

# EVENT REPORT



# ARCASIA FORUM 22

COLOMBO – SRI LANKA

13<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> January 2025

HOSTED BY: THE SRI LANKA INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA) successfully hosted ARCASIA Forum 22 in Colombo from 13–19 January 2025, welcoming around 300 delegates from all 21 ARCASIA member countries. Under the theme *“Polymathic Excellence: Crafting Narratives, Designing Tomorrows”*, the Forum provided a comprehensive platform for knowledge exchange, professional development, and regional collaboration in architecture.

The week-long programme commenced with the arrival and welcome of delegates at premier hotels, including The Kingsbury and Cinnamon Grand. Delegates were provided with facilitation services, welcome kits, and programme information, fostering initial networking and cross-cultural engagement. The opening days featured committee meetings, ARCASIA Council Sessions, and the Forum Exhibition at BMICH Lounge, showcasing architectural innovations and contributions from member institutes. Cultural performances and social gatherings, such as the Welcome Dinner at Lotus Tower and the Fellowship Dinner at The Kingsbury, offered immersive experiences of Sri Lanka’s heritage while strengthening international connections.

A major highlight of the Forum was the ARCASIA Awards for Architecture Ceremony, recognising excellence in design, sustainability, and social impact across Asia. The academic programme, spanning technical sessions, panel discussions, and keynote presentations from eminent architects from the Netherlands, USA, Spain, Italy, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, encouraged in-depth discussions on emerging trends, climate resilience, urban planning, and heritage preservation. The inclusion of youth and student-led programmes on Day 6 further emphasised mentorship and knowledge sharing, ensuring engagement across generations of architects. The Forum concluded with curated architectural tours in Colombo, highlighting the works of Geoffrey Bawa and contemporary Sri Lankan architects, providing delegates with inspiration and a deeper appreciation of Sri Lanka’s architectural identity.

Immediately following the Forum, the ARCASIA Sports Fiesta 2025 on 19–20 January added a lively and social dimension to the gathering. The cricket tournament in Colombo concluded with the Indian architects’ team emerging victorious, while the golf event in Hambantota saw Sri Lankan architects securing the top two awards. The Fiesta culminated in an awards ceremony in Colombo, attended by ARCASIA officials and SLIA leadership, celebrating both sporting achievements and camaraderie among the Asian architectural community.

Notably, while host countries are usually granted a preparation period of **two years** to organise an ARCASIA Forum, SLIA undertook the responsibility of hosting **ARCASIA Forum 22 in Colombo from 1st August 2024 and delivered it in January 2025 — within just six months**. This remarkable achievement underscored SLIA’s capability, dedication, and resilience in mobilising resources, partners, and stakeholders within a significantly condensed timeframe.

Overall, ARCASIA Forum 22 and the Sports Fiesta successfully reinforced SLIA’s reputation as a competent host of major international events, elevated the profile of Sri Lankan architecture, and fostered professional collaboration and friendship throughout the region. Efficient planning, strong stakeholder support, and the integration of cultural, academic, and sporting elements ensured a memorable and impactful experience for all participants.

## INTRODUCTION

The **Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA)** proudly hosted **ARCASIA Forum 22** in Colombo from **13–19 January 2025**, bringing together approximately **300 delegates** from all **21 ARCASIA member countries**. Under the theme *“Polymathic Excellence: Crafting Narratives, Designing Tomorrows”*, the Forum served as a premier platform for knowledge exchange, professional development, and regional collaboration in architecture. The event combined academic sessions, council meetings, cultural activities, and curated architectural tours to provide delegates with a holistic understanding of both contemporary and traditional Sri Lankan architecture.

The Forum also featured the **ARCASIA Sports Fiesta 2025**, a vibrant post-Forum event promoting friendship, teamwork, and cross-cultural engagement through cricket and golf competitions. Together, the Forum and the Sports Fiesta not only highlighted architectural excellence but also celebrated camaraderie and regional solidarity within the Asian architectural community.

## DELEGATE PARTICIPATION

The Forum attracted more than **350 participants** from across Asia. All **21 ARCASIA member nations** were represented, with approximately **250 international delegates** and nearly **100 Sri Lankan participants**, including architects, academics, students, and industry partners.

Among the participants were **keynote speakers** from the Netherlands, USA, Spain, Italy, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, along with ARCASIA Office Bearers, Council Members, and representatives from various ARCASIA Committees including ACAE, ACPD, ACSR, ACGSA, and ACYA. Industry partners and sponsors also played an active role, with high visibility at exhibitions and events.

Particularly notable was the **strong engagement of youth and students**, especially through the ARCASIA Committee on Young Architects (ACYA) and local universities, highlighting the involvement of the next generation in shaping the future of the profession.

