

*“Do not wait for opportunities;  
seek them  
and perform”*

*Vidya Jyothi Professor V.K. Samaranayake*



Prof. Samaranayake, then Chairman, CINTEC demonstrating computer use to the Veddha Chief Tissa-hamy at Dambana, the Veddha village [1990]

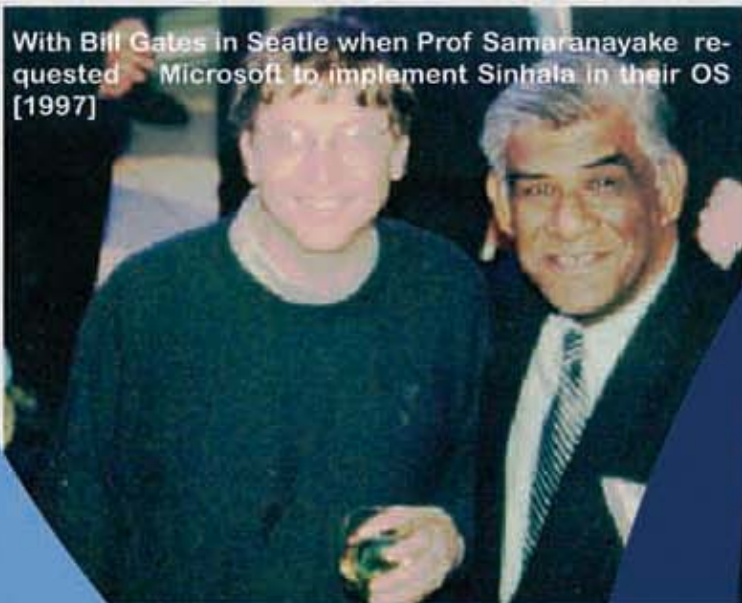


With Sir Arthur C. Clarke when he was presented with the Telluride Festival Award at his residence [2004].

**Emeritus Professor**

# **V.K. Samaranayake**

The Founder Director of the UCSC



With Bill Gates in Seattle when Prof Samaranayake requested Microsoft to implement Sinhala in their OS [1997]



Addressing the gathering at the Felicitation ceremony [2004]

## The Life and Times of

# Vidya Jyothi Emeritus Professor V. K. Samaranayake

Vanniarachchige Kithsiri Samaranayake was born on the 22nd of May 1939 and had his early education in Hewavitharana Vidyalaya, Rajagiriya where his father was the principal and his mother a teacher. He entered Ananda College in 1948 and then Royal College through a competitive examination in 1950.

Prof. V.K.Samaranayake entered the University of Ceylon to read for a degree in Science in 1956 having completed his secondary education at Ananda and Royal Colleges. He was selected to do a Special degree in Mathematics. and obtained a First Class Honours degree in 1961.

Prof. Samaranayake entered the Imperial College, London in 1963 on a state scholarship for his post-graduate studies and then moved on to University College, London to complete his PhD in record time before returning home in 1966. At the age of just 35, in recognition of his great scholarship, the University of Colombo appointed him to its highest Academic position of Professor of Mathematics in 1974. He was subsequently appointed Senior Professor of Mathematics in 1984, invited to be the first Senior Professor of the newly created Chair in Computer Science in 1996 and appointed Emeritus Professor of the University of Colombo after his retirement in 2004. In recognition of which the University honoured him with the title Professor Emeritus of Computer Science, and conferred on him the Degree of Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa at its subsequent Convocation.

As it is not possible to confine the appreciation of his enormous service to the nation and his illustrious career as an academic and an administrator to a few pages, some of the significant milestones of his illustrious career are outlined below.

- 1987- He was appointed as Chairman of the Computer and Information Technology Council of Sri Lanka (CINTEC), which he served for 12 years. During this period he was also tasked with chairing the Presidential Task Force on Integrated R & D in Science & Technology 1997-2000 and the National Y2K Task Force in Sri Lanka 1998-2000.

