

SEP and IYSSE win broad support for Peradeniya university meeting on the struggle for Trotskyism

Our correspondents
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP-Sri Lanka) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) members have stepped up their campaign at the University of Peradeniya in Kandy for the October 3 meeting to commemorate eight decades since the founding of the Fourth International (FI) and the 50th anniversary of the SEP.

The main speaker at the meeting, to be held at the university's Arts Theater, will be David North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS). There will be another meeting in Colombo on October 7, at the New Town Hall.

North's arrival in Sri Lanka, and his welcoming by SEP delegates, including its general secretary Wije Dias, was covered by several television channels.

Rupavahini, the national television network, reported the WSWS International Editorial Board chairman's arrival at Katunayake International Airport on Thursday. Channel Eye, an English-language channel, broadcast the US Trotskyist's short address to the media at the airport on its 9.30 p.m. news bulletin. Yesterday, ITN, another television channel, also briefly reported North's arrival on its Sinhala news bulletin.

The University of Peradeniya has been an important centre in the struggle for Trotskyism in Sri Lanka. Under the influence of Trotskyism, University of Peradeniya students in the 1950s and 1960s fought alongside the working class in major battles against the Sri Lankan ruling elite and on key international issues.

Over the past week SEP and IYSSE campaigners have distributed thousands of leaflets amongst students, workers and academics on campus and explained the importance of the meeting and the struggle for

Trotskyism in Sri Lanka and internationally.

Mayuran, a political science student, said he had been searching for genuine socialism. "The [Stalinist] Communist Party, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and other so-called left parties have proven to have no relationship with socialism," he said.

"I've read about the fight of Bolshevik Leninist Party of India [established in 1942 and the first Trotskyist party on the island]. We need to build this sort of party. The working class needs to be united internationally but it has been divided according to race, religion and gender. North's lecture will be a great opportunity to explain these issues.

"I'm very much agreed with establishing an IYSSE branch at the University of Peradeniya to organise regular discussion with students about socialism. I'll definitely give my support," he added.

Nalini, a final year history student, looked for the WSWS and David North's writings on the internet after receiving a leaflet on the forthcoming meeting.

"When I read the articles, I understood the political significance of historical events that I've just studied for academic purposes," she said.

"Without understanding the political significance of the past events then we cannot apply their lessons to the current situation. I downloaded a few articles, discussed the issues referred to with my friends and I've decided to join SEP."

Kasun, a first year arts student, said that the problems facing mankind cannot be resolved within capitalism. "That is why I believe socialism is a political alternative to the capitalism. The problem is there is confusion amongst students and the general masses about socialism, especially in Sri Lanka as a

result of the JVP armed revolt in 1988–89. It's a challenge to overcome those confusions," he said.

Kasun agreed with the SEP's insistence on the necessity of resolving the crisis of political leadership for the working class. "This is the first time I've met a party that fights for international socialism. I understand the difference between socialism and the protest politics of pressuring capitalist governments to win our rights."

Referring to the Sirisena-Wickremesinghe government's harsh response to recent struggles by workers and students, Kasun said the only way out of this crisis is for the working class to take political power. He then asked what could be done when capitalist governments from other countries intervened? The SEP members answered by explaining the necessity for an international party of the working class and that the fight for socialism was a global struggle.

Asanka, from the university's history faculty, told SEP campaigners that he looked forward to the coming meeting. He said: "I see your assessment on world politics is becoming a reality. The capitalist system can only offer war and social inequality to the people."

Asanka denounced the Inter University Student Federation's (IUSF) protest politics and said that the organisation's methods subordinated the students to bourgeois rule. He said North's lecture was "an important event and to raise the political consciousness of the students."

Sumudu Walakuluge, a political science lecturer, regular WSWWS reader and an SEP supporter, said that the imperialist powers were being driven by the contradictions of capitalism towards another world war.

"Under President Donald Trump, US imperialism has escalated its war preparations against other countries. As the SEP insists, without an international socialist movement these dangers cannot be overcome," he said.

Kingsley Gunathilake, a painting and sculpture lecturer at Aesthetic University, Colombo, said North's political analysis and insights would have a crucial impact on Sri Lankan youth, students and workers and said he would encourage his students to attend the meeting.

"People have been kept sedated by different means, so that they're unable to understand the depth of the political-economic crisis engulfing them nationally and globally," he said.

"Life for university students has become unbearable," he continued, "and when they try to resolve one problem, ten more emerge."

"The government and the entire political establishment grossly disregard issues such as economic difficulties in education and unemployment. Students are fatigued by this situation and have even lost the energy to fight back. This is the reason that has created a political lull and disinterest among them."

"There is no end to the political lies of most parties, including the JVP and others who pretend to be socialists, and although the people have gone numb with these lies they are also searching for an alternative," he said.

Kingsley continued: "That a world renowned revolutionary leader and a Marxist such as North is coming to commemorate the principled political struggle of the Fourth International, globally and in Sri Lanka, is significant and will help break the political stagnation. Learning about the history of the Fourth International will give students the confidence that there is an alternative socialist movement fighting against capitalism."



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