## EVENT PROGRAMME

### Day 1 – 13 January: Arrival and Welcome

The Forum officially began as delegates from all 21 ARCASIA member countries arrived in Colombo. They were welcomed at designated hotels, including The Kingsbury and Cinnamon Grand, where facilitation services ensured smooth check-ins and seamless transfers. Upon arrival, delegates received welcome kits and programme information, setting the tone for a week of professional engagement and cultural exchange. Informal networking opportunities at the hotels allowed participants to meet peers from across Asia, share expectations for the Forum, and begin forging international connections.

### **Day 2 – 14 January: Committee Meetings and Welcome Dinner**

The first full day of ARCASIA Forum 22 was dedicated to official committee meetings, marking the start of structured discussions on regional architectural priorities. Parallely, the Forum Exhibition opened at the BMICH Lounge, featuring architectural innovations, project portfolios, and contributions from member institutes and partner organisations. The day culminated in a spectacular Welcome Dinner at the Lotus Tower, providing delegates with panoramic views of Colombo. The evening was enhanced with cultural performances, highlighting Sri Lanka's rich heritage and creating a warm and festive atmosphere for international guests.

### **Day 3 – 15 January: ARCASIA Council Sessions and Fellowship Dinner**

Day 3 focused on the first day of ARCASIA Council Sessions at BMICH, where delegates engaged in in-depth discussions on governance, strategic initiatives, and collaborative regional projects. The sessions provided an important platform for sharing updates, exploring partnerships, and establishing action plans for future ARCASIA activities. In the evening, the Fellowship Dinner at The Kingsbury offered delegates a blend of networking and cultural immersion, featuring traditional performances that celebrated Sri Lanka's vibrant arts and music. This dinner also fostered informal dialogues, strengthening professional ties among participants.

### **Day 4 – 16 January: Continued Council Sessions and Awards Ceremony**

The Council Sessions continued on Day 4, allowing delegates to finalize deliberations and approve key decisions impacting ARCASIA's future. The day concluded with the prestigious ARCASIA Awards for Architecture Ceremony at The Kingsbury Ballroom, celebrating architectural excellence across Asia. Outstanding works from member countries were recognised, highlighting innovation, sustainability, and social impact. The Awards Ceremony not only honoured individual achievements but also inspired the regional architectural community, demonstrating the power of design to transform societies.

### **Day 5 – 17 January: Keynotes, Technical Sessions, and Forum Dinner**

Day 5 marked the launch of the Forum's academic programme. International keynote addresses presented global perspectives on sustainable design, urban planning, and architectural innovation. Delegates participated in technical sessions and panel discussions, addressing pressing challenges such as climate resilience, smart city planning, and heritage preservation. The sessions fostered rich dialogue, allowing both senior architects and young professionals to exchange knowledge and best practices. The evening concluded with a Forum Dinner at BMICH, providing a relaxed setting for networking, reinforcing connections established during the day, and reflecting on the programme's learnings.

## Day 6 – 18 January: Workshops, Youth Engagement, and Friendship Night

The second day of the Forum’s academic programme focused on hands-on workshops, youth and student-led initiatives, and interactive discussion sessions. Participants were actively engaged in problem-solving exercises, collaborative projects, and idea exchanges that encouraged innovative thinking. Special attention was given to young architects and students, nurturing the next generation of professionals through mentorship and exposure to international perspectives. The day concluded with a lively Friendship Night at Honey Beach, Kingsbury, celebrating camaraderie in an informal setting, blending music, entertainment, and cultural performances, leaving participants with memorable experiences of connection and fellowship.

## ARCASIA FORUM 22

The Forum itself was structured around the theme **“Polymathic Excellence: Crafting Narratives, Designing Tomorrows”**, which emphasised the interdisciplinary and future-focused nature of architectural practice. The **ARCASIA Council Sessions** and committee meetings provided a platform for deliberations on regional priorities, strategies, and policy directions.

The keynote lectures were among the most impactful sessions, with international experts addressing themes such as **climate resilience, sustainability, heritage preservation, smart technologies, and the evolving social responsibilities of architects**. Their insights stimulated discussions across technical presentations, panel sessions, and workshops.

Beyond formal sessions, the Forum was also a **celebration of Sri Lanka’s culture and architectural heritage**. Carefully curated tours and cultural activities showcased the island’s unique blend of tradition and modernity. Delegates visited significant architectural sites, including masterpieces by Geoffrey Bawa and works by contemporary Sri Lankan architects. These experiences not only enriched professional exchange but also promoted Sri Lanka’s identity as a hub of architectural creativity.

## CURATED ARCHITECTURAL TOURS

The Curated Architectural Tours were conducted from 13–21 September 2025, offering delegates an extensive exploration of Sri Lanka’s architectural heritage and contemporary works, guided by dedicated young architects and volunteer students. These tours provided participants with an immersive experience of the country’s diverse built environment, combining history, modernism, and the unique tropical sensibilities of local design.

