

## **"Developing Polyvalent Antivenom for Snakebite in Sri Lanka"**

A public seminar on "Developing polyvalent antivenom for snakebite in Sri Lanka" was held at the Senate Room, University of Peradeniya from 10am to 12pm on Friday 23 October.

Nearly 41,000 patients are admitted to Sri Lankan hospitals annually on account of being bitten by poisonous snakes. The Ministry of Health has spent millions of dollars over the years on snake antivenom imported from India to treat these patients. The Indian antivenom causes severe side effects in nearly 80% of these patients, almost half of which are life threatening. In addition to this, the Indian antivenom is not suitable for use against the commonest snake bite in Sri Lanka, the *Hypnale* (Hump nosed viper).

An international team of experts including scientists and well-wishers from the University of Peradeniya, the Department of Wildlife Conservation, Instituto Clodomiro Picado at the University of Costa Rica and Anti Venom Research International have been working over the last 4 years to produce safe and effective antivenom for snakebite in Sri Lanka. With the support of the National Research Council, the team headed by Prof. Indika Gawarammana of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Peradeniya are now ready to conduct Clinical Trials in Sri Lanka to establish safety and efficacy of the new antivenom.