- 1992 - He initiated the participation of Sri Lankan school children in Computer Programming, by committing CINTEC funds for sending teams of 4 to the International Olympiad in Informatics (IOI). Through his great foresight, to date, Sri Lanka has been able

to secure 3 Gold, 5 Silver and 13 Bronze medals at successive IOI's with a record of never returning without a medal since 1994.

- In 1995 he was instrumental in setting up intensive discussions with Sri Lanka Telecom, to commence Internet services in Sri Lanka. These discussions eventually brought LEARN and Internet connectivity to Sri Lanka in 1996.

- He was instrumental in organizing the IT industry at large by forming associations for Computer Training Organizations (ACTOS), for the Software Industry (SLASI), and for the Computer Vendors (SLCVA). With foresight he also created the umbrella organization for these associations in the form of the Federation of IT Industry Associations (FITIA) which recently hosted the largest ICT event in Sri Lanka – the ASOCIO ICT Summit. He has also been involved with the well known ICT Trade Exhibition organization, INFOTEL whose Chairmanship he has held from 1997. INFOTEL has in turn been the major funding organization for many industry and human resource development efforts in the field of ICT. Handbook of the University of Colombo School of Computing - 2008/2009.

- In 1984 he had his first major breakthrough with the full backing of the then Chancellor, Dr. P. R. Anthonis and Vice Chancellor Prof. Stanley Wijesundera in the form of a substantial JICA grant from the Government of Japan. Almost simultaneously, the UNDP provided some much needed research funding to build up Academic Faculty in Computer Science at the University of Colombo. Starting with the Statistical Unit and the Statistical Computing and Data Processing Centre within the Mathematics Department, Prof. Samaranayake first convinced the University to set up a Department of Statistics and Computer Science in 1985, the first of its kind in Sri Lanka, and then went onto create the first School in the university system in the form of the University of Colombo School of Computing (UCSC) in 2002.

- Commencing in the year 2000, Prof. Samaranayake initiated another major milestone in ICT HRD in Sri Lanka with the launch of the innovative Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT) External Degree programme which provides an ultimately scalable mechanism for affordable ICT education in a way that incorporates the private sector – a feat no other degree programme has been designed to do. Apart from the prestige of a University of Colombo degree to students, the BIT programme also has the indirect but most desirable effect of standardizing ICT education

# “An Innovative Leader with a Feeling for His Country”

*Deshamanya Dr. P. R. Anthonis*

in an era where commercialism is threatening the quality of education.

- Prof. Samaranayake's involvement in the scientific community has been no less impressive with the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science (SLAAS) electing him to the office of General President in 1994 and the National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka electing him as a Fellow of the Academy, its Vice President and finally its President for 1998-99.

- His quest for capacity building in ICT human resources can most clearly be seen in his single handed contribution in this area at the University of Colombo – making it the showcase among the entire university system in Sri Lanka and beyond. Investing in human resource development in ICT also involves huge risks – that of aiding in the brain drain. This is where Prof. Samaranayake's broadness of vision and almost unreasonable trust, especially in the case of training Faculty in the University, is most clearly seen. Commencing with the meager funding resources extended by donors in the 1970's in an era when the developed countries themselves were just getting into the area of serious ICT human resource development, Prof. Samaranayake commenced his quest of directing all local and foreign funding to develop ICT Human Resource development at the University of Colombo.

- In recognition of his towering contribution in the field of ICT in the country, he has been bestowed with several national awards in the form of the Lions' Club Gold Medal for the Most Outstanding Citizen of Sri Lanka in 1986, the Vishva Prasadini Award in 1996 on the occasion of the 80th birthday of the then Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike and the Vidya Jyothi Presidential Award in 1998.

- Prof. Samaranayake's characteristic skill at excelling in multiple tasks simultaneously is also demonstrated by his continuing involvement in research, being named a Fellow of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, USA in 2001, Research Fellow at the National Centre for Digital Government at Harvard University, USA in 2003 and the impending appointment as Visiting Fellow in the Digital Vision Programme at Stanford University, USA in 2005. A particularly high point of this role was when he simultaneously chaired two International Conferences while playing a key role in the whole of the Government declared Information Technology Week in December 2004. He also continued as Chairman of the International Information Technology Conference till his untimely demise.

