

Timetabling in the Tropics

From 10th to 20th November, Ian Grimes Regional Account Manager for Central and South Asia joined Jerome Perera of Academic Management Services (CELCAT's Agent) in Sri Lanka to visit a growing customer base and investigate new opportunities. A very positive week it was as well.

Monday

On Monday they visited Rathnavali Balika Vidyalaya Girl's School in Gampaha one of the top performing schools in Sri Lanka. Rathnavali has been using CELCAT *Timetabler* for approximately one year. Ian met with Principal Mrs Jayawardana and was given a tour of the school and some traditional Sri Lankan hospitality along with an impromptu Q&A session with the Grade 6 English class who were keen to find out more about the UK and especially Scotland where Ian is based.



Afterwards there followed a visit to St Anthony's College where Ian met with Principal Father I.M.W. Fernando, Vice Principal Mrs Ramani Fernando and Primary School Principal Sister W.S. Fernando . St. Anthony's are currently trialling CELCAT *Timetabler* especially keeping in mind planned future expansion of the College where the easy access to statistics will help them make the right decisions as regards expansion. After the visit Ian and Jerome are confident that they will soon be joining the CELCAT user family.



Tuesday

Tuesday saw an early start with a visit to The Good Shepherd Balika Vidyalaya School in Nayakakanda CELCAT's first customer in Sri Lanka and incidentally the school where Dinusha Kadahettige of AMS (Academic Management Services) was educated. Again Ian and Jerome were treated to a tour of the school meeting with the Principal Sister Josepha Fernando and the school's timetabling champion Miss Hiruni Jithma Nayomi.



Afterwards there was a short trip to Enderamulla and St Joseph's College where they are considering using CELCAT *Timetabler*. College Principal Father Ranjith Handradi was presented with some of the benefits of computer assisted timetabling especially as regards immediate access to accurate up to date statistical information. Hopefully soon St Joseph's College will be joining the CELCAT family too.



Wednesday

Jerome and Ian Visited Sri Jayewardenepura University on Wednesday and carried out a full demonstration of *Timetabler* Client to around 20 management and curriculum staff in the Arts Faculty using a sample of the live University dataset. At present year one timetables are done first on a spreadsheet and then other years feed in with their spreadsheets. All timetables are manually cross-checked before a timetable is published. This obviously leads to clashes being missed causing problems when term starts. Staff at the University could clearly see how CELCAT *Timetabler* would make this process much easier to manage along with many benefits for senior management having access to staff and room utilisation reports. The expectation is that the Arts faculty will introduce *Timetabler* first and then it will be rolled out across other faculties.



Thursday

Thursday was an office day offering some ongoing training in the new features of *Timetabler* 7.2 and general discussion about the next steps for Sri Lanka and preparation for a meeting on Friday with the Secretary to the Minister of Higher Education Dr. Sunil Jayantha Nawaratne . Of course it wasn't all work; a trip along the sea front, port area and a visit to Chutney's restaurant in Colombo rounded off a busy few days.



Friday

On Friday Jerome and Ian met with Dr. Sunil Jayantha Nawaratne Secretary to the Minister for Higher Education with a view to how timetabling by computer could benefit the whole of the HE sector in Sri Lanka by providing attractive easy to manage timetables and offering easy access to valuable statistical information that could be used by national university governance and individual institutions. This was followed by a meeting with Professor Gamini Samaranayake Chairman of the UGC (University Grants Commission) along similar lines.

It was then time to head back to the airport ready for the long flight back to the rather cooler and wetter climate of Scotland.

Thanks to Jerome, Dinusha and many others Ian met for making the visit not just beneficial for CELCAT but most interesting and enjoyable too, with some wonderful hospitality.