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Obituary: Professor Sena S. De Silva (1946–2020)

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We were profoundly saddened to learn the demise of Professor Sena S. De Silva who passed away in Melbourne, Australia, on 6 May, 2020. Sena was respected and admired for his enduring commitment and outstanding contributions to the fisheries and aquaculture sector. His profound enthusiasm and dedication over the last 40 years merited him with a reputation as the undisputed fisheries and aquaculture pioneer.

Sena, was a chartered member of the Asian Fisheries Society, and former Editor-in-Chief of the Asian Fisheries Science journal. Sena obtained his B.Sc. (honors) degree in Zoology in 1968 from the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. From July 1968 to April 1973, he served as an Assistant Lecturer in Zoology in the Vidyalankara University (presently University of Kelaniya) of Sri Lanka, and as a lecturer in Zoology until December 1978. He obtained his Ph.D. in Fisheries Biology, from the University of Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom in June 1973. Sena was conferred the degree of Doctor of Science by the University of

Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom in June 1989 for his research contributions to Reservoir Fisheries Management and Aquaculture. He was also conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Science, by the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka in 1996.

At the young age of 32, he was appointed and served as Professor of Zoology at the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka (December 1978 to October 1988). He was the youngest academic to hold such a position within the higher education system in Sri Lanka. He was a Senior Visiting Fellow of the National University of Singapore, from November 1989 to February 1991, after which he joined the Deakin University, Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia and served as the Coordinator of the Post-graduate Degree Courses in Aquaculture. He served as the Professor in Aquaculture and Fisheries Management, & Director Research, Deakin University until August 2006. From August 2006 to August 2011, he served as the Director General of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA), Bangkok, Thailand. At the time of his demise he was serving as an

honorary professor at Deakin University, Australia.

As the Director General of NACA, Sena accomplished many facets related to development in the field of fisheries and aquaculture. These included project development of regional significance, project monitoring and execution, representing Member States at important fora such as the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO of the UN), providing guidance and leadership to its mandate. He was a leading global aquaculture and inland fisheries researcher and played major roles in the development and planning in these sectors at the regional level. Over the years, he formulated and executed many projects in the Asia-Pacific region, often funded by major donor agencies, as well as the FAO technical cooperation programme (TCP) facilities in conjunction with national counterparts in areas of finfish nutrition, inland fisheries management, climate change on aquaculture and aquaculture development in general.

In his role as leader in the field of aquaculture in the region, as well as globally, he played a major part in convening "global fora" on aquaculture, such as the Global Conference on Aquaculture, held in September 2010 in Phuket, Thailand, in association with the FAO and the Department of Fisheries, Thailand. He was also instrumental in convening, together with the FAO and the Government of Sri Lanka, the first-ever Fisheries Ministerial Meeting held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in July 2011. In addition to the aforementioned, Sena was influential in spearheading numerous expert consultations, such as (i) Inland Fisheries Resource Enhancement and Conservation in Asia, Thailand, April 2009; and (ii) Ecosystem approach to inland fisheries: data needs and implementation strategies, Vientiane, Lao PDR, December, 2010.

Sena held over 40 years of experience in the academia, both in developing and developed countries, through which he gained and was able to offer a wealth of experience on curriculum development in fisheries and aquaculture, on education methodologies, dissemination materials, evaluation methods etc. In this sphere, Sena was instrumental and coordinated the first-ever offering of aquaculture post-graduate courses in distant mode at Deakin University, Victoria, Australia.

In the academia, he was the principal supervisor of 22 candidates undertaking their PhD Programme at Deakin University from 1992 to 2005. He has also acted as an external examiner for PhD theses submitted to the universities of Stirling (UK), Dalhousie (Canada), Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand), and many other countries such as India and Thailand.

He was also able to attract many research awards and grants, from several national, regional, and international agencies. Sena published over 300 articles in the aforementioned subject areas in peer

reviewed international journals, and was the senior author of three advanced textbooks, and the editor of nine workshop proceedings. He was the Editor-in-Chief of Reviews in Aquaculture, Wiley (from 2008 onwards); the journal with an impact factor of 7.19, which is currently the top-ranked among those on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Sena is an honorary life member of World Aquaculture Society. He received the Gold Medal Award from Asian Fisheries Society in 2004, and was conferred the AFS Honorary Life Member Award during the 10th Asian Fisheries & Aquaculture Forum held in South Korea in April 2013.

Some of the key areas that he had been working in the recent past include:

- Development and adoption of Better Management Practices (BMPs) for commodities such as catfish farming sector in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.
- Inland fisheries (reservoir & lake) development and management (Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Lao PDR, Cambodia).
- Feed management in aquaculture.
- Global issue on fish meal usage and pellet feed versus trash fish usage in marine fish farming.
- The role of alien species in aquaculture in relation to impacts on biodiversity and food security.
- Culture based fisheries (CBF) development as a low-cost strategy for food fish production in rural areas.
- Climate change impacts on aquaculture; vulnerabilities, adaptations, and mitigation in respect of specific aquaculture farming systems.
- Access and benefit sharing (ABS) of aquatic genetic resources, and broodstock management in aquaculture.
- Breeding and conservation of indigenous fish species.
- Certification in aquaculture.

Sena's contributions were powerful and his energy, commitment, integrity are all words that begin to capture our image of Sena. His untimely demise at the age of 73 is a great loss to the Higher Education system and Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors in the Asian region. He will be always honored and remembered, forever, by all his students, friends, and followers.