



A butterfly year!

by Ranga Chandrarathne

Paradise is a place abounding in nature with wildflowers, waterfalls and the lush green forests, teeming with pristine flora and fauna. In almost all aspects Sri Lanka resembles the Adam's paradise with schools of butterflies flocking annually to the Sri Pada or Adam's Peak, believed to be on their final lap of the pilgrimage to the sacred mountain.

Decades ago butterflies were a common sight and it was not rare to spot one or two flying in one's garden. But, over the years, the butterfly population dwindled drastically even none of Sri Lankan endemic butterflies went extinct. Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) has taken up the task to raise public awareness on the issue by selecting endemic butterflies of Sri Lanka as the theme for its 2009 calendar. In keeping with the concept, SLT has adopted themes relevant to Sri Lanka for its calendar class since 2003. From the year 2003, SLT has featured endemic birds, endemic orchids of Sri Lanka and the *Kalam* masks, endemic fresh water fish and the Gok Art. The informative series on the SLT calendar offers a wealth of information on diverse subjects specific to Sri Lanka. This year's calendar also carries

SLT's signature pictorial brevity in addition to adorning one's home with beautiful butterflies.

One hundred and forty four species of butterflies are found in Sri Lanka and out of these 23 species are endemic to Sri Lanka. Dr. Sarath Kotagama attributed the drastic reduction of the butterfly population to indiscriminate use of pesticides and weedicides.

He is of the view that corporate giants such as SLT can carry this theme throughout the year by implementing an action plan aimed at increasing awareness on the issue, help setting up butterfly breeding centres in schools. Pointing out some shortcomings in the calendar, Dr. Kotagama stressed the fact that in order to put the message across to the masses, it is imperative to implement future activities in the vernacular.

He emphasised that word 'Ceylon' should not have been used and that the back to back printing would make it difficult for a collector to bind the calendar into a book at the year end. However, he commended the calendar as an innovative means of raising public awareness on a timely topic. The text and the pictures of the calendar was by Dr. Michael van der Poorten. SLT calendar will be a treasured gift for the new year.