In June 6th, while on an academic visit to Sweden in strengthening research collaboration, he passed away, creating a great void in the IT landscape in Sri Lanka, and signifying the end of a momentous career.



*Dr Roger Stern of the University of Reading (r) and Buddy Liyanage of the University of Colombo developing the election software on the BBC Micro computer. Note the computer display is a TV. [1985]*



*Visit of Prime Minister J.R. Jayawardana to the Election Office before the announcement of the final result. In the picture are Mr. H. W. Jayawardana, Prof. V. K. Samaranayake and Mr. Chandrananda de Silva, Commissioner of Elections. [1982]*



*Mr. Kaiho, Resident Representative of JICA in Colombo presents the JICA President's Award for the best JICA assisted project worldwide to the ICT. Prof. Samaranayake, Director received the award. He in his individual capacity was also awarded the JICA President's Award for international cooperation [1999]*



*During visit of Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo to the University of Reading May 1980. From Left to Right: Prof. Evan Page, Vice Chancellor University of Reading, Late Prof. Stanley Wijesundera, Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo, Prof. Robert Curnow, Head, Dept of Applied Statistics, University of Reading and Prof. V. K. Samaranyake, Professor of Mathematics, University of Colombo.[1980]*



*The staff of the Institute of Computer Technology together with eight Japanese experts began work at the BMICH in September 1987 as the new building complex for the ICT at the University of Colombo was not ready. [1987]*



*The opening of the first Telecentre in Sri Lanka at Kahawatte Sarvodaya Centre, Prof. Samaranyake inaugurating the Telecentre [1997]*



*Sir Arthur C. Clarke, Chief Guest at the inauguration of IN-FOTEL LANKA '98, ICT Exhibition organised by the Infotel Lanka Society with its Chairman, Prof. V. K. Samaranyake [1998]*



*Prof. Samaranyake Chaired the National Y2K Task Force and ensured that the country crossed over to the 21st Century without any computer related problems. Above Prof. Samaranyake briefing President Chandrika Kumaratunge and Minister of Science and Technology Batty Weerakoon on the steps that will be taken by the Task Force to face the cross over [1999]*



*At the inauguration of a Third Country Program funded by JICA and conducted by UCSC. In the picture, Dr. P. R. Anthonis, Chancellor, Mr. Kaiho, Resident Representative JICA, Prof. Samaranyake and participants [1999]*



*At the Commissioning of the Sida funded Academic and Research Network (LEARN) infrastructure project coordinated by Prof. Samaranyake. l-r Prof. Samaranyake, Director UCSC, Prof. Arjuna Aluwihare, Chairman, UGC, Dr. Afzal Sher of Sida, Hon. Indika Gunewardena, Minister of Higher Education and IT, H.E. Masden, Charge Affairs, Embassy of Sweden and Dr. Arthur C. Clarke.[2001]*

*"He opened the door for youth of this country to benefit by the use of ICT revolution"*

*Prof. P W Epasinghe*



*George Sadowsky and Alan Greenburg, Trustees of the Internet Society visited Sir Arthur C. Clarke at his residence together with Prof. Samaranayake. A Video recording of an interview with Sir Arthur recorded with Prof. Samaranayake's assistance during this meeting was the highlight of the 2002 INet International Conference. [2002]*



*Prof. Samaranayake, as Chairman Infotel, at the inauguration of the International IT Conference 2002 with Chief Minister Milinda Moragoda and David Dominic, Executive Director, Infotel Lanka Society. [2002]*



*Visiting Toyohashi University, Japan with staff led by Prof. Humma who coordinated the JICA project on capacity building of UCSC [2003]*



