Since 2015 India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange programme has been happening in both India & Sri Lanka based on the theme of Global Understanding for sustainable development as well as to strengthen the relationship between youth of both countries towards achieving sustainable development. Also the main agenda of the India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange programme is to build Peace & Friendship among the young people by creating mutual understanding, Dialogue, Arts & Cultural sharing through India - Sri Lanka Youth Forum.

Youth play a major role in building peace nowadays. In thus wonderful occasion we would like to thank those pillars of India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange programme. We would like to thank Ms. Shiromi Samarakoon, Special Interest Group, Commonwealth Youth Council from Sri Lanka who had taken the initiative and conversations with Government of Sri Lanka & our special thanks to Mr. Dinesh Gajendran who is the Catalyst and Executive Director of Audacious Dreams Foundation as well as Focal point for Asia Special Interest Group of Commonwealth Youth Council. He has taken this initiative and sustainably organizing this event for last couple of years in India. We have seen the power of youth in the change making & peace building process. Since our first delegation we had lot of experiences, explorations, development, deep connection, love & emotions in both the countries. In 2015 for the security arrangement to the Sri Lankan delegates in India overnight process has happened only through phone conversation. His Excellency the Deputy High Commissioner came to his office in the mid night approved and recommended the security arrangement from Tamilnadu government. Still we remember those sweet memories. After very long journey of ISYE now we have stepped into the 4th edition of India – Sri Lanka Youth Exchange programme.
4th Edition of India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange programme has been starred with the send-off prayer at Auxilium College, Vellore on the evening of 3rd October 2017 with the valuable presence of Superior of Auxilium College & Dr. (Sr.) Mary Josphin Rani, Principal of Auxilium College. On 4th October 2017 early morning we had our flight. As usual most of our delegates are first time fliers. Furthermore this time it was full women delegation from India for the India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange programme. On 4th of October we reached Sri Lanka and had an amazing welcome ceremony with traditional Tea at St. John’s Kotalalavala Defence University.

Then in the evening we had Cultural Forum to understand various cultural and religious practices and beliefs of Sri Lanka and visited the monuments of Sri Lanka. In this forum we also visited Raja Maha Viharaya at Kelaniya which is one of the famous Buddhist temples of Sri Lanka. Being just seven miles from Colombo, Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya is the most sought after Temple for the Buddhists in and around Colombo. On the Eighth year after the Enlightenment, the Lord Buddha visited this sacred site, which had been the Third and the last visit to Sri Lanka by the Gautama Buddha. It is situated on the banks of Kelani River, which is originating from Sri Pada, makes this temple surrounding attractive for the devotees who come to worship this hallowed land. The original Temple and the Stupa or the Dageba, was built in 5th Century BC, but none of the earlier structures survive today. Mentioned in the Sri Lankan chronicle "Chulavansa" is that, the Kelaniya Temple was five stories high with traditional styling and roofing. It also states that the temple was rebuilt by King Vijayabahu III, (1232-1236) and King Parakrama Bahu II (1236-1270). In 1510 AD, the temple was destroyed by the Portuguese, who had then conquered the Maritime Provinces of the country. Afterwards we visited St. Antony’s Shrine at Kochchikada which is one of the oldest & miraculous churches of Sri Lanka. Then we visited Sri Ponnambala Vaaneswarar temple at Kochchikada.

On the second day of our programme we had an Educational & Arts Forum to understand the various educational activities and visits to the monuments of Sri Lanka which reflected the Art heritages of Sri Lanka. Before that we had a wonderful session at Nagenahuru Center for Environmental Education, Nagenahuru. Mr. Manon Prasanna, Ministry of Forest and Environment Development addressed our delegates and introduced various Bio-Diversity significance of Sri Lanka.
The session was inaugurated by Mr. Lal Emmanuel, Founder of Nagenahiru Center for Environment. Then we enjoyed boat ride at Nagenahiru Center to understand the Mangroves eco-system in Sri Lanka. At the end of the educational session we presented a small token of appreciation to Mr. Lal Emmanuel and to Mr. Manoj Prasanna for hosting that wonderful session for us. On behalf our Indian delegates Dr. Mary Agnes Antony - Programme Coordinator of India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange Programme along with Mr. Dinesh Gajendran, Programme Director of India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange presented gifts to the people. We would like to thank everyone those who have spent their valuable time and energy to host this session.

Exchange presented gifts to the people. We would like to thank everyone those who have spent their valuable time and energy to host this session. Afterwards we visited Galle Dutch Fort in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. During the colonization period Dutch people had been built this biggest fort around 400 years ago. Everyone felt that the travel in the Galle Fort made them feel like travelling in the Dutch country when we witnessed the internal Architecture of fort and buildings. Than we moved to Mattara which is the southern end of Sri Lanka where we had Beach walk and enjoyed the sands of Mattara Beach. Then we returned to Colombo.

