

'Access for All' announces impending legal enactment on accessible facilities for disabled



L to R; Prosonno Silva, Architect and Additional Director General, Urban Development Authority, Thonujo Novorotne, Attorney at Low and Project Coordinator for 'Access for All' and Or. Nee/a Gunesekero, Director for Notional Secretary for Persons with Disabilities.

Access for All, a campaign that fights for the rights of persons with disabilities, announced the parliamentary listed Bill awaiting enactment on accessible facilities for the disabled.

"This Bill carries the regulations on access for persons with disabilities to public buildings, public spaces and common services, said Attorney at Law Thanuja Navaratne, Project Coordinator, Access for All. "We believe that prior notice of this magnitude will be a definite advantage for the parties involved in constructions to adhere to an efficient planning and designing process. Existing public buildings too should be made accessible in compliance specified in the regulations within seven years of the day of implementation, she added.

At the gathering architect, Prasanna Silva, Director General, spoke about the building process involved. Areas that would be subjected to change include buildings, parking areas, public transport and guiding blocks.

Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No, 28 of 1996, passed by

Parliament of Sri Lanka addresses the rights of the disabled and section 23 (2) of the Act refers to the rights on accessibility. However, it carried no guidelines on the procedure of implementation. Even though approved guidelines written in conjunction with the Urban Development authority (UDA) and the Sri Lankan Institute of Architects already exists, difficulties occurred in making the enforcement of these provisions mandatory as it has not been incorporated into law. Subsequently in the year 2001, the Ministry of Social Services drafted a set of regulations to be adopted in enforcement of section 23 (2) of the Act. Hence, the 'Regulations on Accessibility for Persons with Disability' await enactment.