

# Persons with disabilities the largest marginalised

By DILANTHI JAYAMANNE

Persons with disabilities are the largest marginalised group in the world. Chairman of the Disability Organisations Joint Front (DOJF), Prasanna Kuruppu addressing a media workshop on Friday (23) said that 15 percent of the world population was disabled according to WHO reports.

The total number of persons with disabilities, identified by the Census and Statistics Department in 2001, was over 2 74,711. The numbers would have increased even more by the end of the war, the increase in

the number of accidents and due to age-related disabilities. However, the indecisiveness in decision making for the betterment of persons with disabilities was a major problem for winning their rights, Kuruppu said. He said that for this there was a need of awareness regarding the perceptions of persons with disabilities.

Kuruppu identified several factors which should be addressed such as accessibility to buildings, communication barriers, architectural barriers etc. Modern constructions were yet in need of more facilities to

accommodate wheel chairs and other implements utilized by persons with disabilities despite the ruling given by the Supreme Court for steps to be taken when constructing new buildings with facilities for them last year, he said.

Dr. Samitha Samanmalee, who was an invitee, highlighted the issues faced by persons with disabilities. They need financial help because many people with disabilities find it difficult to earn a living. People also fear to provide them with employment considering the physical or mental conditions. She said

that the Social Services Department was able to provide them with limited assistance.

Persons with disabilities also have health issues - just like everyone else and which are highlighted through the media. However, the Rehabilitation Hospital does not give much insight into the health issues, that the person would have to face when leaving it.

Deputy Secretary, DOJF, Manik Gunaratne highlighted the do's and don'ts of communication with persons with disabilities through a presentation.

