

# Rotasia Sri Lanka 2016: Empowering Asia's Future



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Hosting Rotasia Sri Lanka 2016 is a first for the Island's Rotaract Movement while the night also celebrated feats achieved by Rotary Sri Lanka. Youth from across Asia gathered, taking a united stand to put service above self.

By Keshini de Silva | Photography Isuru Upeksha

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Rotasia is the largest international conference for Rotaractors in Asia, a youth-led movement with a membership of more than 220,000. The opportunity to host this significant event for the first time also marks another important milestone, as

Rotaract District 3220 celebrates its 25th year of operation in the Island.

Themed to reflect the magnificence of the peacock, the four-day Rotasia Sri Lanka 2016 conference began with an opening ceremony under the patronage of chief guest, the PHF George Jesuthasan, Governor of Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The Nelum Pokuna Theatre was filled with 1,000 Rotaractors of which 600 hailed from neighbouring countries. Significantly, Australia and Brazil also joined Rotasia 2016, a first time for both countries.

Rotaract is a partner of Rotary International, where each District is mentored and sponsored by their corresponding Rotary District. The Rotary year 2015/2016 is also an important one for Sri Lanka as the current Rotary International President, K R Ravindran is a member of the Rotary District of Sri Lanka. The mission he set for the movement was, "Be a gift to the world." This became the underlying theme for the ceremony where a special welcome presentation and song created showcasing the cultures and beauty of the paradise island were screened. The song, written and voiced by the Rotaractors of Sri Lanka, was performed in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

"We need to look and see as to what more are these gifts that we are capable of giving to the world," said Rtn Thariq Thulba, Rotary Past District Governor, delivering the keynote address which highlighted the combined achievements of Rotary in the region. "The more you are willing to give, the more you are willing to share, the more you become much more enriched as a person."

A mesmerising performance of the traditional Mayura Wannama or peacock dance, mingled with a sense of modernity, followed, introducing the theme picked for Rotasia 2016.

Meanwhile, chief guest George Jesuthasan advised the gathering of youth, "Today you are here from all parts of the world, from many countries, to understand each other. Now when we understand each other we also learn to accept changes. And when you do not accept the changes you tend to be left out. I know you are here to have a great time and make many new friends and in the process become peace ambassadors."



