



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA ON 23RD (WEDNESDAY) JUNE 2021

The Dutch Hospital in Colombo: pre-2012 A story untold

By Dr. Gamini Wijesuriya

The 135th Session of the monthly Lecture series of the National Trust will be delivered online on Wednesday 23rd June 2021 at 6.30 pm by Dr. Gamini Wijesuriya

LINK: <https://bit.ly/3ggGmVL>

Architecture and town planning constitute distinct legacies of the past, and this is true for buildings belonging to the colonial period as well. Indeed, the physical formation and subsequent evolution of most of our modern towns and domestic architecture since 1505 are associated with the interchange of human values that we have begun to consider as part of Sri Lanka's heritage. This is particularly relevant in the case of Colombo, the cradle of modern Sri Lankan civilization, which owes its current physical formation to all three periods of colonial occupation. The 17th-century monument popularly known as the Dutch Hospital is one of the most notable legacies of the colonial period in Colombo and has now gained official status as a heritage asset.

In 2012, this monument received a new lease of life due to the work of the UDA under the personal direction of the then Secretary of Defence and Urban Development, the current President H. E. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa. This is undoubtedly the most significant event in the life of this monument, but in this presentation, Wijesuriya takes us back to an earlier story, one stretching back to 1978. He will discuss two significant efforts made to rescue the building and relate the story of a complete restoration back in 1983/85, all activities with which he was personally involved. He will share some lesser-known facts and figures of the previous restoration work and reveal the circumstances which led to the deterioration and neglect of the monument before it was finally rescued by the UDA in 2012.



Dr. Gamini Wijesuriya, is currently a special Advisor to the Director-General of ICCROM, Rome, Italy, Special Advisor to the Director of WHITRAP Shanghai, China and the current president of ICOMOS Sri Lanka. Having succeeded Dr. Roland Silva as the head of Conservation of the Department of Archaeology, the post he held for 17 years, Dr. Wijesuriya became the first Asian to be appointed to the staff of the ICCROM, Rome, Italy, the premiere conservation training institution in the world. A fellow of the Sri Lanka Council of Archaeologists and the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects, he has gained a reputation as a lead international specialist in World Heritage through his work over the last four decades. He is also known to the heritage world due to his work on people-centred approaches for the conservation of nature and culture. He has travelled to more than 50 countries to provide advice and training on all aspects of conservation and management of heritage and published extensively on the theory and practice. Dr. Wijesuriya holds BSc and MSc from Moratuwa University, MA from Carnegie Mellon University, USA, MA from York University, UK and PhD from Leiden University in the Netherlands.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the public. The HNB Sustainability Foundation is the principal sponsor of the events of the National Trust – Sri Lanka.

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel. 0777397403.