*At the signing of the Order establishing the University of Colombo School of Computing in 2002. l-r Prof. V. K. Samaranayake, Director, ICT, Prof. Tilak Hettiarachchi, Vice Chancellor, Prof. R L C Wijesundara and Dr. N D Kodikara [2002]*



*Chancellor Dr. P. R. Anthonis lighting the Traditional Oil Lamp to mark the establishment of the University of Colombo School of Computing UCSC on 1st September 2002.*



*Prof. Samaranayake signing letter of acceptance as new Director, UCSC. [2002]*



*At the inauguration of the Digital Studio of the Advance Digital Multi Media Centre of the UCSC established with JICA assistance. [2003]*



*With the Japanese Parliamentary delegation that visited UCSC in 2002. Also in the picture Vice Chancellor Tilak Hettiarachchi and Ambassador H.E.Seichiro Otsuka. Below, Prof. Samaranayake makes a presentation to the Parliamentary delegation. [2002]*



*With Minister of International Development, Sweden at the UCSC stall, World Summit on Information Society WSIS, Geneva 2003. Below, With Dr. Wolfgang Von Rudin, Director IT, CERN [2003]*



*Top: with Tim Burnes Lee the inventor of the World Wide Web at the CERN stall, WSIS Geneva 2003 Below, at the UCSC stall with Simon Weerasuriya [2003]*



*The Academic staff and the graduates after the First Convocation held at the BMICH for the Bachelor of Information Technology - BIT (External) graduates of the UCSC in 2004. Below: A recording for the BIT TV program at the UCSC studio. Mr. Kapila Dias, Prof. Samaranayake and Dr. Ruwan Weerasinghe all of UCSC. [2004]*



*"He made polices for taking Sri Lanka towards an e-literate country"*

*Lalith Weeratunga*



*With the UCSC team processing and releasing the results of the 2004 Parliamentary General Election. [2004]*



*The Board of Management of the University of Colombo School of Computing after the last meeting of the Board, attended by Prof. Samaranayake as Director. [2004]*



*Hon Mahinda Rajapaksa Prime Minister as Chief Guest at the Joint IITC2004 and ICEG2004 awarding certificates of recognition to the IOI team that did extremely well by winning 1 Gold and 3 Bronze medals. [2004]*



*Dinner following the Prof. Samaranayake's Felicitation Ceremony [2004]*



*Prof. Samaranayake addressing the Year end Party of the Digital Vision Program [2005]*



*Prof. Lessig meeting H.E. the President Mahinda Rajapaksa. With back to camera is Hon Tissa Vitharana, Minister of Science & Technology [2006]*



*Addressing the Asian Forum for IT AFIT in Chiba, Japan [2006]*



*Prof. Samaranayake, as Chairman Infotel, at the inauguration of the International IT Conference 2002 with Chief guest Minister Milinda Moragoda and David Dominic, Executive Director, Infotel Lanka Society. [2002]*



*Presiding at the Annual General Meeting of the Sri Lanka Sweden Friendship Association as its President in 2005. On right Ms. Anne Marie Fallanius, Charge d' Affairs, Swedish Embassy in Colombo [2005]*



*Prof. Samaranayake receiving the degree of D.Sc. ( Honoris Causa ) from Most Rev Bishop Oswald Gomis, Chacellor of the University of Colombo at the 2004 convocation held in January 2005*



*With Digital Vision Fellows at Stanford University. [2005]*



*With the Sri Lankan Team to the International Olympiad in Informatics IOI in 2004 together with Manager and Deputy Manager. CEO of Sri Lanka Telecom that sponsored the team is also in the picture [2004]*



*Prof. Samaranayake the Chairman, Information & Communications Technology Agency (ICTA) with H. E. President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, Mr. Lalith Weeratunge, Secretary to the President and officials of the ICT. [2006]*



*At the farewell party organized by the Welfare Society of the UCSC in May 2004 at White Haven Resort, Wadduwa.*



*At the inauguration of the Nenasala at Sri Dalada Maligawa on 1st January 2006 by H.E. the President, Mahinda Rajapaksa. [2006]*