



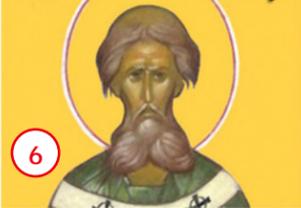
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On board to Vietnam



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St. Patrick's Day



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Monsoon Journal

◆ SURFCAST 1 ◆ LINE UP 10 ◆ MARCH 2007

FRIENDSHIP
 "Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow ripening fruit" - Aristotle, 384 - 322 BC



Jack Fruit Tree in Ward Place, Colombo - 7, Sri Lanka {humanityashore.org}

The Power sharing experience in Canada



The Forum of Federations is an independent organization that was initiated in Canada and is supported by many countries and Governments. (forumfed.org)

See detailed coverage on Page 10

Tamilnadu protests against killing of Indian fishermen

Thousands of activists of Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK party staged a noisy protest on March 12th to denounce the killings of fishermen from the state by Sri Lankan security forces.

Led by Electricity Minister Arcot N. Veeraswamy, the demonstration took place oppo-

Hamza and handed over a memorandum detailing the incidents involving Sri Lankan security forces and Tamil Nadu fishermen.

In Pamban, hundreds of fishermen observed a token fast protesting against firing by the Sri Lankan Navy on Indian fish-



Food, shelter scarce in Sri Lanka war refugee exodus

By Simon Gardner

Hunched over a fire cooking rice amid a sea of tents as a new refugee exodus swells already cramped camps in war-ravaged east Sri Lanka, Krishnagobal Sivamalar fears for her future.

Forced to flee her home in a swathe of jungle and paddy fields to escape artillery shells and air raids as the military seeks to wrest the area from Tamil Tiger rebels, the 25-year-old housewife salvaged only the red checked dress she is standing in.

Her extended family of eight now lives in a small, stiflingly hot tent on a sandy coastal stretch in the eastern district of Batticaloa, where around 40,000 people have fled over the past week, taking the total number of war displaced in recent months to an estimated

120,000-150,000.

"We couldn't stay there because of the artillery and rocket attacks," the mother-of-three said in her native Tamil, sporadic artillery rounds booming in the distance. "All the houses are damaged. We don't want to go back because of the war."

"Both sides are the problem, both the LTTE and the army," she added, referring to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels who are fighting to carve out an independent state for minority Tamils in the north and east. "We were very happy before. Now the war has brought sadness to our lives."

Behind her, clothes hang to dry on a barbed wire fence and from tent ropes as children play barefoot in the sand and pump water from a well to wash. Sweet-

smelling smoke billows from her makeshift stove of burning palm fronds and a tune chimes as an ice-cream vendor arrives at the camp.

A 2002 ceasefire has collapsed and the military has vowed to wipe out the rebels militarily, which analysts say means a war that has killed around 68,000 people since 1983 -- around 4,000 of those in the past 15 months alone -- will escalate.

This month's exodus comes on the heels of an influx of thousands of refugees in December and January in the face of another military offensive to capture a Tiger eastern stronghold.

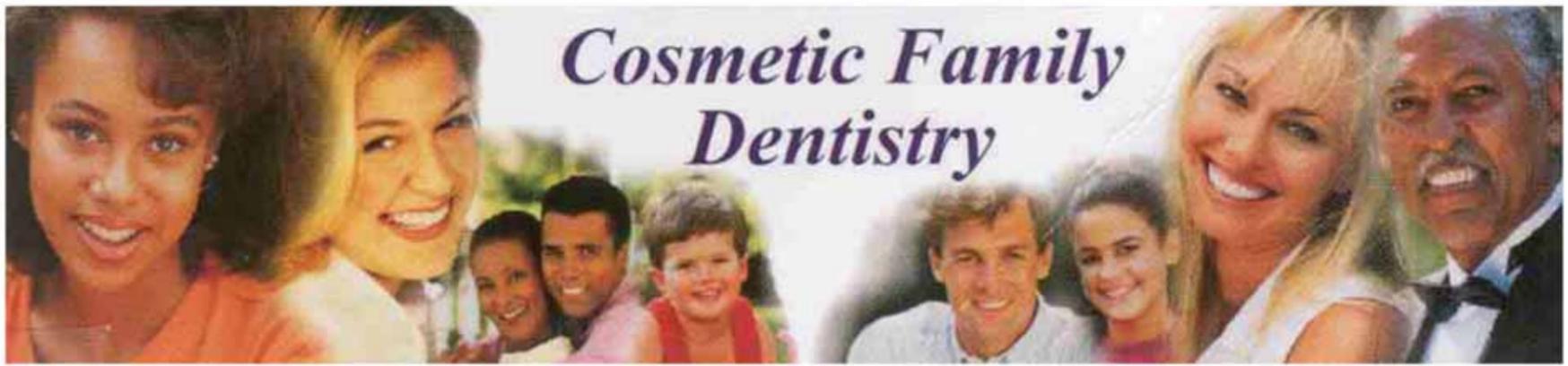
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[Courtesy: Reuters Alertnet]

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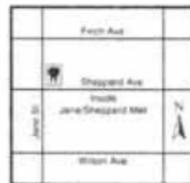


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NEWS FROM SRILANKA

US Ambassador Robert Blake Jr speaks at Colombo MBA Alumni Association

"Peace will have benefits that reach far beyond the economic dividend"

Full Text of Keynote Address to the Colombo MBA Alumni Association Conference March 1, 2007:

Thank you for the invitation by the Colombo MBA Alumni Association to speak at this important conference. Members of the Colombo MBA Alumni Association are at the forefront of Sri Lanka's economy so I am honored to have the opportunity to speak with you today.

Today's topic, "Beyond Traditional Boundaries," is especially appropriate as Sri Lanka seeks creative, non-traditional directions to a future of hope, security and prosperity.

It is a special pleasure to speak with you, the cream of the business community here. The business community here always has impressed me as vibrant, innovative, and optimistic. You therefore have a major role to play in helping lead your country toward a more secure and prosperous future. I will come back to that later.

I thought I would use today's occasion to talk about management of organizations beyond traditional boundaries. All successful organizations share similar traits. Even the organization I work for, the U.S. Department of State, has had to become more like a business and break many of its traditional boundaries.

American diplomacy in the 21st century is still based on the same fundamental beliefs that have guided it for 200 years. Our mission remains to advance security, democracy, and prosperity for the benefit of the American people and the international community.

The world, however, is a vastly different place than it was even 20 years ago. It is smaller, more interconnected, with both traditional and new transnational challenges that threaten global prosperity and security.

Adapting to this changing environment, American diplomacy has broken out of its traditional mold and become more diverse, proactive, creative, and flexible to confront these challenges. It is this new face and attitude in American diplomacy in the 21st century that I would like to highlight today in our discussion of going beyond traditional boundaries.

One of the biggest ways we have changed is to run the State Department like a business. Under the leadership of President Bush, former Secretary Powell and Secretary Rice, every Embassy and every bureau in the State Department has a performance plan with goals and specific objectives we hope to achieve annually.

Every employee also has specific objectives for each year and receives a two-page written performance evaluation that determines promotions. Famously among US federal agencies, the State Department also has a unique up or out system. That is,

those under performers who are not promoted within a certain period are asked to find new employment.

This system encourages leadership and pro-active diplomacy and is good for morale. You may be surprised to hear that the State Department is the highest-ranking Federal agency to be listed in Business Week's 2006 list of "50 best places to launch a career"?

BusinessWeek Magazine conducted a poll that ranked the State Department sixth, just behind such firms as Disney, Goldman and Sachs, and Google. The State Department was also highly ranked as an ideal employer for undergraduate business majors. There are a number of reasons that figure into this account, but I think one of the most important is the State Department's continuing effort to diversify its workforce.

Today, American diplomacy is no longer a white man in a pin-stripe suit and leather briefcase meeting a government official in the ministry. (You will notice I was careful not to wear a pin stripe suit today!) Rather it is conflict resolution in a Bedouin tent while speaking Arabic and drinking bottomless cups of tea; sponsoring local students to tour the U.S. to learn best practices to implement back home; getting dusty building homes with an NGO like Habitat for Humanity from scratch materials; and developing public-private partnerships to link rural villagers to the world wide web.

Indeed diplomacy these days is about people-to-people relations, partnerships between individuals, governments, NGOs, educational institutions, and so forth. So the State Department itself is about people most of all. Unlike our brethren in the Pentagon, we don't have sophisticated machines and weapons. We also don't have the Pentagon's financial resources. The budget for any one of the Pentagon's hundreds of procurement programs far exceeds our tiny budget.

But what we do have is people, some of the very best people in America who are not only the face of America but also reflect the great diversity of our country.

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and current Secretary Condoleezza Rice, both of whom are African-American, have made diversity a top priority. Secretary Rice said, "the signal sent to the rest of the world is that America is represented by people of all cultures, races and religions. Diversity is a great advantage to each and every one of us, and an important affirmation throughout the world that multi-ethnic democracy can work."

To recruit the best and brightest from all backgrounds, geographic regions, academic majors, and ethnic groups, the State Department participates in diversity fairs; it offers a graduate foreign affairs fellowship program aimed at women and minority students; and it partners with

employee organizations such as the Asian Pacific American Foreign Affairs Council, Blacks In Government; Disability in Foreign Affairs Agencies, to name a few.

Diversity is more than a matter of social justice. It also makes good business sense. Diversity encourages a wide range of perspectives, increasing creativity, ideas, and solutions. The new, more diverse generation of American diplomats is culturally aware, adaptable, well-rounded, and agile. They are problem solvers who can effectively reach out to people in pursuit of American interests.

Before coming to Sri Lanka, I served in India from 2003 to 2006, half of that time as acting ambassador. I supervised 1800 employees among our four different consulates. One of our most important tasks was public outreach to the billion plus people of India, half of whom were below 25 years old.

To accomplish this task, I had a staff of dedicated, diverse, and energetic young diplomats that I sent all around India, discussing American policies at universities and secondary schools, doing radio interviews and web chats, and hosting American cultural performances.

What made this diplomacy extraordinary was that many of our officers were of Indian descent and were fluent in the local language or dialect. Not only did these young diplomats represent the face and voice of America, they also demonstrated our serious intent to forge a lasting and meaningful partnership with the Indian people and the pride we have for Americans of Indian origin in our public service.

The greatest challenge these young diplomats encountered was persuading a sometimes incredulous Indian public that these Hindi and Urdu speakers were truly American diplomats and not recruiters for Amitabh Bachan's or Shah Rukh Khan's latest "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" program or some other hoax!

Not only has the State Department become more diverse, it has become more adaptable. The best example of this is our growing use of the Internet in our diplomacy through web chats, blogs and virtual web sites. We have developed programs to enhance America's presence through a medium that young people increasingly rely on for their information.

At the U.S. Embassy in India, we embraced this strategy. For example, we worked with American business to launch

duce. Farmers can use the kiosks to check current market prices of their commodities, access data on markets around the country, and find information on local and global weather. No longer are they reliant on the state marketing boards, which did not really look out for the farmers' interests.

I am equally excited about USAID's Last Mile Initiative, launched here in Sri Lanka six months ago. This program will increase productivity and provide new opportunities for farmers, small businesses, and other organizations in rural areas that do not currently have access to the web. We plan to create 25 internet and communications centers, with the first few centers to be opened in April. As of today, private firms have matched one-for-one the \$380,000 investment made by USAID. Wimax and other connectivity technologies have been selected, and content for the centers to teach English language, agricultural practices, computer use, and small business skills has been identified.

So, the State Department's growing diversity and adaptability are enabling it to practice a new kind of diplomacy for the 21st century. I think the same has to be true for business here in Sri Lanka. Here are a couple of examples:

* Today's businessperson in Sri Lanka has to think 360 degrees. Of course you have to constantly adapt to whatever your market is. But you also need to think out of the box and shape the market. Think of Steve Jobs who invented the I-Pod, a revolutionary new product that is now changing the music and telephone and other businesses.

* Like the State Department, the best companies today must also take care of their employees or risk losing them to your competitors. Continuous professional training, child care, on-site medical care and sports facilities not only enhance employee morale but also enhance productivity.

* Today's modern company must also be a strong corporate citizen. Whether it is contributing to tsunami reconstruction, building an orphanage, or helping an NGO to spread awareness about HIV/AIDS, corporate social responsibility helps brand a company as one that cares about its customers and its community.

* Lastly, you, the business community must take an active role to shape the policy environment in which you operate. That means not just working with Government regulators to reduce bureaucratic constraints on business. It means helping the Government to think ahead about what educational and training policies it must put in place now



so young Sri Lankans ten years from now will have the right kind of education and training to compete in the business environment then.

Perhaps most importantly of all, the business community needs to raise awareness about the benefits of peace. Like the United States, your multiethnic, multilingual society is an advantage, not a liability. Your ability to adapt to years of conflict has been impressive, but now it is time to adapt for peace.

To quote Jayantha Dhanapala, one of Sri Lanka's most distinguished diplomats, "peace is good business." I don't need to tell you how your economy has been held back by war. You know that the cost of the conflict has been to sacrifice 2-3 % of annual GDP growth.

But peace will have benefits that reach far beyond the economic dividend.

* A sustainable peace will provide the climate for the Government and its NGO partners to resettle the more than 500,000 Sri Lankans displaced by conflict, more than 2% of your population.

* And a sustainable peace will do more than anything else to end the killings, abductions and other human rights abuses that have plagued Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has a unique and historic opportunity for peace. The current ruling SLFP party effort to develop with the All Party Representative Committee a serious power-sharing proposal is the best chance in many years to finally achieve a political solution. The President enjoys the support of the Prime Minister and a majority in Parliament and can count on the UNP to support the proposal providing it is credible and meets the needs of Sri Lanka's Tamil and other communities.

I hope all of you and groups such as Sri Lanka First and the Business for Peace Alliance will actively encourage the President and other political leaders to seize this opportunity for peace. Now is the time for all of us to go beyond traditional boundaries for the most important purpose of all: the future of your beautiful country.

Thank you.

[Courtesy: US Embassy, Colombo, Sri Lanka]

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From the Publisher's Desk ...

Ending the Reign of Disappearances in Sri Lanka

Officials in Sri Lanka recently admitted involvement of law enforcement officers in abduction and killing of civilians.

It is a bold move in making such an admission, but what really matters is how it is going to be dealt with.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in a recent statement has called upon that the government of Sri Lanka must seek external help, if it's genuinely interested in bringing an end to this reign of terror. AHRC also dispelled this mere admission of 'some involvement' as a non starter in solving the crisis.

Amen to that!

The Monsoon Journal reiterates that it is the International

Community that can act now to make a difference in the name of humanity - in insisting the Government of Sri Lanka to prevent the alarming and steady increase in disappearances.

There are reports of cases where victims were members of the Sri Lankan diaspora community themselves, visiting family and friends or on business in the island nation.

The Asian Human Rights Commission statement emphasized: "The AHRC is aware that with a fallen system as it is in Sri Lanka, it would be difficult for the Sri Lankan authorities to be successful in an attempt to contain a serious situation of law enforcement officers involving in grave

crimes, without external help. Help is readily available, from international agencies like the United Nations and even from other developed countries".

The Monsoon Journal is in the view that The International Community also must insist on steps be taken by the Sri Lankan authorities to end this reign of fear and suffering of the masses.

In a press briefing in Colombo, the official observer of International Committee of Jurists (ICJ), Michael Brinbaum Q.C has said that it is imperative for the Sri Lankan Government to act and "dispel serious concerns about whether [its] justice system is now able to carry out independent and credible investigations."

