



Gateway College, Colombo had the distinct honour of hosting Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia, on Sunday, 22nd June 2025, during her official visit to Sri Lanka. The Governor was accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising senior representatives from South Australia's government, diplomatic service, trade and investment agencies, and higher education institutions.

The visit celebrated the strengthening educational ties between South Australia and Sri Lanka, particularly through Gateway's successful delivery of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) and its close partnership with the Flinders University, South Australia.

The formal proceedings began with a ceremonial escort by the Gateway College, Colombo Band, followed by the national anthems of Sri Lanka and Australia, performed by the school choir. In his welcome address, Dr. Harsha Alles, Chairman of the Gateway Group, highlighted Gateway's vision of creating globally connected learners and acknowledged the growing opportunities for Sri Lankan students to access world-class education in Australia.

The event featured two thought-provoking student panel discussions. The first, moderated by Ms. Christina Sivasambu, Head of SACE at Gateway Colombo, brought together students from Gateway's campuses in Colombo, Negombo, and Kandy. They shared

GOVERNOR OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA VISITS GATEWAY COLLEGE



insights on how the SACE programme has empowered them to think critically, communicate globally, and prepare for international university life.

The second panel, moderated by Professor Ananda Jayawardena, Vice Chancellor of Gateway Graduate School, featured undergraduate students pursuing higher education pathways in



teaching. Several of the panellists shared their aspirations to continue their studies at Flinders University, whose senior leadership, Professor Romy Lawson, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Mr. Bill Damachis, Director of International Partnerships, were present at the event and warmly engaged with the students and faculty.

In addressing the gathering, Her Excellency Frances Adamson praised Gateway's commitment to academic excellence and cross-border collaboration. She spoke passionately about the importance of educational partnerships in deepening the people-to-people links between Australia and Sri Lanka and encouraged students to continue embracing international perspectives in their learning journeys.

Also in attendance was His Excellency Paul Stephens, Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, who has played a key role in fostering bilateral educational initiatives and strengthening institutional relationships. His presence underscored the shared commitment between the two nations to support innovation, mobility, and opportunity in education.

This distinguished visit reaffirmed Gateway College's reputation as a pioneering institution in international education and highlighted the continued value of collaboration between Sri Lankan schools and Australian universities.

'CIRCLE OF WELL-BEING BY UNION ASSURANCE': CREATING AWARENESS ON DIABETES COMPLICATIONS

In a world that continues to move at a rapid pace, we, as citizens of a small island nation, have often been challenged to rise above numerous difficulties and obstacles. From natural disasters and global pandemics to a financial crisis that shook the nation and socio-economic challenges, the experiences we have encountered as a nation have taught us valuable lessons and shaped our ability to remain vigilant in the face of adversity. This growing awareness is evident across generations, with both the young and the elderly better understanding the risks of both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

However, it is unfortunate that diabetes continues to spread across communities and often left unnoticed until it is too late. The lack of attention has led to the tragic and untimely loss of countless lives. Globally, the burden of diabetes continues to rise, affecting millions across continents. Alarming, Sri Lanka too has seen a sharp increase in cases over a relatively short period, with the disease now posing a serious threat to a growing number of lives. Driven by poor dietary habits, sedentary lifestyles and rise in stress levels, diabetes is no longer confined to older adults, becoming a threat that is increasingly prevalent among youth as well. Yet, with simple progressive habits such as mindful eating and active living, diabetes has become largely preventable. This article provides key highlights from the latest episode of 'Circle of Well-being by Union Assurance', featuring Dr. Mahen Wijesuriya, the founder of the Diabetes Association of Sri Lanka (DASL) and Senior Medical Officer, Dr. Thamara Wijeratne, who unravel the complications of diabetes while helping you understand the detrimental effects of the disease.

CAN YOU BRIEFLY EXPLAIN WHAT DIABETES IS AND ITS ADVERSE EFFECTS?