On our 3rd Day of programme we started our journey towards Jaffna - Northern Province of Sri Lanka to understand the cultural diversity of Tamil culture and to understand the peace building & reconciliation process among the people. As we know many people lost their lives during the long internal war in the Northern Part of Sri Lanka. We travelled for 9 long hours to reach Jaffna. We felt proud and excited when we landed at Historical Jaffna. Also it’s a milestone of India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange programme because since 2015 we are requesting Government of Sri Lanka to host a programme in Northern Province. After three years of request this year we got that historical opportunity to visit Jaffna. Late evening we reached Jaffna and stayed at Dumbukolapatuna Navy Rest House.
On the 4th Day of the programme we started our journey early morning and visited historical Jaffna Dutch Fort built around 400 years ago. This fort is having not only the colonization history of Dutch & British beyond that this fort has the history of many wars. In particular it was the Army base camp of “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)” when they fought against Sri Lankan Army and sometimes it was controlled by Army of Sri Lanka. But still the walls have the memories of bullets & sacrifices. Then we went to famous Nallur Kandan Temple, Jaffna where we enjoyed the architectural techniques.

Afterwards we moved to have “India - Sri Lanka Youth Forum – Dialogue” held at Dumbukolapatuna Navy Rest House with Youth Officers & Directors of Northern Province of National Youth Services Council, Govt. of Sri Lanka. Mr. lyathurai Thavendran, Assistant Director of Jaffna, National Youth Services Council addressed Indian delegates about various Youth initiatives and activities undertaken by the Northern Province Sri Lanka. Followed by the introductory session Programme Director of India - Sri Lanka Youth memories of ISYE from the beginning and welcomed ISYE – Dialogue forum. Every one of our delegates particularly about their valuable experiences in as well as about Peace, Reconciliation & Development activities in Northern Province. Finally Mr. T. Sivathchedhana Moorthy, Rtd. Provincial Director – Northern Region, National Youth Services Council, Govt. of Sri Lanka addressed and delivered valuable Vote of Thanks. After the successful India - Sri Lanka Youth Dialogue forum and historical visits at Jaffna we moved to have Indian style lunch at Mangos Restaurant in Jaffna. Then we went to “Manthiri Manai” which was the Jaffna’s last King Sangili’s palace. Manthiri Manai is a historic palace situated in Nallur, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. It is one of the archaeological protected monuments in Jaffna District and was listed by the Sri Lankan government in 2007. The palace is associated with the Jaffna kingdom. It is believed to be one of the palaces or residences of a minister of Sankili, king of Jaffna, before the fall of the Jaffna kingdom to the Portuguese. The building is surrounded by other historical remains of the Jaffna kingdom such as the Sattanathar temple, which was one the city temples of the kingdom; Yamuna Eri and Cankilian Thoppu are also located nearby. However, much of the architectural style belongs to the post-Jaffna kingdom era.
In the evening on 7th October 2017, it was a great honour to our Indian Delegates to visit historical Jaffna Public Library. The library was built in many stages starting from 1933, from a modest beginning as a private collection. Soon, with the help of primarily local citizens, it became a full-fledged library. The library also became a repository of archival material written in palm leaf manuscripts, original copies of regionally important historic documents in the contested context political history of Sri Lanka and newspapers that were published hundreds of years ago in the Jaffna peninsula. It thus became a place of historic and symbolic importance to all Sri Lankans.

Eventually the first major wing of the library was opened in 1959 by then Jaffna mayor Alfred Duraiappah. The architect of the Indo-Saracenic style building was S. Narasimhan from Madras, India. Prominent Indian librarian S.R. Ranganathan served as an adviser to ensure that the library was built to international standards. The library became the pride of the local people as even researchers from India and other countries began to use it for their research purposes. Each one of our Indian Delegates felt proud to stand in the Library.

After our library visit we moved to see historic “Nilavarai Well” which is the natural Underground water well where the water never gets depleted and it serves the irrigation of the neighbouring fields. Then we went to Riyo Ice Cream Shop which is another landmark of Jaffna where we had amazing refreshment with Ice Cream. Then we moved to have interaction with Consulate General of India in Jaffna, Govt. of India. It was another milestone of India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange Programme to have a dialogue with Consulate General of India in Jaffna Shri. Natarajan Arumugam, Consulate General of India addressed our Indian delegates and shared his experiences in the peace building, Reconciliation & development process initiatives done through Govt. of India. Following that Mr. Dinesh Gajendran, Programme Director of ISYE addressed the delegates and requested Indian High Commission to include youth in the Peace building, Reconciliation & development process in Sri Lanka by Govt. of India. After the dialogue we had refreshment-time with Consulate General of India in Jaffna. With the huge amount of emotional and lovable memories we started our journey back to Colombo in the early morning of the 5th Day of our programme after reaching Colombo we had an experience sharing session in late evening.
On the 6th day of the programme we visited National Youth Parliament to observe the Special session of National Youth Parliament, Govt. of Sri Lanka along with Parliament Representatives of Asia & Pacific and officials of Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population & Development (AFPPD). Followed by the observation we got the opportunity to be part of the official group photograph with the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population & Development. Than we presented gifts and mementos to Hon. Member of Parliament Shri .Ananda Basker Rupolu, Rajya Shaba, Govt. of India than to Hon. Member of Parliament Shri.