Amnesty International has suggested that the Government of Sri Lanka should consider inviting the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to Sri Lanka and facilitating the visit of the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances as a matter of urgency.

Independent activists and observers have called upon to decisive approach in safeguarding the lives of ordinary people, and Monsoon Journal appeals to the International Community that they must now act urgently towards curtailing this spiraling tragedy of humanity in the island nation.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Uthayan International Awards Festival 2007

Venue: Peter & Paul Banquet Hall
231 Milner Ave
Scarborough, On
Markham/Hwy 401

Date: Saturday, March 17, 2007

Time: 6.00 pm

Tamil Anti-Racism Committee

Holds Public Forum In recognition of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Racism in the 21st Century

Venue: Scarborough Civic Centre – Council Chamber

Date: Tuesday, March 20th, 2007

Time: 6.00 pm-9.00 pm

The following Speakers are in the panel.
Ontario Human Rights Commission
Canadian Race Relations Foundation
RCMP Diversity Officer
Local Councillors
School Board Trustees and Officials

All are Welcome
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MAY 31 - JUNE 2, 2007

The Centre for South Asian Studies of the University of Toronto and the University of Windsor will host an interdisciplinary Tamil Studies Conference in Toronto from May 31-June 2, 2007.

The disciplines represented range from Anthropology, Archaeology, Diaspora Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature, Political Studies, Psychology, Public Health, Religion, Sociology and Theatre Studies.

Over 40 scholars from universities including Columbia University, University of California (Berkeley), Massey University (New Zealand), French Institute of Pondicherry, McGill University, University of Toronto, University of Batticaloa and the University of Peradeniya will participate in this important conference.

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NEWS FROM SRILANKA

Permanent solution to the conflict essential for lasting impact on development assistance,

says US Ambassador to Sri Lanka

U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake says the United States "remains deeply committed to continue our assistance to Sri Lanka to enhance economic development, help recover from the [2004] tsunami, and work with Sri Lanka on a durable solution to the ethnic conflict that has held back progress" for more than two decades.

Since 1956, the United States has provided nearly two billion dollars in development assistance to Sri Lanka, including one-hundred-thirty-four million dollars to help Sri Lankans recover from the devastating tsunami of December 2004. The U.S. is undertaking several reconstruction projects, including construction of a new bridge over Arugam Bay, the upgrade of three damaged fishing harbors, and the construction and rehabilitation of ten vocational education schools.

The U.S. is also assisting the Sri Lankan government in efforts to improve democratic processes, encourage transparency, curb corruption, and develop rural areas.

"No amount of development assistance by the United States or any other donor can have any lasting impact," says Ambassador Blake, "without finding a permanent solution to the conflict that has plagued Sri Lanka for more than twenty-five years." Since 1983, more than sixty-thousand have died and about one-million others have been displaced in fighting between the insurgent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or Tamil Tigers, and the Sri

Lankan government. "The negative consequences of continued conflict," says Mr. Blake, "include direct costs such as the higher military and relief expenditures . . . the infrastructure that must be replaced," and "high indirect costs such as income lost from forgone public investment, reduced tourist arrivals, reduced foreign direct investment, and the high costs of supporting internally displaced people."

In the north and east of Sri Lanka, as many as two-hundred-thousand people have been displaced in the last twelve months, and the United Nations estimates that twice that number could eventually become homeless if hostilities continue.

U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake says "the United States attaches great importance to our partnership with Sri Lanka," and hopes "Sri Lanka will seize the opportunity to forge a power-sharing proposal that can form the basis for talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam that could finally bring an end to conflict in Sri Lanka." [VOANews.com]

Torture, TV and the war on terror

Blogged by Peter Apps

Accusing violent television of promoting violence may be nothing new, but this article by Jane Mayer in the New Yorker brings the debate into the world of geopolitics and human rights.

Set in real-time, the TV series "24" pits U.S. federal agent Jack Bauer against a range of conspirators aiming to inflict death and



destruction. With the clock ticking to disaster, there is often no time for the niceties.

The show has aired around the world, and the DVDs - both pirate and legitimate - sold from Seattle to Sri Lanka. Bad guys get tortured, crucial intelligence is gained, the plot is foiled and lives saved in the nick of time.

"Whatever it takes," is the show's mantra. "Everyone breaks eventually."

War, conflict and the darker side of counterinsurgency have always been objects of fascination. George Orwell's dictum that good people only sleep well at night because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf appears to still hold.

For some, the fact that there is even a "debate" over torture is shocking enough - and makes pressuring developing countries to improve their human rights record much more difficult.

"When I went into the human rights field, I never dreamed we would be talking about whether torture was justified," Human Rights Watch senior legal adviser Jim Ross told Reuters. "And I

never dreamed the debate will be taking place inside the United States."

The New Yorker reports that encouraged by the success of torture in "24", young U.S. army interrogators are using the same techniques in Iraq and Afghanistan - to the concern of others in the military.

A group of senior U.S. army officers - mainly lawyers - even went to see the show's producers to try and persuade them to cut back.

In reality, many experts say torture simply does not work. Either the victim does not break at all, or they will simply say anything to get it to stop. From Jane Mayer's article, it appears the producers are unconvinced.

"They say torture doesn't work," co-creator and executive producer Joel Surnow told her. "But I don't believe that... Tell me, what would you do? If someone had one of my children or my wife, I would hope I'd do it."

But in reality, it is rarely that simple. It can almost never be certain that a suspect holds life-saving information.

And all too often, it is barely about information at all. Covering the war in Sri Lanka, I occasionally saw the bodies of young men who disappeared near army camps and were found covered in blood, bones broken and a bullet in the head.

There was almost never the suggestion that they had been tortured to find a ticking bomb - more often, it was simply revenge for an ambush or attack on a military.

But what it could achieve was intimidation. In April of last year, I saw families fleeing an ethnic Tamil village into rebel Tamil Tiger Territory after the torture and killing of just one local young man.

The fear is that once torture or abuse is condoned at all, it can fast become more widespread.

When I asked Sri Lankan army officers or officials about abuse, they at first denied it but often then admitted it might occasionally take place.

But without exception they pointed the finger at a "few bad eggs". And then they pointed to reported abuses from Guantanamo to Iraq and asked why they were being held to a higher standard than the United States.

But the last word should perhaps belong to the lead writer of "24", Howard Gordon, with perhaps the scariest quote ever to feature in an entertainment story.

"The truth is, there is a certain amount of fatigue setting in," he told the New Yorker. "It's harder not to repeat the same torture techniques over and over."

[Reuters-Alertnet]

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NEWS FEATURE

Saint Patrick's Day, is the feast day which annually celebrates Saint Patrick (386-493), the patron saint of Ireland, on March 17. It is the national holiday in the Republic of Ireland; the overseas territory of Motzerrat (a caribbean island) and the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Celebration overview

Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated worldwide by Irish people and increasingly by many of non-

America. In Canada a large and colorful parade is held annually in Toronto and Montreal. Large parades also take place throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia and Asia.

As well as being a celebration of Irish culture, Saint Patrick's

Saint Patrick's Day

S. Raymond Rajabalan

was still a pagan, was sold into slavery by a group of Irish marauders who raided his village. During his captivity, he became closer to God. He escaped from slavery after six years and went to Gaul where he studied in the monastery under St. Germain, bishop of Auxerre for 12 years. During his training he became aware that his calling was to convert the pagans to Christianity.

His wishes were to return to Ireland and to convert the native pagans to Christianity. His superiors instead appointed St. Palladius. But two years later, Palladius was transferred to Scotland. Patrick, having adopted that Christian name earlier, was then appointed as second bishop to Ireland.

Patrick was quite successful at winning converts, a fact that upset the Celtic Druids. Patrick was arrested several times but always escaped. He traveled throughout Ireland, establishing monasteries across the country. He also set up schools and churches that would aid him in his conversion of the Irish to Christianity. His mission in Ireland lasted 30 years. After that time, Patrick retired to County Down. He died on March 17 in AD 461. The day has been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day ever since.

Much Irish folklore surrounds

St. Patrick's Day. Not much of it is substantiated.

Some of this lore includes the belief that Patrick raised people from the dead. He also is said to have given a sermon from a hill-top that drove all the snakes from Ireland. Of course, no snakes were ever native to Ireland, and some people think this is a metaphor for the conversion of the pagans. Though originally a Catholic holy day, St. Patrick's Day has evolved into more of a secular holiday.

One traditional icon of the day is the shamrock. This stems from a more bona fide Irish tale that tells how Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.

The St. Patrick's Day custom came to America in 1737: That year St. Patrick's Day was publicly celebrated in Boston. Today, people celebrate the day with parades, wearing of the green, and drinking beer. One reason St. Patrick's Day might have become so popular is that it takes place just a few days before the first day of spring.

It was only in the mid-1990s that the Irish government began a campaign to use Saint Patrick's

Day to showcase Ireland and its culture.

The first Saint Patrick's Festival was held on March 17, 1996. In 1997, it became a three-day event, and by 2000 was a four-day event. By 2006, the festival was five days long.

The Flag of the Republic of Ireland

Shamrock ("three-leaf clover")

Many Irish people still wear a bunch of shamrock on their lapels or caps on this day or green, white, and orange badges (after the colors of the Irish flag).

And although Saint Patrick's Day has the colour green as their theme, one little known fact is that it was once blue that was the colour of this day

The biggest celebrations on the island of Ireland outside Dublin are in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland, where Saint Patrick was buried following his death on March 17, 493. The day is celebrated by the Church of Ireland as a Christian festival.

Saint Patrick's Day parades in Ireland date from the late 19th century, originating in the growing sense of Irish nationalism (The first parade did not begin in Ireland but in the United States)

In Canada

The longest-running Saint Patrick's Day parade in Canada occurs each year in Montreal. The parades have been held in continuity since 1824; however, St. Patrick's Day itself has been celebrated in Montreal as far back as 1759 by the Irish soldiers of the Montreal Garrison, following the British conquest of New France.



Irish descent. Celebrations are generally themed around all things green and Irish; both Christians and non-Christians celebrate the secular version of the holiday by wearing green, eating Irish food, imbibing Irish drink, and attending parades.

The St. Patrick's day parade was first held in New York City on 17 March 1766 when Irish soldiers marched through the city. Ireland's cities all hold their own parades and festivals. Other large parades include those held in a number of cities in

Day is a Christian festival celebrated in the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland (among other churches in the Anglican Communion) and some other denominations.

History

The person who was to become St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Wales about AD 385. His given name was Maewyn, and he almost didn't get the job of Bishop of Ireland because he lacked the required scholarship.

At the age of 16, Patrick, who

face time. Never miss this out.

Never put your child's emotions down. Listen to them. Most of the parents always compare their children with other children and their goals. Remember, every child is born with different talents and gifts from God. They all are gifted to this society. So try to encourage them in all situations. Every child wants to hear encouraging words especially from their parents. I know many people those who are hurt by their parents and the way they were treated at their young age. Do not show partiality among your children. Treat every child equally at your home. Always build confidence within your children.

Teach your children to respect. I could say rather be an example at home before your children, they always follow you. Have patience with your children. They may not do things quite as the way you would, but respect their feelings.

Give priority to your children. Love your children unceasingly. Hug them as much as possible. Praise them always for their deeds. Let them understand you how much you love and care for them.

Do not lie. Be a role model. Marriage requires total honesty. Lying implies separate goal and agenda. It will bring further problems. Remember, children are watching and hearing what you

speaking. Communication within the family should be honest. Husband and wife should not guess what each other think within themselves. Every husband and wife should work it out at open perception until it becomes a habit in the relationship. This will facilitate your children for their bright future.

Teach your children to fear for God. When you read The Holy Bible, in Psalms, the Psalmist concurs "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children". Parents have the responsibility to restrain sinful behavior within their children. Through this they will trust in God and develop life long righteous behavior. Train up a child in a Godly way he/she should grow and when he/she is matured he/she will not depart from it. Parents can teach the fear for the Lord.

Dear beloved, Children are the gifts of God. Protect your children; discipline them by giving love and care. Let you be an example to your children. Let this March-break be the time for more family values. Thank God for the March-break. Let us exploit this opportunity to build a strong family acquaintance within our children and us intimately.

It is also important that parents consider the different disposition of their children when cor-

recting or disciplining them. Some children are very sensitive and they respond immediately to a simple verbal reproof. But some children are different and it takes them long time to repent. The objective of discipline is repentance and a change in behavior.

As family, we had enough entertainment, get-together, vacation etc. But in this March-break spend your time with your children by listening to them, converse with them, understand their needs, encourage them and let them know that they are very important. Get down on their level and observe the World in the way they observe! Study your children and discern who they are.

Keep on your marriage together! Children need parents who love each other. Remember you are raising someone else's future husband or wife, a leader or the prime minister to this nation. Parents with solid marriage relation will have a spiritual, loving home that allows the children to acquire a bright future. Have a joy - filled blissful happy home. Have lots of fun; Laugh a lot. Have a wonderful M-A-R-C-H-B-R-E-A-K with your lovely children. May God bless you all. Love you. See you all soon in next edition.

Pastor. Michelle Kamal,

www.loverescue.org

Email: pastor@loverescue.org

FAMILY VALUES

...By Pastor. Michelle Kamal

Love Rescue Ministries

The World around us is set up to tempt us. Materialism, pride, self-centeredness, laziness, lying, sexual lust and drugs. On some level or another we may struggle with most every one of these areas in a given day or week.

When tempted no one should say, "God is tempting me". For God cannot be tempted by evil. Temptations always bring us into sin. Eventually sin will lead us to separation. Sin does not start with our action, but with our inner desire. We should be able to deal with those inner desires that come to destroy our family relationship. Many voices are to say, "I can't bear to bring a child into such a world of problems. In a family, husband and wife are made for one another spiritually, psychologically and physically. Their relationship brings forth life in each of these aspects.

We must have a strong foundation of family values to bring up our children well in this dangerous society. A strong foundation of family values can be built by our healthy married relationship. Marriage is a covenant and it is very important to the being and well being of family values. Marriages are more brittle today than ever before and so are the



children. I always meet children during my ministry who are left alone. Broken marriages leave countless children behind the fearful, angry, disappointed and lonely situation. Children are more affected by divorce of their parents. Married couples find divorce is the solution for their problem. It is the easiest way out, but not at all. The real losers are the children, especially in high schools or younger. Everyone has their ups and downs in their relationship. But relationships are not meant to be disposable.

Spent quality time with your children. More than anything, your children need time from you. Quality time means, not watching television together, not shopping with them or going to movies with them. They need your complete attention. Quality time involves

Who is a Guru?

By Kumar Punithavel

In the modern world, every day we see some one comes out and proclaims them selves as a Guru. We see Karate Guru, Gym Guru, Dance Guru, Music Guru to name a few. If one knows the real meaning of Guru then it would be easy to weed away the false ones. Webster English dictionary gives the meaning of the word Guru as,



'A Hindu spiritual teacher'. In general terms the word Guru in Sanskrit language means teacher. Hence any teacher may be called a Guru. In the original meaning in Sanskrit it was specifically used to denote a spiritual teacher.

In Sanskrit language the word 'Gu' stands for darkness, and 'Ru' stands for light or dispel. Hence the word Guru means dispeller of darkness. An interesting verse in Advayataraka Upanishad states as follows;

The syllable gu means shadows

The syllable ru, he who disperses them,

Because of the power to disperse darkness

The guru is named thus.

