

Fitting tribute to Sri Lanka's 'Golden' men and women

Ex-Sri Lankan athletes meet and fete

It was a rare meeting of former Sri Lankan athletes, Olympians, Asian Games Gold medalists, Asian Championship medallists and ex-national champions who represented Sri Lanka at international level.

The Ex-Sri Lanka Athletes' dinner held in Moratuwa last Wednesday was a fitting tribute to the US-based Asian Games double Gold medalist S.L.B. Rosa

who is in town on holiday. Lucien Rosa, better known as S.L.B. Rosa, was an ace long distance runner who brought fame to Sri Lanka in his day, winning back to back Gold medals in the Men's 5,000m (clocking 14 mts and 32.2 seconds) and 10,000m (29 mts and 55.6 sec.) at the 1970 Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand.

Sprint queen Damayanthi Darsha was among

the galaxy of athletic stars present at the dinner reception hosted by former Sri Lanka race walking champion Janendhra Fernando (Managing Director of Refco Engineering, Moratuwa) who represented the country at the Asian Track and Field meet (now Asian Championship) in 1985.

Darsha is the only Sri Lankan athlete to complete a hat-trick of Asian Games Gold medals in indi-

vidual events, winning the Women's 200m and 400m at the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games and the Women's 400m at the 2002 Busan Asian Games.

Playing a major role in organising the gathering of ex-Sri Lanka athletes with Janendhra Fernando was former South Asian Games double Gold medallist and 1993 Asian Championship medallist Sriyani Dhammika Menike who was the

undisputed Middle Distance runner in her day.

The champion sprint couple of yesteryear - Sunil Gunawardena and his wife K.G. Badra Gunawardena, who took to coaching after hanging up their spikes, added colour to the event along with 1991 South Asian Games Gold medallist Jayamini Illeperuma.

It was nice to see Jayamini and her 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games team

mates Darsha and Dhammika Menike together after a lapse of many years.

One could well call it to an evening of 400m specialists in the Gold medal-winning men's 4 x 400m Sri Lanka team mates Sunil Gunawardena, Kosala Sahabandu and A. Premachandra, along with 1998 Bangkok Asian Games 400m Gold medallist Sugath Tillakaratne, Asian Championship Gold med-

allist Prasanna Sampath Amarasekera and 400m double Asian Gold medallist Darsha.

Former champion hurdler Harijan Ratnayake, now the athletic coach for Musaeus College, and medal-winning Sri Lanka shot putter Deepika Rodrigo too graced the occasion.

Among the other ex-national athletes and officials present were former Race Walking national

champion, Nishantha Nayananda, former long distance Olympian R.A. Wimalasena Perera, Upali Kumarasiri, Subasinghe and Major General (Dr) S. Thurairaja.

A notable absentee was Olympic Games Silver medallist Susanthika Jayasinghe who was unable to make it due to a busy schedule with her six-month old second offspring.



Men's 400m specialists..... Asian championship gold medallist Prasanna Sampath Amarasekera flanked by Asian Games gold medalists Sugath Tillakaratne and Kosala Sahabandu Asian Games double Gold medallist in 1970



S.L.B. Rosa entertaining the gathering, this time with a few songs!



Barcelona Olympians - Sri Lanka athletes Damayanthi Darsha, Sriyani Dhammika Menike and Jayamini Illeperuma who competed at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games



1974 Teheran Asian Games 400m relay Gold medallist A. Premachandra



The hosts..... Former Sri Lanka race walking champion Janendhra Fernando with his wife Harini, daughter Heshika and son Jehan



Former Sri Lanka athletes meet..... (from left) Jayamini Illeperuma, S.L.B. Rosa, Deepika Rodrigo, Dileema Peterson, Agampudige Premachandra, Damayanthi Darsha and Sriyani Dhammika Menike.



Ex-Sri Lanka shot putt and discus throw champion Deepika Rodrigo with her husband Samansiri Pathiraja



From left Harini Fernando, S.L.B. Rosa, Wimala Rosa and Mrs. Thurairaja



Former Sri Lanka athlete Wimalasena Perera flanked by ex-national race walking champion Jinendhra Fernando and Major General (Rtd) Dr. C.Thurairaja



Former middle distance runner Padmasiri Subasinghe (brother South Asian Games gold medallist Ranjith Subasinghe) and former DIG and AASL Vice President Upali Kumarasiri



From left S.L.B. Rosa, Sriyani Dhammika Menike and Wimalasena Perera



PIX BY SULOCHANA GAMAGE



Asian Games triple gold medallist Damayanthi Dharshawith Heshika Fernando



From left S.L.B. Rosa, Sumanasiri Pathiraja, Prasanna Sampath Amarasekera, Sugath Tillakaratne, Sriyani Dhammika Menike, Deepika Rodrigo, Jayamini Illeperuma, Nisantha Nayananda, Harijan Ratnayake



1985 South Asian Games women's long jump Gold medallist Dileema Peterson by the former sprint king and queen couple - Asian Games gold medallist Sunil Gunawardena and K.G. Badra



Asian Games 400m gold medallist Sugath Tillakaratne with Asian Championship 400m hurdles silver medallist Harijan Ratnayake