you should score more than others. And nobody is going to underestimate even if you score less since it is believed that children learn individually and everybody is talented in a certain area.

Q - Do you think that you have achieved what you really wanted in education?

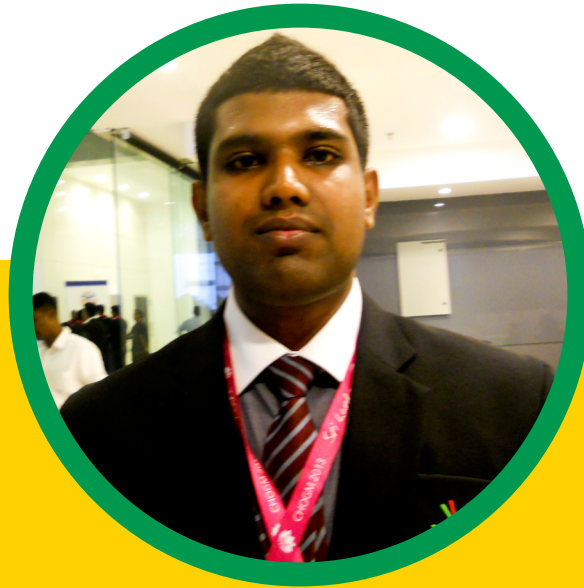
A - I am very passionate about what I do. But I wish I had more opportunities to widen my knowledge. I love learning and at the moment I am happy with my career.



TAILS

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A vibrant young personality, Sandun Athulathmudali is a Sri Lankan delegate to the CYF who is eagerly waiting to experience the precious platform created by CYF 2013. He is a BSc graduate in Facilities Management at University of Moratuwa. He disclosed his perspective on his education career to CYF9.



Q - What are the main challenges you have faced within your academic career?

A - This education system does not have the required practical approach to make youth employed with devoting careers. It is basically about theories and books. I believe that it should be equipped in a more practical manner.

Q - Are you allowed to choose the field you want to excel in education?

A - We just have to follow the given 4 streams which have been existing for decades. We need to change with the world. We need technical and social science related subjects plus more language learning opportunities. Education should be given in a vibrant manner to go with the world.

Q - Is there any compulsory area in your education system?

A - Yes. We are supposed to go through compulsory exams such as Grade five Scholarship exam and Ordinary Level Exam. School education is compulsory for every child.

Q - Are there competitive exams in Sri Lankan education process?

Yes. There is a huge competition in Sri Lankan education since very few students are given the opportunity to enter the university. Most of the exams are quite competitive and students are pressured by parents.

Q - Do you think that you have achieved what you really wanted in education?

I am happy with what I am today. But still I wish I could improve my extracurricular activities while engaged in academic things. However I am very much grateful to the free education system remain in Sri Lanka. We are offered fully free government education. I became a graduate without spending a single rupee.

HOT SEAT

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1). When was your last visit to Hambantota and how far has it developed since the preparation for CHOGM?

My last visit was three months ago when I came to visit the new harbour and wow, it has changed a lot since then. The general infrastructure and the roads and such are just amazing.

2). How did you get involved in the Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013?

Well, I saw a few advertisements on the internet calling for delegates to attend the forum and yeah, I just applied. After a tedious wait of three months, I was finally selected!

3). What would be your main focus in attending this conference?

I'm a person who loves to meet new people and this conference has given me the opportunity to mingle and socialise with people from different parts of the world and various cultures. A more practical aim of mine would be to voice different regional issues, mainly relating to education fit for purpose in Sri Lanka.

4). What are your thoughts on the opening ceremony?

I was speechless! I just can't describe in a few words how much I was moved by the mind blowing performance by the differently abled youngsters. I was just so happy to clap for them at the end, they truly deserved it. And oh, the fusion dance was brilliant.

5). Your thoughts on the Commonwealth overall?

In comparison with the previous youth conference in Perth, Australia, I'm happy that we have more participants this year in Sri Lanka. This shows that the people around the world see Sri Lanka in different perspective after the civil war, which is a positive sign for the country. I am truly proud!

Name - Hasini Liyanage

Age - 21

Alma mater - St. Bridget's Convent
Currently doing her LLB while majoring in
International Relations at the University of
Colombo.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Katherine Ellis - Director of Youth Affairs,
Commonwealth Secretariat

And registration for #CYF2013 begins....! Huge energy with youth delegates arriving from all over the Commonwealth!



Like · Comment · Share · 18 · 5 · 21 hours ago ·

#CYF2013



Yasir Dil @dLzez

#Asia youth is Dedicated toward helping mankind v on prove it
#CYF2013 #HANAN4ASIA @HananAbbasi786 @CommonwealthUth
@CYF_2013

Expand



Madhushala @Madhushala08

Oh #CHOGM, oh CHOGM! The #youth forum in full swing here in
#hambantota #CYF2013

Expand



Bhagya Ratnayake @bugztweet

Switching my tweetathon attention from #CYF2013 to #SLvsNZ
UNICEF shall take a break :)



Kenneth Russell @tallawah

'Saying youth are the future procrastinates (youth engagement);
youth are a force to be partnered and engaged w today' Ravi Karkara
#CYF2013

Expand



Sarah Ashaya Soysa @SarahAshaya

yOuth are not future they need to be taken seriously and engaged
today! They must be included in every forum #cyf2013

Expand



Asiwaju Lekan Koya

Impressive hospitality!! Arrived safely.. Looking forward to joining
Fellow commonwealth citizens, young people, business and political
leaders in an engaging conversation and networking.. at the
Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting 2013 #SriLanka
#CHOGM2013 #CPF2013 #CYF2013. now to get — at Colombo
International Airport, Sri Lanka

Like · Share · about an hour ago via Mobile ·



Jeremy Liddle

Incredibly epic entrance to #Commonwealth #Youth #Forum #CYF2013
at the Commonwealth Heads of... <http://t.co/9BXmbsVmCM>



Instagram

instagram.com

jeremyliddle's photo on Instagram

Like · Comment · Share · @Jeremy_Liddle on Twitter · 5 l



Kistal @CrysKoel

Happiness is a Standing ovation :) #cyf2013 #CHOGM

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Senel Wanniarachchi @Senel_W

long, long standing ovation for the performance by young people with
disabilities at #cyf2013 #respect

Expand



Mohamed Husni @mohamedhusni

At the opening ceremony of #cyf2013 in hambantota. So happy to
meet some good old friends across the Commonwealth @flexydaisy
@jpbrice

Expand



The Commonwealth @commonwealthsec

What happens here in the days ahead will ripple from Hambantota to
Colombo and other parts of the world - #Commonwealth Sec-Gen at
#CYF2013

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Mohamed Hisham @mhmhisham

Someone please correct me if I am wrong in the previous tweet
kamalesh sharma "forgot" to mention president of SL but everyone
else #cyf2013

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CYF9 PAPARAZZI



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