DR. MAHEN WIJESURIYA:

Diabetes is a non-communicable disease that has now spread across the globe. It is a medical condition primarily linked to the body's blood sugar (glucose) levels. The human body relies on balanced blood sugar levels to function properly. When these levels become too high, it can lead to a range of serious health complications. Among the most common complications



Dr. Mahen Wijesuriya, the founder of the Diabetes Association of Sri Lanka (DASL)

Senior Medical Officer, Dr. Thamara Wijeratne,

Thanuja Jayawardhane

are vision problems, heart disease and kidney disorders. Diabetic eye complications can reduce vision and, in severe cases, even lead to blindness. Heart-related effects may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, sometimes necessitating surgery. Kidney damage can progress to kidney failure, while nerve-related complications may cause a gradual loss of sensation in the feet. This can result in frequent injuries, non-healing wounds, and in some cases, partial or complete amputation. Such consequences significantly reduce an individual's quality of life. They may also lead to social isolation, not only affecting the individual but also placing emotional and psychological burdens on their loved ones. One of the most common psychological challenges faced by individuals with diabetes is stress, which often worsens with the progression of the disease.

HOW DO COMPLICATIONS RELATED TO DIABETES AFFECT LIFE AND WHAT STEPS CAN BE TAKEN TO AVOID ITS ADVERSE EFFECTS?

DR. THAMARA WIJERATNE:

Preventing diabetes should be a

priority for everyone. Once it develops, it is extremely challenging to cure and sadly, many people lack the motivation to manage it properly. But the good news is, it can be prevented. From an early age, adopting habits like maintaining a healthy weight, cutting down on sugar and reducing mental stress can help avoid it altogether. Understanding the serious nature of diabetes and taking early action is crucial to protecting long-term health and quality of life.

WHAT CAUSES DIABETES AND HOW CAN IT BE MANAGED EFFECTIVELY?

DR. MAHEN WIJESURIYA:

Our modern lifestyles which include excessive intake of refined carbohydrates and sugary food and beverages is a key factor in the development of diabetes. Items such as refined sweets, cakes, ice cream and sugar-laden drinks significantly increase the risk. It is advisable to consume unrefined, natural grains and rice such as red rice and red rice flour rather than processed varieties like white rice and white flour. Additionally, the frequent consumption of artificially flavoured, processed foods and snacks

can heighten the risk of developing the condition.

Once affected, reversing diabetes is not possible but only good control and management is a viable option. Hence, adopting a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and whole grain from an early stage is essential to prevention of complication and to maintain good health.

CAN DIABETES BE CURED ONCE DIAGNOSED?

DR. THAMARA WIJERATNE:

Diabetes is a chronic condition that cannot be completely cured. However, it can be effectively managed or controlled. Successful management largely depends on the individual's commitment and discipline. In other words, diabetes control is something that is in the hand of each individual. To either prevent or manage diabetes, it is essential to maintain a healthy diet which is low in sugar and has refined carbohydrates and rich in nutrients. Once diabetes is diagnosed, the financial cost of managing the disease could be significant. At a minimum, individuals may need to undergo fasting blood sugar tests at least once a month. Additionally, the HbA1c

test, which measures average blood sugar levels over three months, should be done quarterly. Regular check-ups and clinic visits are also crucial and it is important to consult a family doctor for proper guidance. Home monitoring devices such as glucometers which are used to check blood sugar level can be expensive. Similarly, insulin and other medications necessary for diabetes management often involve high costs. Although these are available through government hospitals, many people still prefer to obtain them privately, which adds to the financial burden. Complications of diabetes such as vision loss or the need to amputate part or all of a limb, can lead to job loss, especially for those in physically demanding roles. This not only results in the loss of income but also causes severe financial strain on families due to rising medical expenses. In summary, it is important that awareness on diabetes and its preventive measures is done at a community level. Let this be your reminder to embrace progressive habits daily that will enrich and sustain your well-being.