

## AAUP annual trip 2013

The members embarked on their annual trip to Hambantota on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013. To me this meant two days of discovery, fun and camaraderie as I found out since the first trip I made in 2010 organized again by Dr. Anura Dantanarayana to watch the dolphins at Kalpitiya. Since then I had been hooked on AAUP trips and as far as know I have not missed a single one.

We all got off to a good start along the Nuwara Eliya road with a customary stop for tea at the Labookelle estate. Then it was a long drive to Ella through the breathtaking Ella gap with a stop at the Ravana Ella Falls to watch another beauty of nature.



Ravana Ella Falls

We proceeded along the Wellawaya-Thissamaharama highway upto the Mattala airport turn off and were welcomed by the Ruhuna chapter president Mr. Chandrasiri Liyanage who took over the entire proceedings from then onwards. We were taken to the Lunugamvehera bund to see the great extent of the Tank and then to the Mattala airport. We learnt that there were no flights that day but one was expected the following day.



Inside view of the Mattala airport



The convention Centre

The MRICC (Mahinda Rajapakse International convention Centre) is situated at a vantage point overlooking the entire proposed development area of Hambantota. From there we had a birds eye view of the Harbour, the wind power towers and the newly constructed buildings in the area. We enjoyed sitting in the 1500 seat convention Hall and pretended we were at the Peradeniya University Research Sessions. The day ended with us being taken to our residences for the night and enjoying the delicious curries that the south is famous for.

After lunch at Wellawaya we visited Buduruwagala. As the name implies it is a large rock with the image of the Buddha and six other figures carved on the face of the rock. One of our alumnus provided us with an elaborate narration of the significance of the figures and the mustard oil (not fortunate enough to see) which is supposed to come out from the rock.



Buduruwagala



The time given for breakfast was 7am. We set our alarms and made it on time for breakfast and set off to the new Botanical Gardens planned and executed by no other than a son of the south and a Peradeniya Alumnus- Dr. Siril Wijesundera. He got us into the gardens even though it was supposed to be closed on Sundays. The highlight was that many of us were eligible for the senior citizen ticket rate!

The entrance to the Gardens



Magampura Mahinda Rajapakse Harbour

We then moved on to the Magampura Mahinda Rajapakse Harbour for the conducted tour and seminar presentation arranged for us. We got many insights to the selection of Hambantota as the port and all doubts cleared about the famous rock that had to be blasted.



International Cricket Stadium

Mr. Chandrasiri insisted on taking us to the final monument of Hambantota - the International Cricket Stadium at Sooriyawewa. The pavilion had a special VVIP section and the media had an entire building to themselves. Being in Sooriyawewa, no excuse can be given for failing to visit the hot springs.

Several enthusiasts tested the well water and reported that the bath was well worth it. With whetted appetites we descended at the Pol-athu bath Kade in Sooriyawewa and wowed that it kept up its name. We thanked Mr Chandrasiri for



The Hot Springs

devoting two days entirely to us and proceeded on our journey back to Peradeniya. It was an eventful journey back with Prof. Kulasooriya and several ladies entertaining us with songs. Prof. Indrajee Amarasinghe decided to conduct the “band of singers’ and kept us

in peals of laughter with his jokes. Once again the AAUP succeeded in giving its membership a most memorable annual trip. Thanks to the carpeted roads and dual lanes in the entire district it was possible to take in all the sights within the two days. I look forward to the next Alumni trip and hope that it would be as eventful and enjoyable as this one.

Professor Nedra Karunaratne