

This is a special edition of *Pahansila Puwath*. Here we wish to draw your attention to a special project that we propose to conduct in an Eastern Province School, Medagama Maha Vidyalaya.

Medagama Maha Vidyalaya (School), Ampara

Just fifty miles away from Kandy is the serene township of Nawa Medagama. To get there one has to travel along the Raja Mawatha highway passing the Victoria and Randenigala reservoirs, the adjoining protected forests - sanctuary to wild elephants and other animals, enjoying the scenic beauty of Sri Lanka's hinterland. Dotted along this road are numerous villages and one can see the smiling faces our country is so famous for. Nawa Medagama is in the Ampara District. The main city close to it is Dehiattakandiya, which also serves as the local administrative centre. Coming under the Maduruoya-Mahaweli Irrigation Project, the area is home to people displaced from their ancestral villages in Teldeniya, Kotmale, Vicitoria, Randenigala and Rantembe areas due to the implementation of the Accelerated Mahaweli Irrigation Project in the mid 70's and early 80's. On its Northwestern side is the Maduruoya Wild life sanctuary and wild elephants rampages of their villages are very common. This village shares one border with an area embroiled in the recently ended war and suffered its own share of casualties. In fact, the father of one of our Pahansila beneficiaries from Nawa Medagama is one such.

Set up in this backdrop is the Medagama Maha Vidyalaya (School) occupying a sprawling 16 acres of land. Built in 1983 it celebrated its silver jubilee on February 13th 2008. It has indeed come a long way during the past 25 years. It now boasts of a student population of 1100, which include children of the colonists as well those of the *adivasis* (indigenous people) from Dambana, Kotabakiniya and Keragoda. Started with only two buildings, it now has a science laboratory, mini library and a mini stadium, a few class rooms and a computer unit. There are classes from Grade 1 to Grade 13 in Arts and Commerce streams. The school has an Arts society, an Environmental Cadet Corps, St. John's Ambulance Brigade, a Boys' Scouts Troup, and a Cadet Corps. The fact that the school has seen many an improvement is evident. This school has been graded as the best school in the Dehiattakandiya education zone.

A Pahansila team visited the Medagama Maha Vidyalaya in January 2008 since we provide scholarships to 13 needy students from this school (in addition, two other scholarship projects were completed as the students completed their education). This is the only instance, that we provide scholarships for more than 10 students from the same school. Incidentally one of the first two beneficiaries of the Pahansila Scholarship project was from this school. She was a child of an inmate of the Bogambara prisons. The team was also able to meet with the Principal and staff. The teachers led efficiently by the Principal Mr. Padmakumara and ably assisted by the Vice Principal Mrs. Mangalika Rupasinghe, are so dedicated they give their best to the school. We were very impressed by the way the school has been maintained with murals like "This is your school" drawn on its walls along with the Map of the World and periodic table etc. It is an effort worth mentioning here.

This issue....

**Feature article on
Medagama Maha Vidyalaya
(School) - Part 1**

PAHANTHARU...



Scenic route to Nawa Medagama from Kandy via Raja Mawatha. A part of the road was damaged by landslides due to heavy rains

The Principal and the staff are socially conscious people. Having been exposed to the lifestyle of the residents of the surrounding villages, mostly subsistence farmers, who in the spare time either consume alcohol and indulge in other vices have thought it fit to bring some qualitative a change in their lives. This in mind, the Principal wants to construct an open air theatre close to his school where he intends to conduct arts and drama festivals where not only traditional folk drama can be held but will also serve as a showcase of the talent of his students as well. Talent in our country is there in abundance and what it needs is a place to show. The Principal has already started on this project having completed the preliminary work. However funding has been the major obstacle to complete this project and he is appealing for funds from well wishers. Funds allocated by the Department of Education are based on the number of students on roll and are strictly for purchasing school requirements such as books, stationery, musical instruments and other urgent needs and checks are routinely carried by the Department of by the Department of Education to ascertain whether the criteria are met. The quantum of the annual funds are usually in the range of Rs.100,000 (less than US\$1000) and can vary depending on the qualitative results of the school. Apart from this no other funds are received by the school

This is an ambitious project. While it is a boon to the school, in turn it would bring about positive interaction between the parents, teachers, students and even the general public. It would also be an opportunity for the parents to be weaned away from the social malice they have been accustomed to. This, in our opinion, would certainly be a catalyst for social change for the better.

We will bring the project proposal and estimates in our next issue. We are in search for donors who are willing to support this project.

Pahansila Statistics....

Scholarships - 125

**Disbursements per month
- Rs. 122,950.00**

Donors - 83

Volunteers - 65

**Distribution of recipients
- 8 provinces 14 districts**



Pahansila team meeting with Medagama School staff, students, and parents in their library

Special feature.... PAHANTHARU - Stars of Pahansila



Dilushani Sharmila Dharmadasa, who studies in grade 6 at Mahamaya Girls's College, Kandy, was selected as a beneficiary of the Pahansila Scholarship Project in January 2008. She was transferred to Mahamaya College from her previous school Medagama Maha Vidyalaya, Nawa Medagama, based on her outstanding Grade 5 scholarship exam results. Dilushani sat for Grade 5 scholarship exam in 2008 and obtained 157 marks, placing her 13th in the Ampara district.

Dilushani's father, A.G. Dharmadasa Banda, works as a labourer. Her mother, S.M. Dayani Gunaratne Manike, is unemployed. She has one sister, 5 years younger.

Despite the problems in her life Dilushani had the courage and determination to do well in school. Her donor, Ms. Achala Dassanayake of Stafford, TX, gave her a special gift (extra payment) in recognition of her outstanding achievement at the grade 5 scholarship examination.

Dilushani is supervised by Mrs. Mangalika Rupasinghe, the Vice Principal of Medagama College, Nawa Medagama. The committee is very happy with the progress of Dilushani and wish her continuing success in her studies!