

# Making Waves of Change: OSC raises 1.1 million rupees for Colombo Friend-in-Need Society



OSC's Gecko Gear Service Group, CFINS representatives, and Paralympian Naveed Raheem united at SAISA Swimming 2025 to champion disability inclusion and equal opportunities in sport.

The Overseas School of Colombo (OSC) made a meaningful impact at the SAISA Swimming 2025 Meet, blending athletic excellence with community service. Over the three-day tournament, students from OSC's Gecko Gear Service Group turned their merchandise stall into a force for good, raising an impressive 1.1 million rupees for the Colombo Friend-in-Need Society (CFINS)—Sri Lanka's oldest charity dedicated to supporting individuals with physical disabilities.

Founded in 1831, CFINS has served the nation for nearly two centuries by providing free prosthetic limbs to individuals affected by landmines, accidents, cancer, diabetes, and vascular diseases. The organization operates a 30-bed residential ward, offering free accommodation, meals, rehabilitation, physiotherapy, psychological support, educational grants, and entrepreneurial training, helping beneficiaries regain independence and dignity.

The SAISA Swimming 2025 Opening Ceremony was highlighted by the presence of Naveed Raheem, a 21-year-old Sri Lankan Paralympian who represented the country at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games and the 2025 Para Swimming World Championships in Singapore. Now the Brand Ambassador for CFINS, Naveed shared his deeply moving journey—revealing that swimming was originally his late younger brother's dream, which he chose to carry forward. Encouraged to take up para-sports at age 11, Naveed overcame social stigma and financial hardship to become one of Sri Lanka's most inspiring athletes.

Addressing the audience, Naveed spoke candidly about the lack of opportunities and facilities for para-athletes in Sri Lanka and stressed the need for organizations to take action. He credited the National Paralympic Committee for transforming his life, emphasizing that ability exists in many forms.

The partnership between OSC and CFINS was initiated by Grade 12 student Aran Eassuwaren, whose introduction inspired the Gecko Gear Service Group to visit CFINS. Sue Turner, founder of the group, and Dr. David Poulus, OSC's Service Coordinator, both highlighted Aran's persistence and passion as key drivers behind the collaboration, expressing hopes for a long-term partnership.

CFINS representatives echoed the importance of youth involvement. Supem D. S. de Silva, Immediate Past President of CFINS, underscored that all services are donation-funded and stressed the role of young people in breaking societal stigma. Jadyn de Silva from the CFINS Youth Council highlighted initiatives aimed at building inclusion through volunteerism, social media engagement, health camps, and sports festivals.

Students such as Tarun Malalasekera, a Grade nine Gecko Gear Service Leader, expressed pride in being part of an initiative that raised awareness and inspired empathy across ten participating schools. Through Gecko Gear's efforts, proceeds from the event funded 22 prosthetic limbs, directly changing lives.

Naveed closed with a powerful message: being differently abled is not a weakness but a source of strength. Through sport, service, and compassion, OSC demonstrated how youth-led action can create ripples of lasting change—breaking barriers, restoring dignity, and inspiring hope far beyond the pool