...continued in pg 38



Yoga-thon for Schizophrenia

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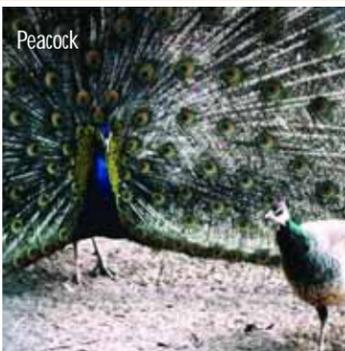
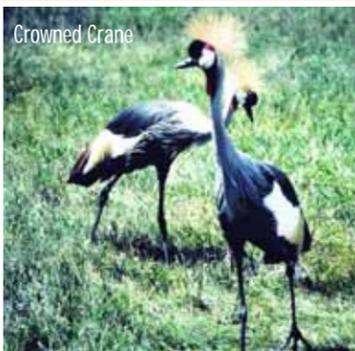
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ORNAMENTAL BIRDS - Refer Article on the next page



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ORNAMENTAL AND DOMESTICATED BIRDS

RAM NAMBIAR

The designation 'ornamental bird' applies to an avian species of gentle disposition and overwhelming beauty. A bird of this status is well groomed, wearing an ornamentation reminiscent of an attractive bride. The difference is that, among birds, mostly the males are richly coloured and versatile. The females are rather unkempt in appearance. Mild mannered and approachable nature of these 'once wild' birds allowed man to exploit their vulnerability and lure some of them into domestication long ago. Some are only semi-domestic.

Today, Recreation park and Garden officials are closely associated with ornamental birds not because they provide food or money but being incredibly beautiful, they brighten the surroundings. Such a picturesque facility is an attraction and visitors derive pleasure watching them. The curator often hires bird experts, dieticians and geneticists who will take care of these birds and also breed them.

An ornamental bird most admired around the world for its unsurpassed elegance and beauty is the national bird of India, the Peacock. No less colourful and popular are its three Asiatic cousins, the Red-necked, Golden and Argus Pheasants. The Red-Jungle fowl, another attraction, is the progenitor of our Common domestic fowl(chicken).

A ground scratching but a reluctant and flimsy flyer, this elusive bird is confined to the rainforests and Bamboo thickets of India and South East Asia. It is still a novelty in zoological parks and wildlife preserves. We have more than a passing interest in this species. The misguided action of a flock among them in the distant past led to the domestication and now the creation of to-days multi-billion dollars Poultry industry in North America.

Well known of the large aristocratic ornamentals are the Flamingoes, the Crowned Crane, swans, Egyptian goose, the Scarlet Ibis, the Roseate Spoonbill, Crowned Pigeon, the Macaws and Electus Parrots.

There are many more in the Avian kingdom. The officials travel to distant lands to catch adaptable wild birds that are endowed with enviable features or to simply buy from a commercial breeder. At new home turf, the aliens must go through quarantine. Once approved, the birds are given the freedom to lead a life of their own in a pre-designed, preset and ecologically balanced area resembling these birds' natural home. The birds' daily activities are live exhibits to the public. One such large facility is the Yellowstone National Park in the State of Wyoming USA, which embraces forests, both deciduous and coniferous, meadows and marshy biotope. The Everglade Marshes in Southern Florida supports many pretty ornamental birds such as the Scarlet Ibis,

Agamy heron, Purple gallinule, Roseate Spoonbill and more.

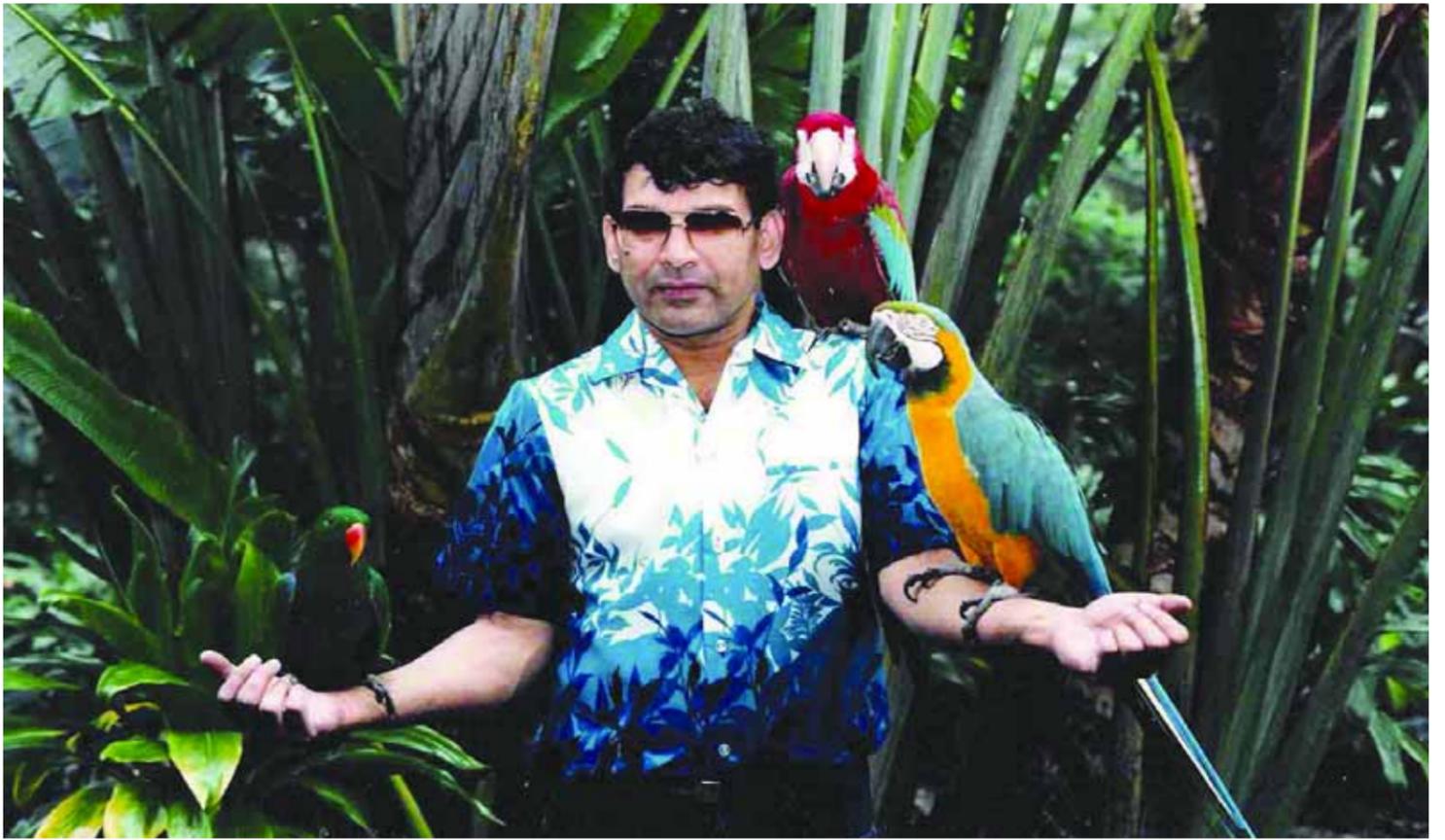
Ornamental birds in partial confinement, by habituation, lose much of the fear of man and crowd. But natural instincts and responses remain more or less intact. For instance, the mating urge in male bird in spring, makes him literally explode. Disharmony, squabbles for a territory and mate are not uncommon during this time. Ornamental swans like the Mute, Australian Black swan and Trumpeter, Goose like Egyptian, breathtakingly beautiful Wood Duck and others often mate in the semi-free conditions and raise

We don't know when and where exactly the birds were first recruited into ornamental beauties. Speculation is that it started from the time of domestication of the chicken and it occurred somewhere in the Peninsular India, and Eastern Europe. The course of events that changed an ever alert and vary wild bird into a tamed one, must have been one of the most ingenious achievements of early man. In the untamed wilderness around his settlement and cultivated areas, a bird most familiar to Bronze -Age Man, in 4000 BC, must have been the wild, brilliantly coloured Red-

common domestic fowl(chicken), due to man's selective breeding and 'genetic engineering' has gone through profound variation in size, shape and colouration resulting in hundreds of varieties and breeds. 'Rhode Island Red rooster', 'Bantam hen', 'Turkey Tom', 'Cornish chicken' 'White leghorn'(a prolific egg layer) 'Jersey Black', wild looking Russian orloff, Cochin(a show bird) Aseel (Ancient Indian athlete) to name a few, now bear no true resemblance to the ancestral Jungle fowl. Some of the genetically altered chicken of today lay very large eggs. Araucana chicken are

Greater Flamingo is found in US, West Indies, South America and sporadically in Asia. The American Flamingo is the brightest and reddish of all. The Lesser Flamingo, on the other hand, is found in Africa and in Asia. Lake Nakuru in Kenya's Rift valley is well known for its large concentration of Flamingoes. This species has a fairly large population in the mudflats and lagoons of India.

Conservation measures of ornamental birds in a large facility include putting mesh fences and signs such as 'Birds Nesting Area-Keep Out' By-Law No:320' etc along the margins of the marsh,



Ram Nambiar in Hawaii - Macaw Parrots on hisleft shoulder and arm and Electus Parrot of Australia on his right arm

free-flying population. Certain others, by nature, are shy and refuse to even court at the slightest of interference. Others simply try to escape.

One of the reasons ornamental birds are popular, is due to their stylized and attention arresting courtship display. Pre-copulatory traits as inviting as 'Peacock Dance' is an exceedingly difficult task to monitor in their natural moist and dry deciduous forest home of Kerala India, or Sri Lanka. Not in today's semi-wild stocks at the park. Here, the male performs time and again.

Anyone who closely attended to a peacock in display, will admit that the show personifies beauty, an attraction of a highest magnitude. He reveals his true royal blue and cinnamon colours to the Peahen. With his 'thousand' iridescent 'eye-like' spots and lustrous spectrum of colours of the upper tail coverts in a fan, he struts around all the while, focused fully in winning her heart. With the electrifying appearance and breathtaking beauty, he literally hypnotizes her. The motivation appears to be predominantly sexual. At times, near-mature male puts on a big show in front of visitors and photographers in the park even when the Peahen is no where in sight. May be, he is practicing for a future show down.

Jungle fowl. He trapped some of them but could not have cooked all the birds at once. No refrigerator to preserve the meat, the live birds were put away in his hut for a rainy day. The birds gradually got used to captive conditions and when kept outside in the open they started to glean a living around his settlement rather than attempting to escape.

Man enticed and tricked more of these wild fowl into accepting grains and seeds thrown out for them. Risk or rewards, one adventurous flock stayed back never to return to its natural wilderness again. Man gave them shelter from rain and cold and also protection from prowling predators. True rewards indeed. In return, the hens provided man with eggs and the cock supplied the meat. The entrapment strategy was a prelude to an ever-lasting symbiotic alliance between man and a fine feathered friend, the domestic fowl (chicken).

Red jungle fowl were brought into wholesale domestication in India in 3200 B.C. Even today, this wild fowl of antiquity can be seen rushing to roost in bushes and covers at dusk in the cultivated areas of North and Central India, close to human settlement. The wild jungle fowl hasn't changed significantly from ancient times. However, its 'lost legacy' the runaway faction, -the

programmed to lay even blue shelled eggs, while Maranus chicken's are chocolate coloured. The 'Turkey Tom' is hefty, an ideal commodity for marketing. Other examples of man-made breeds include some roosters with blood-red wattles and sharply curved tail feathers. Japanese Phoenix chicken has a 3m long tail and another breed, '-Onagadori' carries a tail of 6m. Certain ornamental varieties, '-Old English Bantam, cocks have been, and continue to be, used for 'cock fight and money in many countries. Incidentally, this blood letting, brutal and barbaric game has been banned in North America.

An ornithological Park or outdoor Garden of today may offer us an unique opportunity to discover the dazzling colours, grace, glamour strange forms and splendour in many of the live birds that are being exhibited. One of the strikingly beautiful of the exhibits in the park is the Flamingo. This red or pale-pinkish to white exotic bird in the wild state, feeds and breeds in large colonies in brackish or salt water lakes or lagoons. Flamingoes are birds of the humid climates. Bright colours, long legs, long slender neck, a bizarre looking down-curved bill, make the Flamingoes a unique ornamental species. The tallest

swamps, large water-hole and also in the land environment. As a result, nocturnal beasts of prey, poachers, hunters and joggers are successfully fenced out. Keeping ornamental birds was a status symbol and true inspiration to Kings, Noble men and other aristocratic people starting from Middle ages on. King Richard the First brought into England the majestic looking Mute Swans from Cyprus and released them in the Palace pond. Edward the 1st proclaimed that if any one found stealing a Mute Swan's egg will have to spend a year and a day in Jail.

Ornamental birds are distinct. Adornments, colourful costume; yes, they have them all. These birds win hearts and minds of visiting children and adults alike, world over. They are educational and are protected. Regrettably though, the same cannot be said about their wild brotherens left behind in their country of origin. They are running out of space to live due to man's destruction of their true habitats. Forests are cleared, ponds, lagoons and streams are drained at an alarming rate. We haven't touched on toxic chemicals in their foraging waters. Will these beautiful birds in captivity or denizens of zoos, turn out to be the last remnants?

The Power sharing experience in Canada

"In Canada, weather is a shared subject with the provincial government taking responsibility for the months of April to September and the federal government being responsible from October to March," deadpanned Mathew Mendelshon as the small group of Sri Lankan journalists seated around the table laughed heartily. The quip was greatly appreciated as it came at a time when six scribes and their Canadian co-ordinator were reaching the end of a 10 day study tour in Canada.

The study tour had focused mainly on the power sharing experience between the central or federal government and the provincial or regional governments. Since Canadian weather is generally bright and sunny during spring/summer and bleakly cold in fall/ winter Mendelshon's quip provided insight in lighter vein about the constant tussle between Ottawa and the provinces in the sphere of power sharing. Mendelshon, the deputy-minister of inter-governmental affairs in the provincial government of Ontario was making an informed presentation outlining various aspects of federal - provincial relations.

The Study tour was also a 'shared' brainchild of the Canadian High Commission in Colombo and the Forum of Federations in Ottawa. The High Commission selected the participants and devised a broad agenda. The Forum planned the itinerary in detail and made all relevant arrangements. Five journalists, Victor Ivan (Ravaya), Sharmini Boyle (Young Asia TV), Jatila Wellabada (Lakbima), Anura Solomons (Divaina) and Ayesha Zuhair (Daily Mirror), flew into Canada from Sri Lanka. I joined them in Ottawa as the sixth participant. Irina Shmakova who is the programme officer for Asia/Pacific at the forum coordinated the project and accompanied us on the study tour.

An enigma

I was in a sense an enigma among the six. Technically I was living in Canada but writing for a Sri Lankan newspaper. So on this trip I was a Sri Lankan journalist and not a Canadian resident. Since I do baffle many by writing

on Sri Lankan affairs for Sri Lankan newspapers from Canada this 'duality' was nothing new. Yet, I had to preface most of my self-introductions with the line "Actually I am living in Toronto and writing on Sri Lankan affairs for The Sunday Leader published in Colombo.....".

This provided perennial amusement to my colleagues who struggled to keep a straight face as I kept parroting the "actually" line. The only reward was the look on many faces at this puzzling phenomenon.