Sri Lanka at Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa – Sri Lanka which is one of the 200 years old Institution in Sri Lanka where we witnessed English Day celebration organized by English Literary Association of Prince of Wales College along with Mr. K. A. Thilakarathne, Additional Secretary – Development, Ministry of National Co-existence dialogue & Official languages, Govt. of Sri Lanka. After that we had been invited to have a Diplomacy Forum with Hon. Secretary (Act) Shri .Keeragala,
On the 7th Day of this edition we started our journey in the early morning towards Up Country part of Sri Lanka that is towards Kandy as part of our Cultural & Arts Forum. Kandy is famous for the Tea & Coffee manufacturing factories. Before we reach kandy we had an industrial visit to Kadungannwa Tea factory where we got an opportunity to learn about the life style of Tea Factory employees and how they are manufacturing tea in various qualities. Then we moved to visit Dalada Maligawa. Sri Dalada Maligawa or the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic is a Buddhist temple in the city of Kandy, Sri Lanka. It is located in the royal palace complex of the former Kingdom of Kandy, which houses the relic of the tooth of the Buddha. Since ancient times, the relic has played an important role in local politics because it is believed that whoever holds the relic holds the governance of the country. Kandy was the last capital of the Sri Lankan kings and is a World Heritage Site mainly due to the temple. One of our India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange alumni Mr. Mohammed Anfas came all the way to meet us and shared his experiences and discussed about strengthening the network of India - Sri Lanka Youth Exchange. After the Dalada Maligawa visit we moved to understand the Floral Eco – System of Sri Lanka at Royal Botanical Garden, Peradeniya where we enjoyed various species and learned lot about Tress and Up Country Eco System of Sri Lanka. Finally the 7th Day has been ended with feedback session and Experiences Sharing.

On the 8th Day of our visit we had farewell ceremony at National Youth Services Council, Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Govt. of Sri Lanka. Assistant Directors of NYSC were present and it was a memorable and cheerful farewell to our Indian Delegates. Sri Lankan NYSC’s Dance team gave an amazing performance in their traditional way. Then our Indian Delegates also performed few dance performances which was really amazing. Mr. Roshan Jayasoriya, International Divisional Director of National Youth Services Council, Mr. Prabath Assistant Secretary, National Youth Services Council and Hon. Speaker of National Youth Parliament Mr. Sachinda Duljana, Govt. of Sri Lanka were present in this Farewell ceremony of ISYE programme and they also presented Certificate of Appreciation to the Indian Delegates. Then we moved to Sri Lanka
United Nation Friendship Organization (SUNFO), Moratuwa for the Global Understanding for Sustainable Development Award Ceremony. We presented GUSD Award as India – Sri Lanka Friendship Award to Mr. Samantha Wijesuriya, Director, Producer & Presenter – Specialization for Sports Programme, Sri Lanka Rupavahini Coorporation, Ms. Kaushika Geethaanjalie – Independent Television Network (ITN), Mr. Kalasuri Channa Wijewardena, Cultural Ambassador – Dance Director of Channa Upuli Performing Arts Foundation, Mr. Ranga Chandrarathana, Co Editor, Ceylon Newspapers (Pvt) Ltd. Then to Mr. Sisira Wijetunge – Sisira Wijetunge Graphics (Pvt) Ltd., Dr.Anoma Weeraratne, Hebron Eco University, Ms. Kamanthi, Journalist – Wijeya Newspaper (Pvt) Ltd., Rev. Dr. W .Nissanka, Chairman of Way to Comfort Ministry, Mr. Clerance Mendes, General Manager of Farms Lanka, Mr. Lion Dr. M. Reginold, Lions International Director 306 C1, Ms. Aloma Kaluaratchi, Director of Mahatma Gandhi Non-Violence and Inter-religious Peace & Harmony Monuments, Ms. Irmini Weerasinghe, Directress, Daybridge International School, Mr. K. M. Jayampathi Bandara, Head – Jayampathi Dancing Academy, Auxilium College, SUNFO & Sustainable Development Goals Youth Network Sri Lanka (SDG-YNSL) for promoting peace & Friendship among the youth of both countries.

On the next day that is 12th October 2017 we started traveling back to our mother land India by evening 6.45 PM in the UL 123 – Sri Lankan Airlines. Loads & Loads of emotion love and affection has been stored from the last eight Days. to thank each and who have their time, organize this especially Our to National Council, Ministry Policies and Govt. of Sri Lanka wonderful historical milestones such as Jaffna visit,