



GoodSport NEWS

S R I L A N K A O L Y M P I C W E E K L Y N E W S B U L L E T I N

SPORTS NEWS

Celebrating the Queen's baton relay 2022



Memorable Memories Marked



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It was just awesome. Lot of them say that it was the best treat that the baton has experienced so far in its 115-day meander through the 25 nations and territories of the Commonwealth which is the forerunner Games proper in June 2022. Sri Lanka happened to be the 25th of such destinations.

The man behind all that grandeur was none other the Secretary General of the CGA and the NOC Maxwell de Silva.

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It was he who initially visualized the whole visit in his mind and got it instilled in his team in indelible ink and the rest is history.

The Baton upon its arrival was handed to Her Excellency Sarah Hulton OBE, British High Commissioner to and in turn she handed the baton to the CGA Sri Lanka President Suresh Subramaniam.

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Then after a simple ceremony the baton was brought in procession to the CGA Headquarters in Colombo for the launching of the programme.

Associated at the welcoming ceremony were the Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Namal Rajapaksa, Her Excellency Sarah Hulton OBE, British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Mr. Anuradha Wijekoon, Secretary Ministry of Youth & Sports, Mr. Amal Edirisooriya, Director General, Department of Sports Development, Ms. Annie Benton, Creative Content Coordinator-Queen's Baton Relay, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, President CGA Sri Lanka Suresh Subramaniam and Secretary General CGA Sri Lanka Maxwell de Silva.

Looking back into the success it was de Silva explained it in this manner "If you say that it was a great event, a grand success, I believe it was due to team work.

"When you say team, it is the NOC staff that was empowered to and they took ownership of the whole programme and allocated teams to perform on one location.

For example, the airport was handled by one team, Victoria was handled by another team, Hatton was handled by another team and when it came back to Colombo it was another team who was in charge of the execution.

"We combined these together and the result was a huge success. It's akin to a pickle.

it tastes simple, but when the ingredients are mixed into a thing of great taste.

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"Likewise, in this instance too we worked together as one team and we delivered results".

The CGA Secretary General said that he was especially happy with the programme conducted at the Victoria Dam.

He said that it was a very iconic location and there were a lot of untold stories. There, there were things that was highlighted to the whole world.

He explained that it was an outright grant that was made by the British Government and the British people of United Kingdom and there also a lot of sacrifices made by the Sri Lankan community. For instance it happened when the location was inundated and a lot people lost their traditional lands. He said "Particularly in Teldeniya (The entire Town) – it went under water and that sacrifice has to be remembered. This is what I learned with my visit there.

"It also should be marked that the role made by Balfour Beatty Engineering along with the Lankan Engineers and at that I used to read a lot about what was going on in that location.

"There was TV coverage and newspaper articles and I managed to verify a few of them from the engineers who were on the spot.

"Overall, it was a grand success. By taking the baton to Hatton, and sharing it with Estate workers whom I consider as the heart of the nation; because of the tea industry.

"It is a very difficult task that they are performing, under trying conditions so I think we should take a minute to appreciate – the tea pluckers especially, who rendering yeoman service to our nation."

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He said that their level of confidence amazed him."

He said "Prior to that, in Kandy the school programme conducted by the British Council – a Commonwealth Connected programme and that again was an eye opener for all of us – the work done by the British Council in explaining the values and making them understand vision.

"The six schools chosen for the Commonwealth Baton programme by the British Council was outstanding. The posters made by them was a thing to remember.

"I wish that I could have got the opportunity of bringing back some of the memorabilia back home with me.

"There my overall message to those schoolchildren was 'live the dream and make it happen'.

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"I think the message conveyed here is you can all those values and you can learn, but, the important thing is to implement those values at ground level and practice them so this would be a better place to live."

At the Ceylon School for Deaf and Blind upon the return to the capital city; de Silva said that they had earmarked some location to be visited – some places that they have not visited before.

The CGA Sri Lanka wanted to connect the community in all aspects. They made it a point not to leave out the under privileged and the differently abled.

By doing that the CGA showed everyone in Sri Lanka is included.

He added "This was done only in words, but we made sure that it was accomplished in deed also."

"This is a testimony that we all should be mindful that we should cater to the needs of every one in our society."

Thereafter de Silva went on to say "The Baton meeting with the Prime Minister was the icing on the cake. We were planning to do so on the first day of the programme."

"Then I told honorable prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa it is mandatory that we have an audience with the Queen's Baton and for the Prime Minister to hand it back to the CGA

before it travels to Bangladesh. It was a very good gesture by the Prime Minister to join us in sending off the baton."

Finally, the CGA Secretary General attributed the success of the programme to for the togetherness of the team in solidarity; there were difficulties that we had to undergo. Sleepless nights and everyone who shared this dream. "We also take this opportunity to thank Capital Maharaja Group for giving a great coverage, our IT and media teams who saw it that the event got great coverage and did justice to all our activity and the general public became aware of the QBR in Sri Lanka – which was not the case on the previous occasions."