Initially, I had been doubtful wondering whether I would feel out of place in the team as I had been away from the media scene in Colombo for nearly two decades. Going around with fellow Sri Lankan journalists on an extended tour like this was a fond yet distant memory. But the tour was pleasantly productive and all of us from the veteran Victor to the team's 'baby' Ayesha interacted happily and well. Typical Lankan style jokes and wisecracks were galore with Irina saying "You guys are so funny and always laughing."

Elaborate preparations

But it was not fun alone and we did take the tour seriously, managing to banish the unpunctuality Sri Lankans are notorious for and being on time for our appointments (most of the time at least). Irina who has two Masters degrees had mastered the art of making us fall in line. She did so with gentle charm which brought to mind the phrase "Iron hand in a velvet glove."

A notable feature of the tour was the extent to which the presenters at various discussions had prepared themselves. Most of them had prepared elaborate reading material and went out of their way to be hospitable. At the tail-end of our tour our suitcases in addition to our brains were crammed with enhanced 'knowledge.'

Living in Canada for many years I had acquired a working knowledge of how things worked in Canada. I even prepared myself mentally to 'unlearn' what I had and view everything afresh from a non-Canadian Sri Lankan perspective. But as the study tour progressed I realised how superfi-

By D.B.S. Jeyaraj

cial my knowledge was. I learned much about my adopted homeland that I had never known before.

This has altered my perceptions and perspectives drastically. For this I am truly appreciative of the opportunity provided by the High Commission and Forum. To partially echo Gone With The Wind's Vivian Leigh "as God is my witness I shall never read the 'star' or watch CBC in the same



way after this study tour."

It was Christina Prefontaine, counselor (politics/economics) at the Canadian High Commission in Colombo who sent formal letters confirming selection to the six participants. "The study tour will bring you in contact with Canadian stakeholders who work or deal with decentralisation of power and federalism, such as academics, government officials, and journalists."

Prefontaine explained. "As a confederation ourselves, Canada is happy to share our experiences with this form of devolution of power. There has been much debate over the subject in Sri Lanka, and its applicability to this country. We believe such debates are healthy but could be better informed. You have been invited as we believe journalists are best placed to educate and inform the public, and to interpret the theories and concepts into viable options for Sri Lanka," she wrote in that letter.

Mutual cooperation

The Forum of Federations was eminently equipped to handle and implement the study tour on envisaged lines. It is a non-profit, international organisation based in Ottawa, Canada. It engages in a wide range of programmes of mutual cooperation designed to help develop best practices in countries with federal systems of government around the world. The forum has created an international network on federalism that brings together practitioners, scholars, and youth to learn and share ideas and experiences. The forum works with countries and organisations of the north and of the south, with established federal countries and newly-emerging federations. In addition, the forum works with countries that



The Forum of Federations is an independent organization that was initiated in Canada and is supported by many countries and Governments. (forumfed.org)

are exploring the possibilities of a federal political system.

The Forum of Federations is no stranger to Sri Lanka. Though Sri Lanka is not a federal country there has been a special relationship between the forum and Lanka. Chandrika Kumaratunga

education, networking and information-sharing. There was no advocacy for any political ideology or devolution model. The unique programme devised for us was both multilateral and comparative. It was like one gigantic buffet. Everything was available. It was for us to select and partake of. Nobody tried to force-feed us or short-list the menu.

Speaking of menus the tour also gave us a chance to experience the culinary diversity of Canada. From French fine dining to Italian cuisine and ethnic food fare ranging from Nepalese, Vietnamese, Greek and North Indian, Canada did provide variety to feast on. Since most of us had no dietary restrictions we did make the most of it. Only Ayesha was affected to some extent as halal meat was not always available.

Traditional Sinhala meal

We also got two excellent Sri Lankan meals thanks to our High Commissioner and Consul - General. High Commissioner Karunaratne hosted us at his Ottawa residence. It was a traditional Sinhala meal much relished by us all. Mrs. Karunaratna with charming simplicity was a gracious hostess. In Toronto Consul-General Poolokasingham entertained us for dinner at a Lankan owned restaurant in Scarborough. The amiable Poolokasingham had plans of making us scribes the centre-piece of attention. We respectfully declined but were touched and honoured by his gesture.

was scheduled to address its first ever International Conference on Federalism but could not make it. So it was Prof. G.L. Peiris who did so. After the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) pledged in Oslo to explore a federal solution the forum played a more active role. Former Ontario Premier Bob Rae and Toronto University Professor David Cameron were on hand at many GOSL-LTTE talks to "advise" on federal issues.

No hidden agenda

They also conducted many workshops, seminars etc. in Sri Lanka. They also held classes for the LTTE political affairs committee in the Wannai. The forum has



also conducted a number of workshops to educate the Lankan public on power sharing and devolution. Its President George Anderson was in Lanka to deliver a special lecture last month. The forum's partner in Colombo is the Centre for Policy Alternatives.

If any of us had any fears of a hidden agenda behind the study tour all such misgivings were dispelled as the project unfolded. True to their word the forum people did not seek to impose anything on us. The focus was on

As I mentioned earlier our itinerary was quite tight but very comprehensive. There were occasions when we would have liked very much to prolong discussions but found the chariot of time drawing near. This was to be expected. We did however have some time for sightseeing despite the crisp schedule. But the unpredictable Canadian weather was a spoiler. The trip to Niagara Falls was severely curtailed. We were in the midst of a massive snow storm in Quebec. My colleagues



also faced the coldest night in Toronto this season.

But what of the 'study' in the tour? Almost every session was exhaustive and informative. It was indeed a tremendous task to cite preferences when it was time for evaluation. Hopefully I would be writing a series of articles about various aspects of the tour in the days to come.

There are a variety of subjects from power sharing at federal, provincial and municipal levels; multi-culturalism, Quebec's distinctiveness, bi-lingualism, aboriginal rights, minority rights,



charter of rights and freedoms, promoting French in Quebec, Canada's constitutional evolution, the containment of Quebec separatism etc. are fascinating topics with particular relevance to Sri Lanka; the challenge would be in interpreting these lessons to Sri Lankan readers.

An overview of the study tour would be pertinent at this stage. The programme got off to a start with an introduction about the forum and its objectives. Celine Auclair, the forum's vice-president for research and governance programmes along with Rod Macdonnell, senior director for public information conducted the session; this set the stage for the events to come. I will outline some highlights briefly.

Former constitutional adviser to the Canadian Government James Hurley Ross who spoke about the Evolution of Canadian Federalism and the Charter of Rights laid special emphasis on the defining characteristics of Canada. Dr. Leslie Seidle, senior research associate at the Institute for Research and Public Policy conducted a discussion on Canadian and Quebec identity and values.

Inter-governmental relations

Inter-Governmental relations from a Federal perspective was provided in Ottawa by Alfred Macleod the assistant deputy minister, inter-Governmental relations, Privy Council; Inter-governmental relations from the Quebec perspective was the topic handled vividly in Quebec city by Michel Frederick, directeur Des Politiques Institutionnelles et Constitutives at the Quebec Secretariat of Inter-Governmental Affairs; Inter-governmental relations from an Ontario perspective was provided in Toronto by Mathew Mendelshon, deputy minister of inter-governmental

affairs and his constitutional adviser Paul Barber. The municipal level dimension input came from Jean Seguin, assistant deputy minister of municipal affairs and regions in Montreal.

Graham Fraser, a reputed journalist and columnist is now commissioner of official languages. He gave us a penetrating insight into how his dept 'supervises' bi-lingualism officially; Gerald Paquette of the Office Quebecois de Langue Francaise in Montreal explained with thorough detail the methods and devices adopted to empower the use of

French language in Quebec Province in terms of the Charter of the French Language. Both these sessions enabled us to gain much insight that would be of use within the Sri Lankan context.

Though Canada is perceived as being founded by the English and French 'solitudes' the land's original people are its indigenous peoples. There was no possibility in the itinerary of meeting any of their representatives but that was compensated for adequately by an illuminating talk delivered by Prof. Sebastien Grammond of the Faculty of Law in the University of Ottawa.

The discussion that followed was two-way and we provided Grammond with details about how cruelly our own indigenous people, the Veddahs had been treated. In similar plight are the kuravas or gypsies.

There were three round-table discussions. The first was in Ottawa with officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Glen Hodgins, deputy-director of South Asia Division initiated the discussion. The ebullient Hodgins has served in the Canadian High Commission in Colombo some years ago and was well-informed of Sri Lankan developments. He also told us of a 'new' area in which Canada was exploring ways and means of providing assis-



tance to Sri Lanka.

The second round table was in Quebec at the Laval University. Dr. Gerard Hervouet and his colleagues at the Department of Laval University participated. It was a stimulating discussion with the focus being on how and why the Quebec separatist movement did not descend into violence apart from the brief FLQ phase in 1970. It was the consensus of opinion among us Lankan scribes that the French Canadians were more passionate and intense about issues as compared to the more detached and clinical English Canadian counterparts.

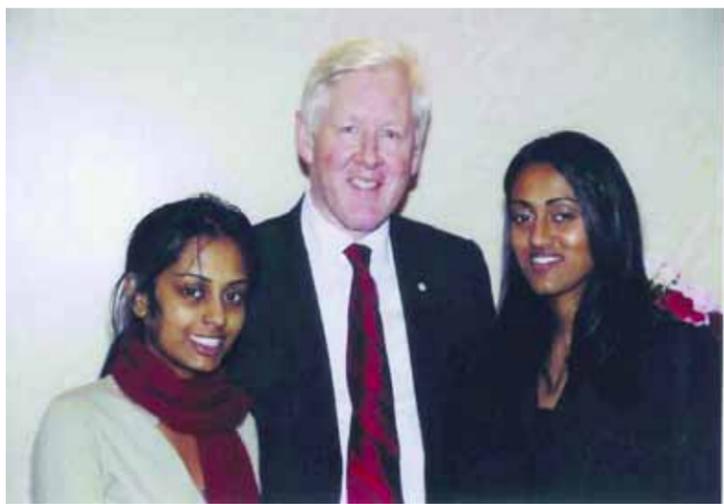
Blame on Colombo and Kilinochchi

The third round table discussion was at the venerable Massey House in the University of Toronto (U of T). Prof. David Cameron led the discussion that focused mainly on journalism in a conflict situation. The discussion was enriched by the participation of five journalists, all of them Southam Fellows. The Southam Fellowship is modeled on the Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University. Since Prof. Cameron had first-hand knowledge of the Sri Lankan peace process we asked him his opinion and were surprised to find that he apportioned 'blame' equally on Colombo and Kilinochchi for its perceived failure. Later Bob Rae joined us for lunch at the U of T.

We also had the opportunity of visiting an English and French newspaper office respectively. The Montreal Gazette is an icon for the English in Quebec Province. Andrew Phillips its quiet editor admitted that the paper was a rallying point for Anglophones in Montreal.

Our visit to the French newspaper Le Devoir was equally interesting. Apparently the paper is regarded by many as being partial towards the separatist cause in Quebec. Both newspapers however claimed that they are 'objective' when it comes to news presentation.

Speaking of journalism and the media, we also met Daniel Giasson, analyst at the Quebec Press Council. He gave us a comprehensive lecture on how the press council works and Lakbima Editor Jatila, who is an office-bearer at the Editors' Guild found it very worthwhile. Daniel endeared himself to us all by his demeanour and quaint English accent that reminded us of Peter Sellers's Inspector Clouseau in the Pink Panther series. So lov-



able was the man that he was showered with gifts at the end by some of us.

In Toronto we met Paul Knox, the chair, School of Journalism at Ryerson University, for a discussion on media ethics, training and professionalism etc. Paul was a well-known journalist at the Globe and Mail who has now re-located to academia. Associated in the discussion was Meena Nallainathan, a graduate student at Ryerson which is highly regarded as a training centre for media. Meena is of Sri Lankan origin and had come to Canada at the age of three.

One aspect of our tour was the conspicuous absence of gender balance in the presentations. Almost all the presenters were masculine though a few females also participated in some discussions. But at our last stop on the tour the situation was reversed. We went to the media rights watchdog - Canadian Journalists for Free expression - and met Anne Game its executive director. The boardroom was packed with CJFE staffers, all of them females but for one. In the lively discussion that followed, Victor Ivan shocked them with his unorthodox comments.

Nostalgic feelings

It must be emphasised that all sessions had time for questions and answers. Though we gleaned much information from these it was not always a one-way street. We provided some insight into happenings in Sri Lanka. What was most gratifying was the fact that some of our questions made the Canadians think about Canada in a way they had not thought of before. When some of them acknowledged this fact it made us feel really, really good.

From a journalist point of view our visit to the House of Commons was unforgettable. Nostalgic feelings were revived as we sat in the gallery and listened to the proceedings via earphones. Though I have watched Canadian Parliament proceedings on TV it was a refreshing change to see it from inside. I derived immense pleasure in pointing out the leaders like Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Ministers Peter Mackay, Stockwell Day, NDP Leader Jack Layton, Liberal Deputy Leader Michael Ignatieff etc. to my colleagues.

Our respect for Canadian ministers went up greatly on seeing that prior notice of questions are

generally not given. The ministers rise to answer each and every question and also supplementary ones. They think on their feet and come out with answers while the treasury benches thump the table and cheer. We could not but help compare the situation with Sri Lanka where ministers are seldom present to answer questions.

Ready to answer

We also saw the media scrum where political bigwigs are accosted in the outer lobby by media personnel. Instead of shying away from the members of the fourth estate the Federal MPs stood their ground responding to media queries. Nelson Laframboise met us outside and gave us our media accreditation passes. He also took us to the press gallery. A freelance journalist Richard Cleroux gave us a guided tour of the Parliament building. The magnificent library with its white pine paneling and the 'jinxed' portrait of Queen Victoria grabbed our attention.

There was a high degree of bonhomie and camaraderie among all seven of us during the tour. Though we teased Irena as a slave driver all of us were impressed by her energy and enchanted by her efficiency. All good things come to an end. Our study tour ended on March 6, and I bade farewell to return home to Scarborough. The other five were to go home to Colombo while Irena would go home to Ottawa. The study tour was very useful and my thanks to the High Commission and Forum for organising it and inviting me as participant. [transCurrents.com]

TAILPIECE: I learnt subsequently that my colleagues had shocking treatment meted out, by boorish Air Canada officials at the Toronto Airport. They were not allowed to fly by Air Canada to London and would have been stranded if not for the presence of Irena. Adding insult to injury were the dirty remarks made and callous disregard shown. The Forum then bought new tickets from Cathay Pacific thus enabling my colleagues to fly home via Hong Kong and Singapore. All the goodwill created for Canada during the study tour was shattered by Air Canada.

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ICJ calls for justice as inquest into killing of 17 Sri Lankan aid workers concludes

Michael Birnbaum QC, at the ICJ media conference held on Friday March 9th at Galle Face hotel in Colombo

Following the conclusion of the official Magistrate's inquest into the killing of 17 aid workers in Muttur last August, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has called for a prompt, independent and thorough investigation by a body that has the trust of all Sri Lankans and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

"The inquest Magistrate has pointed out flaws in the investigation so far and indicated the next steps in the investigation", said Michael Birnbaum QC, the ICJ's official observer at the inquest hearings.

"The Sri Lankan Government needs to dispel serious concerns about whether the justice system is now able to carry out independent and credible investigations into who was responsible for these killings and to mount effective prosecutions", added Michael Birnbaum.

"The Government should entrust the investigation to a national body that has the trust of all Sri Lankans and if that is not possible, then the Government should look elsewhere for assis-

tance in the investigation," he added.

