



Students of Vavuniya South Education Zone presenting a cultural item.



Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development Minister S. M. Chandrasena, Presidential Social Development Director Nandana Wijesinghe, Vavuniya Maha Vidyalaya Principal and other invitees being welcomed for the inaugural ceremony.



Students engaged in group activity.

# Nena Guna Weduma Sisu Diriya National program

SAMAN UDAWATTA

The foundation for the *Nena Guna Weduma Sisu Diriya* (enriching students with knowledge and virtue) program was laid in 2005 through *Mahinda Chintana*. The responsibility of implementing this program in an efficient and fruitful manner was entrusted to Nandana Wijesinghe, Senior lecturer attached to the Peradeniya University's Social Science Department by setting up the Presidential Social Development Directors' office.

Since July 11, 2006 this program has been implemented by rallying a large number of schoolchildren in the conflict affected Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Amurathapura, Polutionaruwa, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara districts to various places such as the S.L.F.I. Maharagama Youth Centre, Pilmatalaya Rural Development Training Centre, Peradeniya Teacher Training College and other venues in Kandy.

This program has been drawn up with the target of developing the mentality and attitudes of schoolchildren destroyed in a war environment. An attitude of hate against other communities had been built among youth sections caught up in



Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim students singing the National Anthem.

the conflict for 30 years from birth to end of schooling and more in areas affected by the terrorist menace. They had to live with hatred against each other because they acted with a wrong impression regarding other communities. Their mentality had no inclination towards mutual co-operation and co-existence. I believe that this program has been able to erase this to a certain extent by getting the participation of GCE Ordinary and Advanced Level students

representing the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities. This is evident from the building of a co-existence mentality among the students after participating in this program. Upto May 2009 this program was implemented by bringing

batches of 75 students selected from various areas to Colombo or Kandy and conducting lectures and providing opportunities for education and enjoyment by visiting the Katunayake Airport, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, Dehiwala Zoo and the Kalu

Aggala wonder world. Presidential Social Development Director Nandana Wijesinghe had arranged food, lodging, health and transport facilities for the students. Under the April 2009 program a rural new year festival and new year contests were conducted on



A Tamil dance item presented by students.

a grand scale. The June 2009 program was further extended by joining it with the *Uthuru Vasanthaya* program. All this time only a small group of people derived benefits from the program each month. The June 29 program was held centred

round the Vavuniya Tamil Maha Vidyalaya with the participation of 400 student leaders from 28 Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim schools. The program started at the Vavuniya Tamil Maha Vidyalaya on June 29 under the patronage of Nation Building Minister S. M. Chandrasena and on June 30 with the participation of NCP Chief Minister Berty Premalal Dissanayake. The concluding ceremony on July 1 was held on a grand note. Intellectuals such as Dimuthu Piyasena, Lal Fon-

seka, Shabir M. Hashim and Dr. PUNCHILAME Mee-gaswatte delivered lectures each day for which there was a positive response from teachers and students. Students said this is the first time they had such an experience.

Another special feature of this program was four schools supplied noon meals to the students and the organising committee which participated on the four days while several other schools provided morning and evening tea. The Red Cross Society provided water and vehicle facilities while the Vavuniya SP provided security.

*Nena Guna Weduma Sisu Diriya* societies have been set up in areas where this program was conducted while arrangements are being made to set up societies in several other areas too. These societies will enable the distribution of ideas and views among students who have not attended this program.

Mutual co-operation and friendship could be developed among communities giving way to a patriotic co-operative network if this can be conducted throughout the country expeditiously. Photos: Presidential Social Development, Director's office

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All Religious leaders and other invitees who attended the inaugural ceremony.



Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim students presenting cultural items endemic to their communities.



A section of the students who attended the workshop.



Students viewing the exhibits at the Nena Guna Weduma Sisu Diriya exhibition.