

An Ode to the Great Adaptors

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SLT-MOBITEL extends a well-deserved compliment to one of the earth's hardest survivors living along the island's coastline. Submerged in water, mangroves form a rich habitat that provides a home to diverse plants and animals and a hedge of protection and sustenance for the islanders. The 2024 calendar showcasing the 'Mangrove Ecosystems in Sri Lanka' succinctly conveys why they matter to us. Why they matter to the world.

Words Jennifer Paldano Goonewardane.



Three artists have used brush strokes to eloquently capture the aesthetics of mangroves, allowing people to appreciate a plant that grows clumsily along Sri Lanka's coastline, widely witnessed close to lagoons and estuaries. It is in their unembellished nature that humanity stands to benefit munificently. Coarse and sturdy, mangroves are symbols of resilience against nature's onslaught, existing in a harsh environment of tidal currents, high salinity, high temperature, and strong winds. But bunched together, they withstand the vicissitudes and have adapted to thrive under all circumstances to become productive ecosystems for humanity. They wither the odds to support a rich biodiversity and productivity. They are the guardians of lands, marine species, coastal communities, livelihoods, and economies.

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Today, they are severely under threat. Every species deserves the space to thrive, a measure of care and respect. Nothing in nature deserves to be disturbed or ignored. Mangroves, long taken for granted as just wooded plants and left to their own devices, are at the forefront in 2024, receiving a well-deserved spotlight in the SLT-MOBITEL calendar, which features 12 eye-catching paintings, paintings that have captured the subtleties of this robust plant. Its blooms, fruits, leaves, and animals associated with them that none would stop by to appreciate. But at the hands of artists Pulasthi Ediriweera, Parami Vidyarathna, and Piumi Maheshika, this mundane powerhouse plant has got its deserved place.

The paintings have been painstakingly finished. They are close-ups of the different and small parts that make the expansive swarms. They are so detailed that one cannot help but appreciate the beauty of small things in these mighty masses. They go beyond the all too familiar stilt-like long roots. The beauty lies in the small details, like a branch of leaves, their various shapes, colors, and textures, the variety of flowers, different in appearance and size, white and pinkish, may be light yellowish or creamy, the scarlet beauties, some densely haired, thorny leaves bearing purple flowers, the apple-like round fruits and the delightful heart-shaped berries, elongating spindles facing downwards, with corky and leathery coverings that propagate the species far and wide – they have so much of variety and vivacity in them. They are profound in their varied colors as if signifying different emotions. The artists capture all these nuances in the most striking and aesthetically warm manner that would often miss the naked eye. After all, who stops to look at the beauty of mangroves or their flowers while taking in the ocean's enormity, the ripples in the lagoon, and the intensity of a changing sky? Now is the time as the world battles the specter of climate change.



River Mangrove by Piumi Maheshika.



Milky Mangrove by Parami Vidyarathna.



Looking-glass Tree by Pulasthi Ediriweera.



Large-leafed Orange Mangrove by Pulasthi Ediriweera.



Mangrove Apple by Pulasthi Ediriweera.

Prabath Dahanayake, CMO of SLT- MOBITELE, said, “The calendar artistically spotlights the local mangrove ecosystems and reflects our commitment to preserving the beauty of our natural heritage. We also hope to create respect for this ecosystem, inspiring collective action to protect the remaining mangroves.” Therefore, the SLT-MOBITELE calendar is a reawakening, a revival of discourse, and a window to new knowledge for children and adults alike, an exclusive journey into the world of Sri Lanka’s unique mangroves and the threat to their survival. In their mundaneness, mangroves are often overlooked in a world where beauty is appreciated upfront. Still, it is only in exposing people to the primarily bypassed knowledge that transformation can take place, like in this instance, where, by showcasing the intricate details of the 18 varieties of mangroves in Sri Lanka, we are made to pause and realign our priorities to conserving one of the earth’s most dynamic coastal ecosystems through awareness, collective engagement, responsible consumption, advocacy, and policy engagement. It reminds us to reconcile our prosperity and development goals with environmental sustainability.



Professor Sevvandi Jayakody.



Prabath Dahanayake, Chief Marketing Officer, SLT-MOBITELE Group.



Cannonball Mangrove by Parami Vidyarathna.



Black Mangrove by Parami Vidyarathna.



Holy Mangrove by Piumi Maheshika.



Grey Mangrove by Piumi Maheshika



Artist Pulasthi Ediriweera.



Artist Parami Vidyarathna.



Artist Piumi Maheshika.