The ICJ supported the Magistrate's ruling that the investigation of the case had been inadequate. "I believe it was right for the Magistrate to order that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) should seek the assistance of Australian expertise to reinvestigate the ballistics evidence", said Michael Birnbaum.

"I am particularly concerned that despite a Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Sri Lanka and Australia, whereby Australian experts would assist in the analysis of bullets found at the scene and recovered from the bodies, the CID has unilaterally arranged the ballistics examination", added Michael Birnbaum. "Involvement of independent, outside experts would have helped to allay any suspicion of tampering with evidence - an issue which has been raised in at least one other similar case".

The ICJ expressed its condolences to the relatives of the Action Internationale Contre la Faim (ACF) workers killed in Muttur. "This is an appalling atrocity. These brave people were seeking to help the local population. The killers could not have



Michael Birnbaum QC, at the ICJ media conference held on Friday March 9th at Galle Face Hotel in Colombo

been in any doubt about who they were executing. The premises were clearly marked as those of ACF and most of the victims wore its distinctive T-shirts. Yet, they were made to lie down on the ground and were shot in the head. Their families are entitled to justice - this means not only the identification and prosecution of those responsible, but also financial and other compensation", said Michael Birnbaum.

A remarkable feature of the inquest was that it was heard by two different magistrates. The first was the magistrate of Muttur, himself a Tamil. On 4 September 2006, he received a telephone call from the Ministry of Justice notifying him that on the instructions of the Judicial Services Commission (JSC), he was to send the file to

the Anuradhapura Magistrate who would continue the inquest.

Michael Birnbaum commented: "To appoint a new magistrate to hear a case that is well under way is virtually unprecedented. In my view, this mid hearing substitution of magistrates by the JSC was unlawful under Sri Lankan law and without justification. Worst of all, the way it was done might well undermine the confidence of the Tamil minority in the system of justice".

However, Michael Birnbaum paid tribute to the sensitivity and fairness with which the two magistrates handled the case. The improper action of the JSC had not, in fact, compromised their independence and impartiality.

The ICJ welcomed the Magistrate's order that further

steps should be taken to protect the identity of the witnesses who are willing to come forward with additional evidence and also residents living near the crime scene.

"Fear is the enemy of justice. Unless the Government of Sri Lanka implements a witness protection programme, witnesses will rarely come forward in any case where they feel themselves to be in peril. Measures that should be considered include: the use of evidence by video link, the physical protection of witnesses by a body independent of the police and army, and the temporary or permanent relocation of particularly vulnerable witnesses", said Michael Birnbaum.

The ICJ acknowledges the establishment of a Presidential Commission to enquire into a number of recent serious human rights violations, including the killing of the 17 ACF aid workers. The Commissioners are to be assisted by a panel of foreign observers. Michael Birnbaum commented: "I hope that the Commissioners will be able to conduct independent and impartial investigations, implement a comprehensive witness protection programme and make full use of the expertise and advice offered by the international experts".

"However, the Presidential Commission of Inquiry is outside the Sri Lankan justice system and will report only to the President. Its work should not delay the Government from moving swiftly to resolve the Muttur killings", concluded Michael Birnbaum.

[icj.org]

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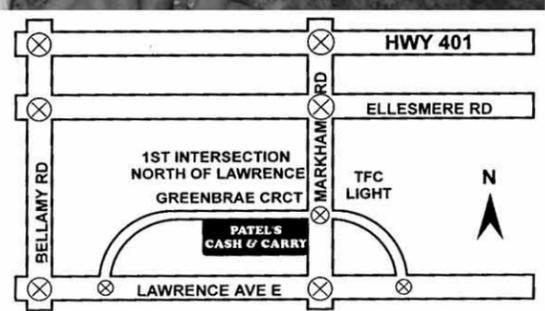
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Getting used to life with no working limbs

By Peter Apps

Five months after a minibus smash on the eastern front of the Sri Lankan civil war broke my neck and left me completely paralysed, the condition has long since lost its novelty value.

Since September, I have been unable to perform most of life's most basic functions. I need to be fed, washed, dressed and turned frequently in bed to avoid pressure sores.

It is a uniquely isolating condition. I can't reach out to touch anything, can't even point at something I want the staff at my rehabilitation hospital to fetch.

Having spent the previous two years covering conflict, economics, business, disease, food crises and disaster in southern Africa and Sri Lanka, it was an abrupt and brutal change to find myself immobile in a small English town.

Yet one of the most striking things I have discovered is how much is possible.

I have learnt to drive an electric wheelchair with my head. I navigated through throngs of pre-Christmas shoppers, barely damaging the displays in the packed stores we browsed through in a crowded but wheelchair-friendly mall.

I have taken up painting with a brush held in my teeth, producing some occasionally striking works. One of my fellow patients said they might win an art competition, but only in the six- to nine-year-old category.

The last story I wrote in November -- about the accident itself and my evacuation to Britain -- had to be dictated to friends



and family. Through the marvel of voice recognition software, this piece was written and then revised entirely by me.

The ability to write e-mails and surf the Internet myself has helped me regain much mental independence and control over my life and it will be crucial in allowing me to return to work.

Obviously, it has been a tough time. Leaving aside the physical disability, there have been vast financial worries, personal disappointments and the disconcerting assumption by some that my useful life was effectively over.

Encouraging e-mails from colleagues and others from Baghdad to Beijing made a huge difference. More useful still was getting in touch with people with similar disabilities who had already achieved so much.

Bouncing back

Victoria Brignell was paralysed from the neck down in childhood after surgery to remove a tumour from her spine. Now, she is a producer for BBC Radio Four.

Colin Javens has a little more arm movement than I do, but not much. He drove a specially adapted four-wheel-drive vehicle from Britain to Cape Town, crossing North Africa, Sudan and the bandit-infested badlands of northern Kenya.

All I wanted was to go back to my job and my team in Sri Lanka and carry on trying to make sense of the increasingly hellish conflict; obviously in a wheelchair and at a very respectable distance from live battlefields.

My doctors told me it was clearly medically possible, but more cautious heads prevailed.

Instead I will be in London, writing about aid, development, food shortages, conflict and other issues for AlertNet, a humanitarian news Web site run by the Reuters Foundation.

I'll still be working hard at recovery. Although I am unable even to lift the weight of my arms, some of the muscles are getting stronger.

Even if, as seems likely given the level of damage to my spinal cord, my hands remain useless, I may in time regain useful arm movement.

But for me, I will know I have bounced back when I'm back in a minibus in my wheelchair, heading out somewhere in the developing world to talk to people who are usually ignored about problems the world barely cares about.

Again, the doctors say it is totally feasible. And it certainly beats sitting in a room watching daytime television and feeling sorry for myself.

[Courtesy: Reuters.com]

Torture, TV and the war on terror

By Peter Apps

Accusing violent television of promoting violence may be nothing new, but this article by Jane Mayer in the New Yorker brings the debate into the world of geopolitics and human rights.

Set in real-time, the TV series "24" pits U.S. federal agent Jack Bauer against a range of conspirators aiming to inflict death and destruction. With the clock ticking to disaster, there is often no time for the niceties.

The show has aired around the world, and the DVDs - both pirate and legitimate - sold from Seattle to Sri Lanka. Bad guys get tortured, crucial intelligence is gained, the plot is foiled and lives saved in the nick of time.

"Whatever it takes," is the show's mantra. "Everyone breaks eventually."

War, conflict and the darker side of counterinsurgency have always been objects of fascination. George Orwell's dictum that good people only sleep well at night because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf appears to still hold.

For some, the fact that there is even a "debate" over torture is shocking enough - and makes pressuring developing countries to improve their human rights record much more difficult.

"When I went into the human rights field, I never dreamed we would be talking about whether torture was justified," Human Rights Watch senior legal adviser Jim Ross told Reuters. "And I never dreamed the debate will be taking place inside the United States."

The New Yorker reports that encouraged by the success of torture in "24", young U.S. army interrogators are using the same techniques in Iraq and Afghanistan - to the concern of others in the military.

A group of senior U.S. army officers - mainly lawyers - even went to see the show's producers to try and persuade them to cut back.

In reality, many experts say torture simply does not work. Either the victim does not break at

all, or they will simply say anything to get it to stop. From Jane Mayer's article, it appears the producers are unconvinced.

"They say torture doesn't work," co-creator and executive producer Joel Surnow told her. "But I don't believe that... Tell me, what would you do? If someone had one of my children or my wife, I would hope I'd do it."

But in reality, it is rarely that simple. It can almost never be certain that a suspect holds life-saving information.

And all too often, it is barely about information at all. Covering the war in Sri Lanka, I occasionally saw the bodies of young men who disappeared near army camps and were found covered in blood, bones broken and a bullet in the head.

There was almost never the suggestion that they had been tortured to find a ticking bomb - more often, it was simply revenge for an ambush or attack on a military.

But what it could achieve was intimidation. In April of last year, I saw families fleeing an ethnic Tamil village into rebel Tamil Tiger Territory after the torture and killing of just one local young man.

The fear is that once torture or abuse is condoned at all, it can fast become more widespread.

When I asked Sri Lankan army officers or officials about abuse, they at first denied it but often then admitted it might occasionally take place.

But without exception they pointed the finger at a "few bad eggs". And then they pointed to reported abuses from Guantanamo to Iraq and asked why they were being held to a higher standard than the United States.

But the last word should perhaps belong to the lead writer of "24", Howard Gordon, with perhaps the scariest quote ever to feature in an entertainment story.

"The truth is, there is a certain amount of fatigue setting in," he told the New Yorker. "It's harder not to repeat the same torture techniques over and over."

[Reuters-Alertnet]

Act to end serious abuses in Sri Lanka

UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission Needed

(Geneva, March 13, 2007)

The United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva should take urgent action to address serious human rights violations in Sri Lanka during its current session, Human Rights Watch said today in a letter to council members. Human Rights Watch and other international and Sri Lankan human rights organizations are calling for the creation of a UN human rights monitoring mission to deter, monitor, and help investigate abuses by both government forces and the armed opposition Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In a letter sent to council members today, Human Rights Watch highlighted an ongoing pattern of human rights and international humanitarian law violations by both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, resulting in deaths and injuries to hundreds of civilians and the displacement of thousands more in recent months.

"Both the government and the LTTE have long been responsible



for serious abuses, and the violations will not end without concerted international effort," said Brad Adams, Asia director of Human Rights Watch. "To help save lives, the Human Rights Council should work with the relevant parties to urgently deploy UN human rights monitors on the ground."

Human Rights Watch said that abductions, killings, and enforced disappearances implicating pro-government forces are escalating. Government forces remain complicit in the use of child soldiers by

the Karuna group. Particularly troubling is a government crackdown on the media, humanitarian agencies, and nongovernmental organizations based on unsubstantiated claims they are supporting the LTTE. The LTTE continues to engage in killings and the use of child soldiers.

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Canada's SC strikes down controversial anti-terror law

Canada's highest court has struck down an anti-terrorism law that allowed authorities to indefinitely detain and deport foreign-born terrorist suspects without revealing evidence, and gave the Canadian government one year to modify the rules.

The unanimous 9-0 Supreme Court decision, said the individual rights of three men accused of links to al-Qaeda should not be superseded by national security concerns.

"Before the state can detain people for significant periods of time, it must accord them a fair judicial process," Judge Beverley McLachlin wrote in the court's judgment Friday.

The ruling dealt a blow to the

government's anti-terrorism regulations. Five Arab men have been held for years under the "security certificate" program, which the Justice Department had insisted is a key tool in the fight against global terrorism and essential to Canada's security.

Authorities have until now had the ability to issue so-called security certificates to arrest and deport terrorism suspects living in Canada, hold non-public trials and not disclose evidence against the accused.

The Canadian government has argued the system is necessary to safeguard public security, and said it would not respond to the court's decision before examining the ruling more closely. [PTI]

Sultan of Brunei bestows honour on Lankan scholar

Sri Lankan scholar Dr. Haji B.A. Hussainmiya, received high State honours from His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah during his recent 60th birthday celebrations held at Istana Darul Iman, the Brunei Sultan's palace attended by royal dignitaries, diplomatic community, and state officials.

The award is 'Bintang' - Star in Malay known as 'The Most Blessed Order of Setia Negara Brunei - 4th Class' (Darjah Setia Negara Brunei Yang Amat Bahagia Darjah Ke-empat - PSB), the highest meritorious medal ever awarded to a Sri Lankan in Brunei.

Dr. Haji Hussainmiya is a Professor of history at the University of Brunei Darussalam. He is a leading expert in Brunei history and has already written



three books on Brunei's modern history, and countless number of research articles on Brunei history in international journals, including world encyclopedias.

Hussainmiya is also well known for his pioneering books on Malays of Sri Lanka and the Ceylon Rifle Regiment.

Hussainmiya has taught at the Peradeniya University, the

National University of Malaysia and at the University of Brunei Darussalam. He has also delivered talks in various universities worldwide, at the National University of Singapore, Tokyo University Japan, University of Science, Penang, University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur and Hull University in England.

Hussainmiya was a research fellow and visiting professor at the National University of Malaysia, Hull University, National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka and University of Northern Illinois in the USA.

He is also currently a Consultant to the Official Brunei History Centre and regularly travels to world archives to collect information on Brunei historical documents.

Kuwait confirms 20 cases of avian flu in birds

25 February 2007 KUWAIT CITY

Kuwait has confirmed 20 cases of the deadly avian flu in birds including falcons, chickens and turkeys, a spokesman for the Health Ministry said Sunday.

Ahmed Al Shatti said there were no human cases and an emergency plan has been activated. He the cases were found at the Kuwait Zoo, farms and a clinic for falcons. The zoo and bird markets would be closed temporarily, and exports and imports of birds would be halted, he said.

This small oil-rich state last

confirmed case of the deadly H5N1 strain of the virus was in 2005 when officials discovered the disease in a flamingo.

Since it began ravaging Asian poultry farms in late 2003, the H5N1 strain has killed at least 167 people worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

Although it remains difficult for humans to catch, health authorities across the world are monitoring the strain out of concern it could mutate into a form that easily spreads from person to person, sparking a pandemic.

Tea prices expected to be lower than '06

Tea market in 2007 might not be as hot as it was in 2006 owing to a bumper crop, some industry players expect.

"Tea prices are likely to ease during 2007 due to expectation of a bumper crop in India and overseas as compared to the previous year," Beeyu Overseas Ltd chairman and managing director B P Singh told media.

He, however, remained optimistic that the price correction due to volume spurt would be not more than four to five per cent than the ruling average prices.

"This year we have had good rainfall and the February rain will

help production. Our tea processing factories are opening from tomorrow as green tea leaves will start coming in from March," he added.

Singh said that production in Africa would also shoot up as after a slump of production by 15-20 million kg in 2006, this year the crop would be better. Production of Sri Lanka would also grow as production was lost for two months in 2006.

"With global demand growing by just 1-2 per cent any bumper crop will pull down prices," Singh said. The average tea price had firmed up by 8-10 per cent in

2006 over the previous year.

Beside, Kenya and Sri Lanka as major competitors to India tea exports, China tea is also gaining marketshare very fast. Being, mainly a green tea exporter it has not yet hurt Indian interest so far.

However, C K Dhanuka chief of Dhunseri Tea did not hope for any significant change in tea prices during the current year. "I believe tea prices will remain stable in 2007," Dhanuka said. [PTI]

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Lankan Tamils seeking TN support, says MP

'Sri Lankan Tamils are looking forward to support from India and Tamilnadu in particular to solve their problems in the island nation,' said N Srikantha, MP, Tamil National Alliance, Jaffna district.