The tours began with visits to Colombo’s historic landmarks, including colonial-era structures in Fort and Pettah, the stately old Parliament, and heritage religious buildings that reflect the city’s multicultural fabric. Expert guides offered insightful commentary on the historical

significance, architectural styles, and urban context of each site, allowing delegates to appreciate both the aesthetics and the cultural narratives embedded in the built environment.

A major highlight was the exploration of Geoffrey Bawa's iconic works, celebrated for their seamless integration with the natural environment, climate sensitivity, and fusion of traditional and modern design principles. Delegates visited selected residences, public buildings, and landscape-integrated projects exemplifying Bawa's philosophy of tropical modernism, gaining firsthand insight into the interplay of light, space, and materiality that defines his legacy.

In addition, the tours covered contemporary projects by leading Sri Lankan architects, highlighting innovations in sustainable design, adaptive reuse, and contextual modernism. At selected sites, delegates interacted with local architects, fostering knowledge exchange and dialogue on design strategies, environmental considerations, and cultural influences.

The day concluded with reflections over lunch or coffee at heritage venues, providing a relaxed setting for participants to share insights, exchange contacts, and consolidate networks forged during the Forum. Spanning the entire country, these tours enriched delegates' understanding of Sri Lanka's architectural identity, leaving a lasting impression of its creativity, craftsmanship, and design legacy. For many participants, this experience served as both a fitting conclusion to ARCASIA Forum 22 and an inspiring reminder of architecture's power to tell stories, connect communities, and shape experiences beyond national boundaries.

## **ARCASIA SPORTS FIESTA 2025**

Immediately following the Forum, the **ARCASIA Sports Fiesta 2025** added a dynamic social dimension to the gathering. Held on **19 and 20 January** in Colombo and Hambantota, the Fiesta was organised by the Sports Committee of SLIA.

The cricket tournament, held in Colombo, was the highlight of the event. In an exciting final, the **Indian architects' team defeated Sri Lanka**, emerging as champions to much applause and friendly rivalry. The competition fostered team spirit and cross-cultural bonding in an informal setting.

In Hambantota, the golf event was staged at an international-standard course. Sri Lankan architects excelled on home ground, securing the **top two awards**, showcasing both skill and pride.

The Sports Fiesta culminated in an **awards ceremony in Colombo**, attended by teams, ARCASIA officials, and SLIA leadership. The evening celebrated not just sporting achievements but also friendship and solidarity among Asian architects. The Fiesta clearly demonstrated that professional collaboration is strengthened when coupled with cultural and social fellowship.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The event was managed under challenging economic circumstances, yet the financial outcome was **not favourable than expected**.

- The Expenses of ARCAISA Forum 22: LKR 78, 314, 204.77 (78.3 Million)
- The Income of ARCAISA Forum 22: LKR 57,789,579.57 (57.7 million)

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

The Forum and Sports Fiesta delivered significant achievements:

- **International Recognition:** Enhanced SLIA's global credibility as a professional body capable of hosting major international events.
- **Professional Development:** Provided delegates with exposure to global best practices and new knowledge.
- **Youth Engagement:** Strong participation from ACYA and universities ensured future generations were represented.
- **Networking:** Built lasting relationships among ARCASIA institutes, governments, sponsors, and industry partners.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Promoted Sri Lanka's heritage, contemporary creativity, and hospitality to a global audience.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The events were not without challenges. **Visa facilitation** required direct intervention from government authorities, while budgetary constraints demanded strict cost management. **Logistical complexities** arose from multiple venues and simultaneous activities.

Key lessons for the future include the need for:

- Early finalisation of venues, logistics, and sponsorship agreements
- Robust digital platforms for registration, communication, and hybrid streaming.
- Binding sponsorship contracts with early payments.
- A government liaison mechanism to streamline visas and facilitation.
- Stronger partnerships with universities and youth groups to mobilise wider engagement.

## CONCLUSION

The **ARCASIA Forum 22 and Sports Fiesta 2025** were landmark events that elevated Sri Lanka's profile regionally and internationally. They reinforced SLIA's leadership within ARCASIA,

enhanced professional and cultural diplomacy, and showcased the creativity, resilience, and hospitality of Sri Lanka.

The successful execution, despite economic and logistical challenges, stands as a testament to SLIA's organisational capacity and the collaborative spirit of its members and partners. The legacy of Colombo 2025 will be remembered as one of **excellence, innovation, and friendship**, demonstrating that architecture not only designs spaces but also builds connections across cultures.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Sri Lanka Institute of Architects extends its sincere gratitude to:

- The **leadership of ARCASIA** and all member institutes for their active participation and support.
- The **Government of Sri Lanka**, particularly tourism and immigration authorities, for facilitation.
- **Sponsors and industry partners**, whose support was invaluable in achieving financial sustainability.
- **SLIA staff, committees, and volunteers**, whose dedication ensured smooth operations.
- The **media, performers, and cultural contributors**, who helped bring vibrancy and visibility to the event.

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