



මගේ අංකය
எனது இல
My no

ඔබේ අංකය
உமது இல
Your no

දිනය
திகதி
Date

PRESS RELEASE

Enhancing Professionalism and Esteem is the Greatest Respect and Gratitude We Can Offer to Teachers, says Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, Hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Education.

With nearly 250,000 teachers and principals at the heart of our efforts to build a thriving nation and enrich lives, their invaluable contribution to nurturing future generations has not received the recognition it deserves. In her message for World Teachers' Day 2024, hosted by the South Asian Centre for Teacher Development (SACTD) in Meepe, Sri Lanka, Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, Hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Education, emphasized the pivotal role educators play in shaping a future generation equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Dr. Amarasuriya reaffirmed her unwavering commitment to uplift the education sector, calling for action beyond the celebration of a single day. She stressed the importance of improving teachers' living standards and work environments to retain qualified professionals and attract talented youth to the profession. These measures, she noted, are vital to counteract the departure of skilled educators from the field.

Secretary to the Ministry of Education, Mrs. Thilaka Jayasundare, also extended her felicitations to the teacher community. She commended the Director-General of SACTD, Mr. Kamal Pathmasiri, and the Centre—the only UNESCO Category 2 Centre in Sri Lanka—for organizing the World Teachers' Day 2024 celebration, which featured a rich and meaningful program at the SACTD premises in Meepe. This year marks the 30th anniversary of World Teachers' Day, originally established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1994.

A highlight of the event was the launch of the **Virtual Community Learning Platform**, adding value to the global theme, "*Valuing Teachers' Voices: Towards a New Social Contract for Education.*" (<https://sites.google.com/sactd.edu.lk/virtual-com-learning-platform/home>) This platform enables teacher educators, mentors, and the broader teaching community across South Asia to share ideas, pedagogical resources, experiences, and best practices. It also promotes teacher empowerment through professional development, cross-border collaboration in educational research, and setting professional standards—all core mandates of SACTD.

In attendance at the celebration were prominent figures including Prof. Sirimali Fernando, Secretary-General of the UNESCO National Commission of Sri Lanka, as well as a diverse group of invitees representing university academics, the National Institute of Education (NIE), Ministry of Education officials, pre-service and in-service teacher educators, principals of National Colleges of Education, school principals, students, and members of non-governmental educational organizations.



Joining virtually was Dr. Carlos Vargas, Chief of Section for Teacher Development at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, who underscored the critical importance of teachers' voices in reshaping educational systems. The keynote address was delivered by Senior Professor Shironika Karunanayake, former Dean of the Faculty of Education at the Open University of Sri Lanka and Chair of the Commonwealth of Learning, emphasizing the need for systemic change to support educators.

Other notable presentations were delivered by experts including Senior Prof. Santosh Panda and Prof. Ruchi Shukla from India, Ms. Fazna Yoosuf from the Maldives, and Ms. Kanthi Liyanage and Dr. N. Prashanthan from Sri Lanka. The event concluded with an open discussion, moderated by Dr. Ashoka de Silva, DDG (Teacher Training) at NIE, and Dr. Jayantha Wattavidanage, DDG (Academic Affairs) at SACTD. This session allowed participants, including students, to share candid views on the challenges facing the education sector and propose solutions to address them.

Adding a lively cultural element to the occasion, a song composed by Dr. Prashanthan from the National College of Education in Kalmunai, Sri Lanka, was performed, bringing a vibrant close to the event.

**SACTD – Meepe, Sri Lanka
October 5, 2024**





