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General Secretary

Mr. Thilina Heenatigala.

Mob: +94 (0) 716 245 545

thilina_atn@yahoo.com

Sir Arthur C Clarke dies aged 90

Colombo, Sri Lanka: 19 March 2008

Science fiction author and inventor of the communications satellite Sir Arthur C Clarke passed away today after a brief illness. He was 90 years old.

He died at Colombo's Apollo Hospital in the early hours of March 19 (Sri Lanka time) from respiratory complications.

He was also suffering from the Post Polio Syndrome since the early 1990s, which confined him to a wheelchair for the past decade.

Sir Arthur is survived by his brother Fred and sister Mary, both living Minehead, Somerset, UK. Their youngest brother, Michael, predeceased him.

Sir Arthur's business partner Hector Ekanayake, who heads his adopted Sri Lankan family, was with him to the end, along with his office and household staff.

According to them, Sir Arthur remained alert and active throughout his recent illness. He was also in regular contact with his literary agents, publishers and officials of the non-profit Arthur C Clarke Foundation based in the United States.

Only a few days ago, Sir Arthur reviewed the final manuscript of his latest science fiction novel, *The Last Theorem*. Co-written with the American author Frederik Pohl, the book is to be published later this year.

Sir Arthur's wish was that his funeral be held in Sri Lanka as a private event. He has asked to be buried at the family burial plot owned by the Ekanayake family at the Kanatte General Cemetery in Colombo.

Sir Arthur has also left written instructions that his funeral be strictly secular: "Absolutely no religious rites of any kind, relating to any religious faith, should be associated with my funeral."

Additional biographical information follows

Background information

In his 90th birthday reflections video released on YouTube in December 2007, Sir Arthur said he had 'no regrets and no more personal ambitions'. He listed three 'last wishes': some evidence of extra-terrestrial life; adoption of clean energy sources; and an end to the long-drawn civil war in Sri Lanka.

He added: "I've had a diverse career as a writer, underwater explorer, space promoter and science populariser. Of all these, I want to be remembered most as a writer – one who entertained readers, and, hopefully, stretched their imagination as well."

Arthur C Clarke wrote 100 books and more than 1,000 short stories and essays over 60 years. Among his best-selling novels are *Childhood's End*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Rendezvous with Rama* and *Fountains of Paradise*.

One of his short stories ('Dial F for Frankenstein', 1964) inspired British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee to invent the World Wide Web in 1989. Another short story ('The Sentinel', 1948) was expanded to make the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which he co-wrote with director Stanley Kubrick. They shared an Oscar nomination for the best screenplay in 1969.

Trained in physics and mathematics, Sir Arthur also wrote many books and essays of non-fiction on space travel, communication technologies, underwater exploration and future studies.

In a landmark scientific paper titled "Extra-terrestrial Relays" published in 1945, Arthur C Clarke was the first to set out the principles of satellite communication with satellites placed in geostationary orbits. Sir Arthur never patented the idea, and received no financial benefits from his invention. He was contented being acknowledged as the 'Godfather of the communication satellite', and having the geostationary orbit designated as 'Clarke Orbit'.

Born in Minehead, Somerset, England, Arthur Charles Clarke was educated at Huish's Grammar School, Taunton, and King's College, London. He worked in

the British Exchequer and Audit Department and served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force before turning a full time author in 1950.

His interest in diving and underwater exploration led him to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where he settled down in 1956. He pioneered diving and underwater tourism in Sri Lanka through his company Underwater Safaris, and played an active role as a public intellectual and as a patron of art, science and higher education. He served as Chancellor of Sri Lanka's technological University of Moratuwa from 1979 to 2002.

Although he became the island nation's first Resident Guest in 1975, Sir Arthur always remained a British citizen. The Sri Lankan government presented him the Lankabhimanya ('Pride of Lanka'), the country's highest civilian honour, in 2005. Government officials, scientists, artistes and diplomats came together to felicitate Sir Arthur on his 90th birthday on 16 December 2007.

Sir Arthur's literary achievements were recognised by Queen Elizabeth II when she honoured him with a Knighthood in 1998. He had earlier received the British Royal honour of CBE in 1989. Sir Arthur was conferred several honorary doctorates from universities around the world, and had won all the top science fiction literary awards at one time or another.

In 1996, the International Astronomical Union named asteroid No 4923 in his honour, while scientists at the University of Monash, Australia, named a newly discovered dinosaur species as *Serendipaceratops arthurcclarkei* in 2003.

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Web links for further information:

90th Birthday Reflections video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qLdeEjdbWE>

Transcript: http://www.tveap.org/news/0712art_transcript_01.html

Short biographical note: <http://www.clarkefoundation.org/acc/biography.php>

and <http://www.clarkefoundation.org/acc/vita.php>

List of books: <http://www.clarkefoundation.org/acc/vita.php>

Sri Lanka Astronomical Association - <http://aalk.lakdiva.net/>

Birthday blog <http://sirarthurclarke90.blogspot.com>

Video message <http://thilinaheenatigala.blogspot.com>

Images:

For media's free use, copyright-cleared recent photographs of Sir Arthur C Clarke are available in high resolution on request.

Contact in Sri Lanka:

Nalaka Gunawardene, Spokesperson

Office of Sir Arthur C Clarke in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Mobile: + 94 777 714 525

Email: <media@arthurclarke.org>

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Ceylon Astronomical Association which was founded in June 1959, (later known as Sri Lanka Astronomical Association) and now revived as the Astronomical

Association of Lanka (AALK) is a not-for-profit association founded by Sir Arthur C. Clarke and late Herschel Gunawardene.

It is for the purpose of pursuing the study of astronomy and promoting the education of astronomy and related sciences. The revived Association's goals would include usage of internet to carry research on astronomy and related sciences among university students and others.

For more information:

Sri Lanka Astronomical Association - Chair

Prof Kavan Ratnatunga

Phone: +(94) 775 419 494

Email: kavanr@gmail.com

URL: <http://www.lakdiva.org>

Sri Lanka Astronomical Association - Secretary

THILINA HEENATIGALA.

General Secretary

Sri Lanka Astronomical Association

Phone: +(94) 716 245 545

Email: thilina_atn@yahoo.com

URL: <http://thilinaheenatigala.blogspot.com>