

Daily News

Death of Dr. Roland Silva

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The death occurred of Deshamanya Dr. Roland Silva, the creator of the Central Cultural Fund.

Dr Silva, described as a “true son of mother Lanka” and a “giant of our time” was an architect and archaeologist who served as the Commissioner of Archaeology and founder Director General of the Central Cultural Fund.

He was instrumental in the declaration of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, Dambulla, Kandy and Galle as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. During his career as an archaeologist, Dr. Roland Silva worked on every known stupa in Sri Lanka.

He was conferred the title of “PuravidyaVidvjjana Shiromani” in appreciation of his services to the Sanga-sasana by Karakasangasabhava of the Malwatte chapter headed by the Chief Prelate of the Chapter.

His contribution to establishing world class teaching, education and institutions in Sri Lanka has led to generations of Sri Lankans leading the fields of architecture and conservation. Early in his career he worked under Dr Justin Samarasekera in establishing an architecture course at the University of Moratuwa and during his tenure as President of the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) accreditation was obtained for those who passed the equivalent parts of the exam at the University of Moratuwa. He later served as the Chancellor of the University of Moratuwa.

Dr Roland Silva’s contribution in the field of conservation spread internationally when he became the first non-European World President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a position he held for 9 consecutive years (1990-1999). During his tenure as President of ICOMOS, the membership of the organization increased from 67 to 112 countries and he presided over the nomination of 222 out of the 500 World Heritage sites established by 1999. He has also served as an advisor on conservation to China, Italy, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Thailand, Pakistan and the Maldives.

Dr. Silva possessed a Doctor of Letters (D.Litt) from the University of Leiden, D.Sc (Hon Causa) from the University of Moratuwa. He served as the UNESCO Chair of the Post Graduate Institute of Archeology, University of Kelaniya, Member of the Councils of the Universities of Jayawardhanapura, Moratuwa, Kelaniya, University of Ceylon - Vidyodaya, Moratuwa and Jaffna campuses. His numerous publications have shed light on pioneering techniques and interpretations on archaeology, which still act as a guide to scholars both locally and internationally. He has led the way in national and international policy on monuments and conservation, and its implementation worldwide, leading the change from the front.

In recognition of his colossal contribution to the nation in the fields of conservation, archaeology and architecture, he was conferred Vidyajyothi (Light of Science) in 1992 and Deshamanya in 2006 by the Government of Sri Lanka. He was also the recipient of the prestigious Fukuoka Art and Culture Prize for Asia from Japan and the Gazzola Prize from ICOMOS International in tribute to his international and local achievements. Dr Silva was the founder President of the National Trust of Sri Lanka.

After retiring from government service and ICOMOS, Dr. Silva served a non-executive chairman of the Silvermill Group of Companies for over a decade.

Funeral services will be held on January 2 and 3 at The Restpect Funeral Parlour by Jayaratne's with viewing from 10 am to 10 pm on January 2 and from 10 am on January 3, 2020. Cortege will leave the parlour at 3.30pm for crematorium (Devi Balika side), General Cemetery, Borella at 4.00 pm on January 3, 2020.