Srikantha said this while addressing a press meet organised by the World Tamil Federation in Chennai yesterday. The meet was held to create awareness about the problems suffered by the Tamils in Lanka.

He said Tamils were subjected to human rights violation. 'Since May last year, killing of Tamils in places like Jaffna, Vaunia and Batticaloa have become common, and since August last indiscriminate arrests,



abduction, disappearance of Tamils have been reported,' he added.

'The Lankan authorities and the Armed Forces have been resorting to violence on Tamils and the paramilitary forces seem

to go hand-in-hand with the Armed Forces in this regard,' he added.

Srikantha further said innocent Tamil civilians bore the brunt of bombing by Lankan Armed Forces under the pretext of targeting LTTE positions. He added that certain foreign nations were lending a helping hand to Lankan authorities in this regard.

T R Janardhanam, president, World Tamil Federation (WTF), speaking on the occasion, said WTF had been focussing on problems and issues of Tamils for the past 40 years.

M K Sivajilingam, MP, was also present on the occasion. [newstodaynet.com]

Coca-Cola Blamed For India's Water Problems

By Mil Arcega

The Coca-Cola Company is embroiled in a bitter legal fight in India over water rights. Farmers in drought stricken areas of the sub-continent accuse the soft-drink maker of siphoning off badly needed water, but others say the US-based multi-national company may be the target of anti-American sentiments.

Coca-Cola may be the most popular soft drink in the world, but for some in Southern India, clean water is still the drink of choice.

In rural areas from Uttar Pradesh to Kerala, persistent droughts have dried up wells such as this one in the village of Plachimada. For many of the 30,000 people who live here, the only reliable source of water - is the one that arrives everyday in trucks.

Some say the wells dried up three years ago after the Coke bottling plant came to town. This woman says the plant pulled so much water out of the ground, there was nothing left to cook, drink or wash with.

And this farmer says even when they dig deeper wells, the water is unfit for human consumption.

Following several large protests, the local government



revoked the company's license late last year and ordered Coca-Cola to shut down its \$25 million plant.

Coke officials insist there is no scientific evidence to link the groundwater shortage to the company's operations. Some Indian leaders believe the issue may be less about science and more about the politics of anti-globalization.

Sitaram Yechuri is a politburo member of the Communist Party of India. "Coca-Cola is also a political product of the America's global success and domination, so on anything that people will turn to be anti-American, Coke will be the first symbol."

Coca-Cola currently has 52 plants in India. According to the India Resource Center, a non-profit group based in the U.S. state of California, communities near those plants are planning their own protests.

[VOANews.com]

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Away from the noise of the aircraft'

The story of an Internally Displaced girl in Sri Lanka...

"If I ever get a chance, I will go back to Muttur just to bring Meena." Nishadini, aged 10, says while she looks at me and smiles.

We are in a camp for displaced people in Sri Lanka's north-east Batticaloa. I watch her straighten her dress, the joy and hope that flushes her face in stark contrast to the scars war has left in her life.

"We left home so suddenly that night, and I couldn't bring her with me," she continues.

Meena is a doll. But for Nishadini Meena is her best friend, a symbol of something permanent among the many things and people that have been tagged 'temporary' in her life, which has been marked by conflict.

"We laid in the bunker in our garden for a very long time," Nishadini says as she tells me about 'that night'. "Whenever we hear the noise of aircraft overhead that's what we do - we quickly run and lie in the bunker and wait till it becomes quiet, but

that night it just wouldn't be quiet."

That's when her father realized they were no longer safe and that soon they would be without food and water. He decided to take the family and leave.

"We left past midnight so that we would not be seen and we didn't wait to pack anything. We didn't know where we were going, we only wanted to be safe," she says.

They traveled from Muttur, east of Sri Lanka in the Trincomalee District, southwards to Kadirveli School (Batticaloa District), living there for three months alongside other displaced families - then the shelling began there.

Next, they walked to Vaharai (further south in the eastern province) and took refuge in the hospital premises for five days - but the shelling found them there too.

They finally began to walk to Batticaloa town crossing the lagoon and the jungle.



"We walked for five days without food and rested very little. When we found a little water, we drank. We all lie down the moment we hear a plane; when we get up so many people lay dead. We would just leave them there and keep going," Nishadini shakes her head.

Nothing has been more constant in her life than displacement. When her family was made homeless in the previous war she was still growing inside her moth-

By Hasanthi Jayamaha

er. When the 2004 Asian tsunami caused havoc again they had to move on, Nishadini was only seven.

She has spent more time in schools as a displaced child, than as a student. She has stayed hidden in the jungle longer than she has had a permanent home and she has seen more lives destroyed than lives protected.

"I used to be so scared to go to school," she recalls. "Some days armed people in masks would come and ask us to go home saying school is closed. One day they shot and killed our class teacher. Another day a shell fell into the school and killed lots of children."

Here in the Iyankerni IDP Camp in Eravur Pattu she is away from all that and in a 'safe' place once again. She has begun another new life with her mother and father and four siblings, though her house is a temporary shelter and her school temporary too.

I look at the little girl once again. Everything about her

seems in place - her pigtails, her dress and the 'pottu' that decorates her forehead - though she is called 'displaced'.

"Do you like it here?" I ask.

"Yes," she smiles from one ear to the other, "I have new friends, we have food and more than anything else, there's no aircraft noise here."

Nishadini is one of thousands of children displaced in the North and East by the ongoing civil war. With no end to the violence in sight, World Vision and other NGOs are working to the best of their ability to ensure the protection of affected families, and provide the displaced communities with water, food and medical assistance.

In Vaharai, where the government is promoting resettlement, World Vision has been asked to help restore schools, as 10 out of the 15 schools in the area are currently unuseable. World Vision also plans to co-ordinate with the World Food Program to implement a food programme for families returning to Vaharai. [<http://www.wvasiapacific.org>]

[Hasanthi Jayamaha is a Sri Lankan journalist who works for World Vision Lanka in Colombo]

Sri Lanka: 200,000 displaced, security worsening in Government-separatist fighting

Over 200,000 Sri Lankans have been displaced in the past six months and some 600,000 others remain cut off in the north of the island as the unresolved conflict and dangerously fragile ceasefire accord between the Government and Tamil separatists continue to affect gravely the lives of children and women, according to a United Nations update.

"With violence between the government and the LTTE [Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam] at its highest level since 2002, the security situation is deteriorating especially in the North and East," the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in its March report on the 20-year-old conflict which has already killed more than 65,000 people.

"Political functionaries have been killed and multiple attacks on military and police outposts have taken place. Religious/ethnic strife is common, and public life is often closed down as a means of popular protest," it added, noting that the recruitment of children by the LTTE and the breakaway Karuna Faction continues to be a major violation of children's rights in the Indian Ocean island.

In the case of increasing violence and warfare, additional resources will be needed to respond to the uprooting of up to 400,000 people with displacement likely to range up to several years, UNICEF warned.

Security in the north and east has deteriorated for humanitarian workers due to harassment,

abduction and forced recruitment by the LTTE and Karuna Faction, while intensified security measures by the Armed Forces has led to reduced access for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN humanitarian staff and supplies to LTTE-operating areas, as well as to allegations of human rights violations.

Currently the immediate issues for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are services for water supplies, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management. "Ensuring that needs of public and personal hygiene are in place is critical," the report said, adding that some IDPs had already been uprooted several times.

UNICEF continues to monitor underage recruitment. During the last quarter of 2006, the number of children reportedly recruited by the LTTE further decreased from 187 to 145. Recruitment by the Karuna faction also dropped from 72 to 68 during the same period. The agency continues to talk with armed groups on the release of children and the cessation of recruitment.

As of the end of January, UNICEF had recorded 6,241 children abducted, 6,006 by LTTE and 235 by Karuna, with 1,879 children still being held, 1,710 by LTTE and 169 by Karuna. Released children and other male youth continue to seek UNICEF's aid for special protection in fear of assassination, arrests and abduction.

[UN News Centre]

Canadian Tamils Call For Clarity From Ottawa on Sri Lankan Policy

Press Conference on Parliament Hill explores Sri Lankan Ceasefire, Tamil Secession and Immigration Issues

Canada's largest Tamil organization has called on the federal government to clearly state its position on whether Tamils deserve the right to their own nation independent from Sri Lanka.

On the fifth anniversary of the Sri Lankan ceasefire, representatives from the Canadian Tamil Congress noted in a news conference on Parliament Hill that Sri Lanka has since seen a disheartening backward slide into deepening chaos, violence, and aggression that has seen more than 3,000 Tamils killed and 250,000 displaced last year alone.

Being the home of the largest Tamil diaspora in the world-numbering 300,000 people-Canada is in a unique position and carries special clout to help stop this dispiriting trend.

"Most Tamils in this country believe the ultimate solution to the plight of their relatives lies in Tamil independence," said Julian Francis, Ottawa Coordinator for the CTC.

"By every objective measure, Sri Lanka is a failed state. With state-sponsored pogroms, with

military bombings of civilian areas, with the burning of homes and schools, Sri Lanka has failed to meet the basic criterion under which nation-states can justifiably continue to exist intact: that bottom line is protecting your own citizens from harm."

Citing norms of international law, the CTC called on Ottawa to explain whether it believes - as it does - that Tamils deserve independence from Sri Lanka.

The group also called on Ottawa to take more immediate steps that would place pressure on Sri Lanka to ease the suffering of Tamils in that country. They asked the federal government to demand that Sri Lanka put an end to the road blockades that have exacerbated an ongoing humanitarian crisis.

These blockades have prevented goods and international aid to flow into Tamil-controlled areas in the north-east parts of the country. They have also made it nearly impossible for Tamils to travel and seek consular and immigration services from Canada and other countries in the capital, Colombo.

"So many Tamils have found a paradise in Canada - and have contributed as honest, hard-working citizens thanks to the human-

itarian amnesty granted in 1983 by former prime minister Brian Mulroney," added Francis.

"There would be more of our relatives here today, working hard, paying taxes, and getting an education, if they were able to flee that violence-ravaged country. But sadly, it's difficult for many of them to even reach the Canadian embassy."

Also in attendance was MP Maurice Vellacott, who expressed his personal admiration for the Tamil community's contribution to Canada, noting that Canadians ought to "allow them (potential Tamil refugees) to further contribute to our society."

The CTC called on Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay to state a position on Sri Lanka's national status, and to participate with Immigration Minister Diane Finley in seeking a solution that would ease badly-needed access to Canadian consular services.

The Canadian Tamil Congress is a national organization with over 10,000 members, dedicated to promoting human rights and celebrating Tamil culture.

[Full Text of Canadian Tamil Congress Press Release]

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MONSOON COMMUNITY



Tree of Dreams, Branches of Hope a Big Success!!! Thanks to Community Support!

By: Ashley Grant, Manager of Fundraising, MukiBaum Treatment Centres

MukiBaum Treatment Centres would like to extend their most sincere appreciation to the over 900 people who came out to support Tree of Dreams, Branches of Hope on Saturday, February 24th at the Toronto Centre for the Arts. It was a fabulous evening and a true labour of love for all of those involved. Words cannot express how thankful we are to Geetha Yogendran, the Director of Narthanalaya and all of the dancers. Thank you for sharing

your talents, dedication and passion with us! The dances, costumes, music, projections, and lighting were simply magical!

The goal of this event was to reach out to families within the South Asian community who have children with complex disabilities, such as Autism, so that they realize that they are not alone; places like MukiBaum exist and will try to provide guidance and support. We were very pleased to have a number of families in the audience as well as many persons with disabilities enjoying the universal language of dance.

All of the funds raised from this event, over \$25,000.00, are going to MukiBaum establishing a permanent dance program throughout our treatment centres. Dance provides a crucial vehicle through which individuals can express their emotions, create awareness of their bodies in space, and learn to relate to themselves and to others. It truly is a valuable form of treatment in the realm of sensory therapy for children and adults with complex disabilities.

Tree of Dreams, Branches of Hope was simply the first step

towards creating awareness within the community in order to ultimately improve the quality of life for children with disabilities and their families.

Thank you to our generous sponsors, Quattro Marketing and IWI Consulting Group, Gnanams Studio, The Host, Mahar as well as all of the media partners and donors who helped to make Tree of Dreams, Branches of Hope a reality.

Special thanks to: John Sabaratnam, Krish Thuraiajah, Doug Kinsley, Raviandran Kanayasamy, Logan Velumailum,

Claudette Persaud, Shalini Bahadur, Denise Boyd, Rudy Ruthran and all of the other dedicated volunteers for their efforts.

Thank you to Geetha Yogendran and Narthanalaya for helping us to make dreams come true!

For more information about MukiBaum Treatment Centres, please visit www.mukibaum.com or call 416-630-2222. For more details about Narthanalaya, The Canadian Centre for South Asian Dances, visit www.narthanalaya.com or call 416- 824-8847.



MONSOON ARTS

"Music has a spiritual quality" - Nithyasree Mahadevan

Nithyasree Mahadevan, also referred to as S. Nithyashri Mahadevan (born August 25, 1973) is an eminent Indian classical musician leading playback singer for film songs in many Indian languages. Nithyasree, was born to Lalitha Sivakumar and Injikudi Sivakumar. Her mother Lalitha Sivakumar, who was Palghat Mani Iyer's daughter and learnt Carnatic music - Indian classical music from her mother-in-law, the one-and-only, D.K. Pattammal, was Nithyasree's first guru. Nithyasree's commanding, high-pitched voice is well suited to Carnatic music, devotional, patriotic and popular songs. Her amazing voice, coupled with her style and vast repertoire, impresses audiences all over the world.

Nithyasree's first maiden Carnatic performance was for the Youth Association For Classical Music on 10th August 1987, in which she was titled 'best concert of the series'. She is an A.I.R. PRIZE WINNER (1990) and has been an 'A' grade artist. She has been awarded the "YUVA KALA



BHARATHI" title by Bharath Kalachar in 1994, "INNISAI MAAMANI" by Tamil Nadu Welfare Association, and various other prestigious awards such as "Kalaimamani", "ISAI PEROLI" (2001), . She received "BEST CONCERT AWARD" from The Music Academy during the music festivals a couple of times and has also performed for the "Sangeeth Natak Academy" twice in their International Music Festivals in Bombay and Hyderabad. She has performed in all major sabhas all over India and has presented her

concerts in the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Singapore, Malaysia and various other destinations throughout the world.

She has presented a paper on the Life and Contribution of Gopalakrishna Bharathi for the Music Department of PSG College, Coimbatore and made two thematic albums popularising a number of Gopalakrishna Bharathi 's compositions. Nithyasree has also given a Lecture Demonstration in Coimbatore for Manoranjitham on "Papanasam Sivan - A Legend" and likewise, released a couple of thematic albums popularising compositions of Papanasam Sivan. She received the "Best Promising Artiste" from "Mohanam" Music Club, and made a thematic album of compositions popularising the Ragam Mohanam. She has given numerous concerts consisting of only patriotic songs to commemorate the 50 th year of Indian Independence, a few with her grandmother D K Pattammal



Nithyasree with eminent singers D. K. Pattammal and Sudha Raghunathan

while her grandmother was still performing. Similarly, Nithyasree released a few albums popularising patriotic songs.

