

REPORT
Alumni meet of CSSTEAP at Colombo, Sri Lanka
October 21, 2011

CSSTEAP established in 1996 has till date trained 1022 students from 32 countries of Asia & the Pacific region. Sri Lanka is one of the member countries of CSSTEAP, GB and also used the facilities of CSSTEAP capacity building. It was suggested in CSSTEAP 15th Governing Board meeting to establish direct contact with the alumni to obtain first hand feedback and understand the alumni role in promoting space science and technology in their home countries. The alumni meet would also bring together students of the different courses from the same country on common platform. It will also facilitate the centre to know about their achievements and how the Centre helped them in grooming their professional research career.

On an invitation from UN-OOSA, Dr. S. K. Saha, Course Director, RS & GIS, CSSTEAP and Head, ASD, IIRS(ISRO), Dehradun visited Colombo, Sri Lanka during October 17 - 22, 2011, as a member of UN-OOSA International Technical Advisory Mission (TAM) of UN-SPIDER, to suggest the space inputs in Disaster Management in Sri Lanka.

Dr. S.K Saha, RS & GIS Course Director, CSSTEAP took an opportunity to conduct alumni meet in Colombo on October 21, 2011. CSSTEAP has 53 alumni from Sri Lanka under various courses (PG Course - 38 and Short Course -15) being organized at IIRS, SAC and PRL. Out of 53 alumni invited, 12 number of alumni from Disaster Management Centre (DMC); UNDP Regional Office, Arthur C Clarke Institute for Modern Technologies; Department of Meteorology (DOM); Survey & Mapping (SM); Sri Lanka Port Authority attended the meet. Most of the Sri Lankan CSSTEAP Alumni are at present out of the country for higher studies and hence could not participate in the Alumni meet. Mr. S. Panawennage, Director, Arthur C Clark Centre of Modern Technology and GB Member, CSSTEAP was the Chief Guest of the function. Senior officials of DMC, DOM & SM also participated in the meet and made presentation on their organizational activities and suggested enhanced role of CSSTEAP. UN-SPIDER Technical Advisory mission members are also invited to participate in the meeting and share their experiences in the field of space science and technology applications. Senior Executive from private entrepreneur – Digital Globe (DG) AP region also attended the meet and made presentation on various satellite data products of DG. The details of the program of the alumni meet are given in Annexure-1.

Dr. S.K.Saha welcomed the gathering and briefed on the Centre's current activities and future programmes including capacity building contributions of CSSTEAP to Sri Lanka. UN-SPIDER representative made presentation on the role and activities of UN-SPIDER in Disaster Management and use of space technology for Disaster Risk Reduction. UN-ESCAP representative (one of the members of TAM of UN-SPIDER) briefed about contribution of UN-ESCAP to Sri Lanka through CSSTEAP programmes. Two senior officials representing DMC, and DOM made presentations on their experiences and achievements. The program ended with address by the Chief Guest, CSSTEAP GB Member from Sri Lanka.

The main observations from the presentations made are as below:

- The Chief Guest Mr. S. Panawennage, Governing Board member from Sri Lanka highlighted the contributions of CSSTEAP in the capacity building endeavor for the Sri Lanka, since the establishment of the centre. The contributions of CSSTEAP for creating critical technical mass for Sri Lanka for supporting the activities related to utilization of space science and technology for national development also appreciated by him. Mr. Panawennage also applauded the contributions and support received from host country – India through ISRO/DOS for the functioning and running various activities of CSSTEAP.
- The professional knowledge acquired through theory, practical exercises and pilot project work by the students from academic programs of CSSTEAP have helped them to enhance their working capability in the area of space science and technology in their home organizations /institutions. However, lack of appropriate satellite data products; software and day-to-day technical guidance has been the main impediments to raise the level of knowledge of the students.
- CSSTEAP alumni based on the PG diploma / M.Tech degree obtained from CSSTEAP have taken lead role as team leader and are assigned important projects to handle independently.
- Due to lack of manpower in the Govt. organizations, on return the students are put to routine jobs and hardly there is any support to undertake M. Tech research projects in their home country.
- The organizational representatives suggested relaxing academic qualifications and considering professional experiences for the admission of P.G. educational programmes CSSTEAP. They also suggested short courses on Microwave remote sensing, Disaster Management with emphasis on Floods, Drought, Coastal and Geological Hazards; Early warning systems for weather and disasters; RS & GIS based crop production forecasting; Open source Geo-spatial tools etc.
- DMC suggested to organize special short courses on Disaster Management jointly with CSSTEAP and UN-SPIDER in Sri Lanka so that large officials can be benefited from the programme. DMC agreed to provide facilities and local support.
- UN-SPIDER and UN-ESCAP will strengthen their supports to CSSTEAP's capacity building activities with financial and technical contributions.
- Representative of Digital Globe, AP region agreed to provide high resolution satellite data products to Sri Lankan CSSTEAP alumni for their M. Tech. research work.

Recommendations by Alumni:

- Most of alumni present in the meet mentioned that due to non-availability of suitable satellite data products, lack of software and local supervisor has been the main hurdles for not pursuing M. Tech research work. They suggested that more opportunity should be provided in offering fellowships to the students from Sri Lanka for pursuing M. Tech research work at CSSTEAP.
- The alumni formed a CSSTEAP alumni forum and identified Mr. Srimal Priyantha Samansir Assistant Director / IT GIS, Disaster Management Centre, Ministry of Disaster Management & Human Rights, Sri Lanka as Convenor.
- The alumni forum agreed to provide technical help and support for running ongoing academic programs on RS & GIS in various universities/institutes and also research activities in various govt. organizations of Sri Lanka.

The meeting ended by vote of thanks by Dr S. K. Saha and thanked all the participants and officials of the meet. The Alumni agreed to flag the issues of common interest from time to time to CSSTEAP. The alumni meet was followed by dinner.



Meeting with the CSSTEAP alumni in Colombo, Sri Lanka



Mr. S. Panawennage, Director, Arthur C Clark Centre of Modern Technology and GB member, CSSTEAP from Sri Lanka addressing the gathering



CSSTEAP Alumni Meet

Venue: Hotel Galadari, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Date: October 21, 2011 (Friday)

Meet: 1600 to 1930 hrs.

Dinner: 1945 hrs.

Agenda

- Welcome by Course Director, RS & GIS CSSTEAP & Introduction: 1600 – 1615 hrs.
- About CSSTEAP and its future programme
by Course Director, RS & GIS CSSTEAP : 1615 – 1645 hrs.
- UN SPIDER & UN ESCAP Presentations: 1645 – 1715 hrs.
- Presentation by Representative Digital Globe, AP Region: 1715 – 1730 hrs
- Presentations by senior officials of: 1730 – 1800 hrs.
 - Sri Lanka Disaster Management Centre.
 - Sri Lanka Department of Meteorology
- Sharing of Experiences and about their
Achievements by a few alumni 1800 – 1900 hrs.
- Address by Chief Guest (CSSTEAP GB Member, Sri Lanka): 1900 – 1915 hrs
- Concluding discussions 1915 – 1930 hrs.
- Vote of thanks 1930 – 1945 hrs.
- Dinner: 1945 hrs.
