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**Sri Lankan Youth Scrabble team secures a hat trick of World Team Titles**

## Royalist Aabid Ismail wins World Youth Scrabble Title

Sri Lanka produced its first World Youth Scrabble Champion as 16-year-old Royalist Aabid Ismail secured the title at the WESPA Youth Cup 2017 concluded in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Aabid who obtained 20.5 wins out of 24 games edged out 15-year-old Janul De Silva, also from Royal College, who secured the 1st runner up position with 20 wins out of 24 games. Vignesh Pirapaharan (15 years) of Lyceum International School, Panadura secured the 8th place with 16 wins.

The Sri Lankan Youth Scrabble team also secured their third consecutive World Team Title at this flagship annual event conducted for under 18 Scrabble players by the World English Language Scrabble Players Association (WESPA). This year's WESPA Youth Cup (formerly known as World Youth Scrabble Championship) was the largest ever attracting 178 players from 15 countries. The Sri Lankan team victory was secured amidst a tense battle with Pakistan with wins by

Aabid, Janul and Vignesh in the 22nd and 23rd rounds ensuring the all-important points required for victory. Experienced players Aabid and Janul were among the leaders from the first day and a strong finish on day 3 enabled them to outshine the competition. Vignesh, who was a strong contender on 3 previous occasions, ensured a well-deserved place in the top ten after overcoming a few setbacks on the all-important last day to conclude the event on a high note.



**WESPA Youth Cup Champion 2017: Aabid Ismail receiving the trophy**



**The Sri Lanka Youth Scrabble Team Kneeling (from left) Adheesha Dissanayake, Thavalakshman Yoganathan, Pasindu Malawaraarachchi, Hemaka Gunasekara, Aabid Ismail, Qays Sangani Standing (from left) Nimuthu Witharana, Thuwaragesh Jayachandran, Ashvin Kesavan, Janul de Silva, Vignesh Pirapaharan, Thirandi de Silva, Radinka Dissanayake, Therunee Karunaratne, Hasali Ratnayake, Kalpana Senevirathna, Sethmi Jayasinghe**

Janul also secured the Under 16 title at the WESPAYouth Cup whilst Vignesh emerged third in the same age group. Nine year old Adheesha Dissanayake (Willesden College) participating in his first international ... SEE P30



**Winning trio from Team Sri Lanka: Vignesh Pirapaharan, Aabid Ismail and Janul de Silva**

## Sri Lanka Tourism wins Best Long Haul Destination for Families

The Family Traveller Awards 2017 attracted a record 45,000 votes from the popular magazine and website's readership this year demonstrating just how important a sector this is for the UK

travel industry. Over 2300 companies were nominated and 240 were shortlisted for 20 categories with the winners announced at a buzzing awards ceremony in central London.



**Nalin Perera from Sri Lanka Tourism in the UK after receiving the award with Jane Anderson, Editor / Family Traveller and Alice Beer / UK television presenter**

Readers voted on every element of a family trip from the transport to the tour operator and from the accommodation to the kids' club. The results clearly showed parents are looking for active and culturally enriching holidays over and above lazy fly and flop options. Holidays designed to enrich the lives of children are becoming increasingly popular signalling the demand by

parents to use the time together as richly as possible. Hotels are improving their facilities and services for families, and kids' clubs are increasingly focusing on providing its mini members with local and cultural experiences inside and outside of the hotel property.

Jane Anderson, editor of Family Traveller magazine said: "Transformative travel, authentic experiences and active outdoorsy holidays are on the rise for families. The industry has clearly recognised that parents and carers are seeking enriching experiences and are providing holidays which are tailored, great value and leave their customers with memories to treasure for years to come."

**"I'm thrilled to see Sri Lanka winning Best Long Haul Destination for Families in the Family Traveller Awards 2017. Every family I speak to who has visited the country recently, whether travel writer, reader or friend, comes back bursting with enthusiasm and wonder at the culture, landscapes, nature, accommodation and very warm welcome they receive. There's a buzz**

**about the place that's palpable."**

The panel of judges consisted of a range of travel experts, including: Jane Anderson, editor of Family Traveller magazine; Simon Reeve, BBC presenter; Mariella Frostrup, BBC Radio 4 presenter; Sue Ward Davies, travel director of ELLE and Jane Knight, travel editor of The Times. Short lists of every category were then put to the public vote. Family Traveller has made its mark as the trusted authority on family travel in the UK. Its website and magazine are the first port of call for parents looking for inspiration and information whether that's on a day trip to London or an adventure on the other side of the globe. This year this popular brand has expanded to launch in the USA both online and in print.

Nalin Perera from Sri Lanka Tourism commented:

**"Our visitors endorsement is the best measure of success and we are absolutely delighted and thrilled that our visitors have had such an encouraging response regarding their experiences in Sri Lanka.**

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