Though hailing from a very powerful family of musicians, she is an artiste in her own right. Nithyasree takes pride in confessing that her grand-mother D.K.Pattammal is her role-model but she does want to be a carbon copy of her grandmother. Nithyasree definitely is a chip of the old block. She genuinely feels her sole important responsibility and duty to keep alive the great tradition set by her family. Nithyasree feels proud to be an Indian. She feels happy about being a part of this country's rich

culture and heritage and also likes the loving and affectionate people here. She also feels life is too wonderful to be spent worrying. According to her "Everyone in this world should live with concrete and purposeful targets and should work towards achieving the same". She strongly believes that "Service to humanity is service to God". Music is, by itself, a spiritual experience. It helps you cope with anger or depression. It lifts your spirits and makes you happy, she says. She says that "HUMILITY" is the most important quality of any artiste and all praises and compliments from fans should reach their hearts and not head.

Courtesy : Wikipedia

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MONSOON ARTS

Veena Maestro Rajhesh Vaidya's Nadha Vinodham in Toronto

Eminent Veena Artist Rajhesh Vaidhya will be performing in Imperial Auditorium, Ontario Science Centre, Toronto on April 14, 2007. He will be performing jointly with Canadian Mega Tuners Aravindan for a big musical show. The musical evening show has been aptly titled as 'Nadha Vinodham' and presented by the past pupil of the Methodist Girls High School of Point Pedro, Sri Lanka. All proceeds of the event will go to benefit MGHS.

Born in 1973, Rajhesh Vaidhya was brought up in a rich musical tradition. His father Sri K.M. Vaidyanathan was a rhythm stalwart both in mridangam and ghatam. From a very tender age, he started his tutelage under Smt. Jeyalakshmi and continued receiving teaching of the Saraswathi Veena under Smt Rama Nambinarayanan. He also received advance training under the world-renowned carnatic veena maestro Shri Chitti Babu.

Rajhesh Vaidhya is not only a highly capable musician in India, but has performed on stages around the world including Europe, Brazil, South Africa, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Mauritius, Canada, USA and many more. He has even performed with an experimental dance troupe based in Switzerland.

Apart from his blistering speed, Rajhesh's veena playing is distinguished by his use of electric or amplified strings.

In addition to his instrumental performances, he is also involved in musical directing for teleserials, also working with leading cine directors Vidyasagar, Harris



Jeyaraj, Bhardhwaj, Deva and many more.

Albums to his credits includes 'Temptations', Hurricane, Rampage, d Voyage I, II, Freak, Churaliya. He has numerous other albums to his credit in the classical, "Bharathiyar" and Thiagaraja kirthis category.

Within the Veena tradition, undoubtedly one of the most intriguing and technically beguiling, Rajhesh Vaidhya has received the honorable title "Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Aasthana Vidwan"

(2001).

He has also acted in the famous Tele-serial "Premi" directed by Iyakkunar Sigaram Sri. K. Balachander on Sun TV. Rajhesh Vaidhya has done Music Direction for some of the famous Tele serials like, "Pudayal", "Marmadesam", "Anni", "Veettukku

veedu Looty", "Sharadha", "Alaigal", "Mugha-ngal", "Marakka Mudiya", "Enna satham inda naeram", "Sahaana" Nilaval Pidippom", and Vikramaaditya.

For more details and tickets for Rajhesh Vaidhya's 'Nadha Vinodham' concert in Toronto, please contact Subo: 416 795 9445, Vasugi: 905 303 4148, Rajezwaran: 905 827 9453, Yaso: 416 283 8353 or Gogulam: 416 265 2093.

Courtesy : www.rajheshvaidhya.com



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MONSOON HEALTH

Susceptible to kidney stones?

These diet tips may help

By Suzanne Havala Hobbs

Are you prone to kidney stones? Some dietary changes may help.

Kidney stones form when minerals and other substances in urine crystallize and clump into hard masses or stones. A number of factors may cause this, including urinary tract infections, kidney disease and inherited disorders or conditions that favor the formation of stones.

Foods aren't likely to cause stones to form unless you are already susceptible to them.

Who's most likely to develop kidney stones? Middle-aged men, but they can occur in adults of all ages. When they do, treatment varies.

Most small stones don't require medical intervention, but larger stones that cause persistent pain or other complications may be treated with a variety of techniques, none of which typically involves surgery. (For more details about kidney stones, go to the National Kidney and Urologic Diseases Information Clearing house at <http://kidney.niddk.nih.gov>

Drinking plenty of water -- up to 2 or 3 quarts per day -- can help flush a kidney stone out of the ureter and into your bladder.

Other than drinking plenty of fluids, though, your diet is likely to be more helpful in preventing future stones than in treating the ones that already exist.

Specific recommendations depend on the type of stones you form. The vast majority of kidney stones are composed of calcium and oxalate -- a component of some fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes.

Contrary to what you might guess, you

AFTER READING A RECENT OBSERVER COLUMN ON WHAT TO EAT, OR NOT TO EAT, TO AVOID KIDNEY STONES, ROGER FOX, OF HICKORY, NORTH CAROLINA SHARED A RECIPE THAT HE SAYS HAS CURED HIS PROBLEM, IN THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER RECENTLY:

Glycerine, lemon juice help his kidney stone ills

By Karen Garloch

Fox, 60, had his first attack while a student at Mars Hill College in the 1960s. He was catching baseballs during a winter practice inside the gym when he dropped to the floor and curled up in pain.

Teammates carried him to the infirmary, and a doctor in town gave him a painkiller.

Several years later, the attacks started again.

Once, he woke up at 5 a.m., again curled up in pain, and his wife drove him to the emergency room, where he got morphine and doctors retrieved the stone.

As a traveling salesman for an industrial chemical firm, Fox said he'd sometimes have to pull his car off the road. "It hurt so bad, I'd stop and throw up." Even prescription Tylenol 3 with codeine didn't always do the trick.

Then one day, Fox told a Hickory client, Wade Shepherd Sr., about his kidney stone attacks. Shepherd said his wife, Sophie, had a surefire natural remedy.

The recipe? One ounce lemon juice mixed with one teaspoon of liquid glycerine (from the drugstore). Drink one teaspoon before breakfast for seven consecutive days.

Fox tried it, and never had another kidney stone attack.

That was 12 years ago.

He knows it sounds too good to be true, but he asks: "What have you got to lose?"

Wade Shepherd remembers his late wife's recipe a little differently: One tablespoon lemon juice and three drops of liquid

don't have to restrict your intake of calcium-rich foods, although calcium supplements taken between meals may increase the risk of stones.

It's more important to reduce salt and sodium-rich foods, including salty soups, condiments, fast foods and processed foods, and to cut back on animal proteins, especially meat, cheese, eggs and poultry. Sodium and animal proteins cause you to lose calcium in your urine.

People prone to forming calcium oxalate stones also need to limit foods high in oxalates. Those include chocolate, nuts, rhubarb, spinach, peanut butter, dark leafy greens, strawberries, wheat germ, soy foods and sesame seeds.

Unfortunately, most of these high-oxalate foods are also super-nutritious, the kinds of foods most of us need. Your health care provider will give you individualized advice, and it's likely you'll be able to eat some -- but not a lot -- of these otherwise-good-for-you foods.

More water, less sodium, less animal protein. Perhaps you recall hearing that advice from me before. That's because the same recommendations that help prevent kidney stones generally reduce the risk of other chronic diseases and conditions, too.

Eat a diet rich in whole, unprocessed foods, reduce your reliance on protein-heavy and fatty animal products, watch the sodium and added sugar and get regular exercise. It's a prescription for overall good health.

[Suzanne Havala Hobbs is a registered dietitian and a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Health Policy at UNC; suzanne@onthetable.net; www.onthetable.net.]

glycerine. But Fox said he copied his version according to Sophie Shepherd's directions, and it worked.

He and his wife keep it taped inside their medicine chest. "I don't want to lose it," he said.

Raise citrate level.

I asked Charlotte urologist Tom Phillips for his thoughts on the lemon juice remedy.

Turns out it's not all that different from a recipe Phillips gives his own patients.

The best way to avoid kidney stones is to drink lots of fluids, especially water, lemonade (from concentrate) and orange juice, Phillips said. These drinks have high concentrations of citrate, which helps prevent stone formation. (Avoid coffee, tea and soft drinks.)

Phillips tells patients to drink this mixture daily: One-half cup reconstituted lemon juice (Real Lemon brand comes in a green bottle) mixed with 7 1/2 cups of water. You may add sugar to taste.

This drink will increase citrate in the urine to a level that will help prevent stones, Phillips said. There has been no study proving the recipe works, but studies have shown that pharmaceutical-grade citrate products prevent stones in those with low citrate levels.

Bottom line: Patients who've had kidney stones have a 50 percent chance of not having another stone regardless of what they do. "I frequently hear anecdotal stories..." Phillips wrote in an e-mail. "I do not ignore them, but I try to base my recommendations on scientific evidence." [Courtesy: charlotteobserver.com]

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MONSOON HEALTH

Scientific Study Takes Closer Look at Women's Risk for Heart Disease

By Melinda Smith

Figures from the World Health Organization show that 17 million people die of cardiovascular disease each year. Symptoms for heart disease in men and women often vary. But typically doctors diagnose heart problems in women based on risk factors seen in men. Now a decade-long study of 25,000 American women shows some underlying risks that may provide deeper clues to heart disease in many women.

Forty-five-year-old Leslie Power was out shoveling snow two years ago when she got the first warning of a pending heart attack. "I couldn't breathe. I was having pain in my shoulder."

Leslie Power had not thought she was at risk for heart disease.

Typically women experience warning signs for at least a month before an attack. Doctors can often make a wrong diagnosis because symptoms can match those of another illness. General symptoms of a heart attack include chest pain that lasts for a few minutes then returns. Pain felt in other parts of the upper body. Nausea or vomiting, dizziness, or rapid heart beats.

For women, those symptoms can include unusual fatigue, trouble sleeping, shortness of breath, indigestion or anxiety. Or sometimes women heart attack victims may have no symptoms at all.

Dr. Paul Ridker is part of a researcher team at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts: "We currently tend to underestimate women's

risk for heart disease. We found in the new data that many women were at much higher risk than we anticipated."

Dr. Ridker and his colleagues collected blood samples from almost 25,000 women who were 45 years and older. They looked at factors that could lead to heart attack or stroke years later. Their findings appear in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"We created a new risk score, something called the Reynolds Risk Score. And it turned out this does a much better job predicting accurately a woman's true risk of having a heart attack or stroke over the next ten years of her life."

The 'score' measures the usual factors such as smoking tobacco, diabetes, high blood

pressure and high cholesterol, and of course, age. Also taken into consideration: whether your parents and other relatives suffered heart attacks. Now the Reynolds Risk assessment includes a measurement of the C-reactive protein in your blood. C-R-P, as it is called, indicates possible inflammation of the arteries.

Again, Dr. Paul Ridker. "What's very important to understand is that you can be a high-risk patient if your C-R-P is elevated, even if your cholesterol levels are low."

Health experts say millions of women -- and men -- may be at risk for heart disease. For those who have access to a computer, Dr. Ridker believes that reading about the Reynolds Risk Score might just give you the tools you

and your doctor need to make an intelligent diagnosis:

"We can reclassify nearly 50 percent of all those women into higher or lower risk," says the doctor.

While using the scoring system may help forecast future risk of heart disease, the researchers say as many as one fourth of heart attacks and strokes still occur among people who show no warning signs.

Nevertheless, Leslie Power says she wants others to benefit from she has already learned. "I think what women need to understand is that they are at risk for heart disease." Power is reducing her risk of further heart problems by exercising more and quitting smoking.

[VOANews.com]

Taking Folic Acid During Pregnancy Prevents Cleft Lip

By Rose Hoban

Folic acid is a nutrient found in green leafy vegetables and in some fruits and grains. Medical researchers have known for some time that if pregnant women don't consume enough folic acid early in their pregnancy, it increases their babies' risk for neural tube defects such as spina bifida.

Now, new research performed by Allen Wilcox from the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences confirms folic acid deficiency also contributes to the risk of cleft lip. "A cleft lip or what used to be called a hare lip, is a defect in which the upper lip and sometimes the upper bone of the mouth that form the upper teeth, does not form properly," he explains. "A cleft palate is when that defect occurs back further in the mouth, in the roof of the

mouth."

Wilcox says the birth defects make it difficult for the baby to breast feed. "It also interferes with speech and infections in the ears, and there's all kinds of complications that can ensue," he adds.

The epidemiologist studied Norwegian babies born with cleft lip, cleft palate or both. He asked their mothers to recall whether they had taken pre-natal vitamins, or eaten diets high in folic acid and other folates. The usual amount of folic acid in prenatal vitamins is 400 micrograms.

"What we found was that the risk of cleft lip and cleft palate was reduced by about one-third among the women who reported that they were taking at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day," he reports. Wilcox says women who took folic acid, but took less than 400 micrograms,

"did not have any protection against cleft lip."

Wilcox says the effect of folic acid intake on the formation of cleft palates was not as strong. But he also says researchers think that defect has a slightly different cause than cleft lips.

Cleft lip and palate are two of the most common birth defects in the world. About two in every 1,000 babies are born with the problem.

Wilcox stresses that it's important for women to be taking folic acid if there's even the slightest chance of getting pregnant. "If women wait until they're pregnant to start taking vitamins, they may have already missed the early crucial stages of embryonic development where these birth defects are formed."

The research was published in a recent issue of the British Medical Journal. [VOANews.com]

Quacks threaten India's traditional ayurvedic health spas

Western tourists are flocking to luxury spas devoted to India's traditional ayurvedic cures at Kovalam beach in Kerala - India, but lack of regulation has brought a flood of quacks into the industry.

Hundreds of practitioners have set up shop here to take advantage of the growing popularity of the ancient healing medicine, which uses massage and special potions.

Just about every self-respecting hotel boasts a spa and ayurvedic massages.

But experienced providers warn that untrained newcomers risk causing more harm than good.

"Many doctors can't speak proper English or communicate with their clients, so they are not able to diagnose the real health

problems of the patients," said Chandran.

Ayurveda operates on the principle of balancing the body's "dosha," a type of mind and body combination, similar to the Greek concept of humours.

Kerala has been aggressively marketing ayurveda abroad over the past decade with roadshows in Europe and the Middle East, in its bid to position itself as a unique destination.

Another ayurvedic doctor said that most of the medical texts were written in ancient Sanskrit, making it difficult for locals to understand the complexities or for foreigners even to recognise an authentic experience.

"Quacks will kill the industry. The government should set up strict norms for accreditation,".

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Missing out on rest could harm brain cell production

BBC NEWS

No sleep means no new brain cells

Missing out on sleep may cause the brain to stop producing new cells, a study has suggested.

The work on rats, by a team from Princeton University found a lack of sleep affected the hippocampus, a brain region involved in forming memories.

The research in Proceedings of the National Academy of Science showed a stress hormone causes the effect.

A UK expert said it would be interesting to see if too little rather than no sleep had the same consequence.

Deficits

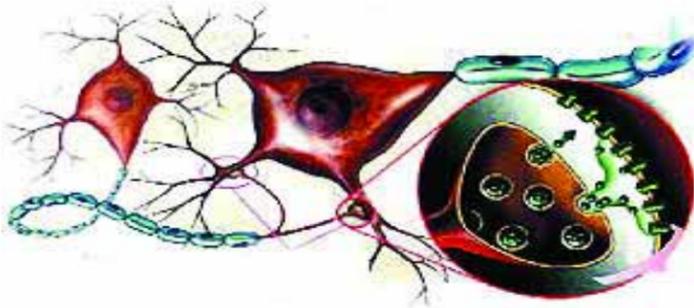
The researchers compared animals who were deprived of sleep for 72 hours with others who were not.

They found those who missed out on rest had higher levels of the stress hormone corticosterone.

It would be interesting to see if partial sleep deprivation - getting a little bit less sleep every night that you need - had the same effect

Dr Neil Stanley, sleep expert

They also produced significantly fewer new brain cells in a particular region of the hippocampus.



pus.

When the animals' corticosterone levels were kept at a constant level, the reduction in cell proliferation was abolished.

The results suggest that elevated stress hormone levels resulting from sleep deprivation could explain the reduction in cell production in the adult brain.

Sleep patterns were restored to normal within a week.

However levels of nerve cell production (neurogenesis) were not restored for two weeks, and the brain appears to boost its efforts in order to counteract the shortage.

Writing in PNAS, the researchers led by Dr Elizabeth Gould, said that although the role of nerve cell production in adults remained unknown, "the suppression of adult neurogenesis may underlie some of the cognitive deficits associated with prolonged

sleep deprivation."

People who experience a lack of sleep experience concentration problems and other difficulties.

Sleep expert Dr Neil Stanley, based at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, said the study's findings could not be directly translated to humans because people did not go without sleep for 72 hours, unless they were in extreme circumstances.

But he added: "It is an interesting finding. It would be interesting to see if partial sleep deprivation - getting a little bit less sleep every night that you need - had the same effect."

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/health/6347043.stm>

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COMPUTEK COLLEGE

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Graduation Day 2007

Computek College of Career Development held its Graduation Day 2007 on March 4, 2007 at Ellas Banquet Hall. Guest of honor D'Arcy Pigott issued Certificates for all graduating Students.

The Director of the College Mr. Thesa Theiventhiran said in his speech that the college has shown vast improvement in the past years by adding Authorized Training Programs from various suppliers. This has since helped the Instructors to produce qualified candidates for the current job market, by having the most up to-date software and learning tools. He also thanked the Students and Staff for their continuous support and participation in helping Computek get to where it is today.

Mr. Arun Kumar informed about the inauguration of the Computek Alumni which will be an important roll for organizing social get-togethers and where students can network and help each other. If you are a past or present student and would like more information in becoming a member of the Alumni please contact Karen Plourde at alumni@computekcollege.ca

Students are so impressed with their experience at Computek College that some stood up to congratulate the college and spoke about their experience at the college and where they are now. Kate said "Computek provided me with the utmost atmosphere where learning new technology became a reality from a dream." She also thanked the staff for all their help and kindness. Christobel said "The learning experience at Computek College helped me to find a suitable job and helped me in handling the job properly". Patricia and Jenny Thanked Computek for their support and said "The subjects we learned have helped us with our careers".

Everyone enjoyed the ceremony, and afterwards spent the rest of the evening with a buffet dinner and dance.



To Promote Trade & Commerce in Greater Toronto

A Remarkable South Asian Annual Trade Show - May 12 & 13, 2007

By Mr. SENTHI CHELLIAH, the President of Athavan Publication & the Founder and the Editor of "TAMILS GUIDE", an Annual Business Directory.

Pudhuvai N.RAMAN.M.A.,
Challenges are very common throughout the world to promote any kind of Business, Trade and Commerce since these fields are widely expanding day by day with modern techniques and scientific innovations; thereby new products are being manufactured and marketed with little manpower. Thus in Toronto, being a melting pot of cultural diversity, all most all ethnic groups in the blue planet have their own businesses in all trades and have achieved a lot

migrated to the Greater Toronto Area in Canada and established all kinds of businesses in all trades with great recognition of all ethnic groups and the governments in Canada. One among them, a rising star for Business Community 'ThamilanValikaddy' Mr. Senth, a young well talented personality, who is the pioneer of South Asian Annual Trade Show in Toronto is bringing all these business people who are serving the Tamils to gather under one roof - that is his very popular SOUTH

As a single man show, Mr. Senth's untiring effort to promote and help the business community has achieved a remarkable record of appreciation from all walks of life since his integrity, brilliance and community participation is well known to all. Similarly his involvement with political leaders and government officials as well as his contribution in social services has proved that he is one of the GEMS among the Tamils in total. Being a publisher, writer, actor and social worker like



through their honest and hard labour with great investments and interests, which in turn have established a good recognition from people of all walks of life. Similarly operating any kind of business or trade is not an easy task without some sort of promotions, sponsors, and cooperation and with personal experience apart from necessary investment capital and a due market. The success of any business totally depends on customers who are the backbone and as such the product or service has to get the positive popularity among the mass.

In order to promote their businesses, every business people seek right professional help for market their product or services. Publicity stands as one of the root cause and main essence of inviting the consumers to the business. Through Mass Media like News Papers, Business Directories, Radio, TV, Internet, and bill boards, marketing has become wider to focus the attention among the public to expand further their products and sales.

Within the last two decades more than 300 thousand Tamils

ASIAN TRADE SHOW-, has created a new admiration from all as his personal identity 'VELVOM' (we'll win) reflects every one the path of success and glory as a wonderful slogan.

As an entertainment with great events, he runs this show annually at Downsview Park in Toronto for two consecutive days during the month of May which has created a great successful business event of Grand Exhibitions to promote their businesses in all respects. Every year this trade show high lights with a number of entertaining events to the public to enjoy and have fun and frolic as well as to make their domestic purchases of their choice. Over 200 Business Booths, displaying their materials in an attractive manner, promote to the visitors by giving free gifts, samples, discounts, sales and lucky prizes with flyers and pamphlets to all.

This year SENTHI'S "SOUTH ASIAN TRADE SHOW 2007" is to be held on May 12th & 13th and getting its momentum to register respective stalls and sale booths, by the business people and professionals well in advance to



avoid rush. This is a golden opportunity to exhibit their materials to promote their businesses in a grand and successful manner. We all know that such kind of exhibitions are held during the annual festival events like Temple festivals and Public Exhibitions and Fairs in our Homeland which helps us to meet our nearest and dearest with green memory of pleasure and pride as well as to buy things for our needs and enjoy peacefully to a great extent. Similarly the business community of all cultures patronizes to increase their sales resulting to get good feed back.

Above all apart from the busi-

ness booths guest will enjoy the trade show with variety of programs such as music, dance, competitions to youths and seniors, especially to the children of all ages a number of amusements with fun like Magic Shows, Face Painting, free gifts, competitions, medical emergency facilities, famous Food Courts, Emergency Medical Services, Security and adequate free car parking facilities etc which are well planned, cannot be put in words rather experience, one should not miss to visit this grandeur extravaganza to enjoy in full swing since this is taking place conveniently on the weekend.

his father eminent literate late Mr. Chelliah. His whole family sets an example as "A Good Family is a University". We feel highly proud to express our sincere good wishes to this noble man as well wish him Great Success once again in the forthcoming Grand Show.

(To reach this location from Downsview Subway Station take 84 Sheppard Ave. East TTC Bus and get off at John Drury & Sheppard (1 stoplight east of Keele) and turn left at the stop sign, pass railway track (last building on the right hand side), you can see the beautiful arrangements of Grand Canopy welcomes everyone with colorful flags and echoing melodious music. This year's celebrating Mothers' Day is for two days as a new venture, mothers are allowed free till 12 noon on both days. Further free transport facilities are arranged from Parking Area and Downsview Park Entrance on Sheppard Avenue.)

For further details about the South Asian Trade Show

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MONSOON BUSINESS

BY Siva Sivapragasam

**CTCC Business Convention
– March 23rd**

The annual Business Convention organized by the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce takes place for the second year in succession on Friday, March 23rd at the Delta Hotel. The Convention will have two parts-the morning will be devoted to exhibitions and seminars while the evening will present opportunities for net-working and will feature an expo night. The seminars will provide useful information to business owners

and entrepreneurs. This year's theme will be "Think Mainstream". The Convention will be an ideal opportunity for mainstream businesses to obtain exposure into our community and vice-versa where our entrepreneurs can showcase their products and services to other communities. Admission is free to the visitors to the Convention. Businesses who wish to reserve booths can contact the following- Mr. Velumailum (President), Mr. Ken Kirupa (Director) and Mr. Vernu Sivakolundu (Director) members of the organizing committee for the Convention.

**Toronto International
Auto Show 2007**

Since 1974 the Toronto International Auto Show has been the largest consumer show of its kind held. As in previous years, the 2007 show saw glistening vehicles numbering over 1,000 displayed at the Rogers Centre and the Metro Convention Centre. Car lovers are drawn in large numbers to this show because of its wide appeal and interest. Design prizes and competitions were held to add interest to the show. The show is really a kick-start for the spring and summer auto buying spree.

**Computek College
Graduation Day 2007**

The Director of Computek watches as Guest of Honor D'Arcy Pigott presents the award to the graduate



Graduates lined up to receive the award

Yogathon

(Refer page 7)

The unique yogathon event is in aid of early intervention programme for the benefit of youth at risk for full blown mental illness. The illness affects all communities, the rich and the poor to be held at the spacious 100000 sq ft atrium at CBC on Sunday April 22nd. The events co-ordinator Yogi Tambiraja is expecting a turnout of 200 or more yogis and yoginis to take part. Beginning with a 3 hour intro and asana class led by PRAHLADA the director of the authentic Hatha Yoga school SIVANADA VEDANTA YOGA CENTER, it will be followed by light entertainment by the cabagetown junior Tamil Childrens dance troupe during a light vegetarian lunch.

the afternoon will provide classes for special needs including people with health handicaps and prenatal yoga.

The event will conclude with a rousing kirtan by SWAHA.

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Here are some vital points to take into consideration for your year end tax planning

Top 10 Tax Tips

1. Use an RRSP after age 69

Are you over 69 and still have RRSP contribution room? If you are over 69 but your spouse or common-law partner is age 69 or younger, you may use your RRSP contribution room by contributing to a spousal RRSP. This will help to reduce your current income and increase your spouse's or common-law partner's income in future years when the funds are withdrawn - thus accomplishing a form of income splitting on retirement.

2. Use RRSPs for minor children

Do you have a child under the age of 18 that has earned income? Even if your child does not have to pay taxes, filing a tax return will create RRSP contribution room in respect of any earned income. A child is permitted to have an RRSP but cannot make the \$2,000 over contribution. Contributions that are made into a child's RRSP may be carried forward indefinitely and deducted in a future year to reduce taxable income.

3. Take advantage of income-splitting opportunities

Have you considered all possibilities for income splitting? Attribution rules do not apply on capital gains for children under the age of 18, nor do the rules apply to second-generation income. If your spouse or common-law partner does not have any income, they may be able to receive up to \$28,000 in tax-free dividends. If you are over age 65 and receiving Old Age Security pension (OAS) or if you have received Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, income-splitting opportunities may eliminate or reduce the OAS or the EI claw backs.

4. Maximize tax-deferral for retiring allowances

Did you receive a retiring allowance in 2006? You may still be able to contribute the eligible amount to your RRSP without affecting your RRSP contribution room, even if you did not elect for the transfer to be processed directly from your employer. This option is only available for up to 60 days after the year-end. Payments for unused sick leave qualify as "retiring allowance," how-

ever payments for accumulated vacation leave do not qualify.

5. Reduce taxes withheld at source

Are you making regular payments to your RRSP from your bank account? Rather than waiting for your income tax refund, you may be able to take advantage of immediate tax savings and increase your cash flow. To do this, simply submit Form T1213 to Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) for authorization. Once authorized your employer will be able to reduce the amount of taxes they are required to withhold based on the amount of your regular RRSP contribution. A further advantage of regular RRSP contributions would be to dollars cost average.

6. Consider investing in a mutual fund corporation

Can you defer capital gains outside of your of your RRSP? One of the advantages of contributing to an RRSP is the ability to defer taxable income and capital gains to a future date when you are in a lower tax bracket, usually upon retirement. There is another strategy available to defer capital gains tax for investments outside your RRSP. Imagine the tax savings if you had deferred any realized capital gains from a 75 per cent inclusion rate to the reduced inclusion rate of 50 per cent. Investments in corporate funds allow you to switch between a large variety of funds while deferring any capital gains tax.

7. Invest for your child's education

Do you have children under the age of 18 and are not sure whether to accumulate savings for their post-secondary-level education in an informal in-trust account or a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP)? In an in-trust account, capital gains may be taxed in the hands of the minor child while any income may be attributed back to the contributor, depending on the source of the funds. RESPs defer taxes on income until the funds are withdrawn when the beneficiary is pursuing his or her post-secondary education. There are many complex rules to both savings vehicles that your advisor could assist you with.

8. Make your interest tax-deductible

Is the interest tax deductible on an investment loan? The Supreme Court of Canada released its long-awaited decision in the "Singleton case" in favour of the taxpayer. The facts in Singleton are very similar to the advice many Canadians receive from their financial planners before buying a home. The strategy often suggests to liquidate any non-registered investments (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc.) and use the cash received upon disposition to either fully purchase their home or at least to reduce the amount of the mortgage. The new homeowner would then acquire an "investment loan" and repurchase the securities previously disposed of with the favourable result that what would have been non-deductible interest expense on the mortgage has now become tax deductible.

9. Minimize probate costs with joint ownership

Are you looking for ways to minimize probate fees on your estate? There are many strategies available to reduce the probate fees and minimize estate costs. A common method used is to hold property as joint tenants with rights of survivorship (not available in Quebec). This is not always the best strategy because of some dangers associated with jointly held property such as possible tax implications when adding the joint name onto the property in addition to the future taxation of income and growth.

10. Think about tax savings on estate assets

Upon death, should you transfer property to a surviving spouse, common-law partner or testamentary spouse trust at the adjusted cost base (ACB)? Upon the death of an individual, the transfer of capital property to the surviving spouse, common-law partner or testamentary spousal trust is generally done at the ACB in order to defer potential capital gains tax until the property is disposed of or upon the surviving spouse's or common-law partner's death. In some cases there may be tax advantage to trigger all or part of the capital gains to be reported on the final return and have the capital gains taxed to the deceased.



BOBBY SIVA
Financial Advisor
416 410 3274



MONSOON MOSAIC

Millions celebrate Persian New Year

Iranian New Year 1385 begins on Monday Farvardin 1st, 9:55:35 PM Tehran Time (March 20, 2006)

Tens of millions of people from Asia to the Middle East will be welcome their 'New Year' by celebrating the ancient festival of Nowruz by the 20th of March, 2007.

Nowruz, or Persian New Year, is held on the first day of spring and marks the beginning of the calendar year in Iran and Afghanistan, Kurdish areas of northern Iraq and Turkey and some Central Asian republics.

The origins of the festival are shrouded in mystery.

It is said to have started thousands of years ago in ancient

Persia - a spring festival to celebrate the reawakening of nature.

It was later adapted as part of Zoroastrianism and Islam.

Some of the rituals surrounding the holiday - including people jumping over bonfires to rid themselves of illness and misfortune - are said to have their roots in Iran's Zoroastrian past.

Nowruz remains Iran's biggest annual holiday.

Public offices close for five days and families get together for two weeks of feasting and celebration.

In most other countries, the celebrations are more limited, with people being given only one or two days off work.

Honouring the presence and contribution of Persians to the cultural mosaic of Ontario

Hon. Mario G. Racco Provincial MPP for the Riding of Thornhill, introduced Bill 63 in the Ontario Legislature in Feb 2006, an act to proclaim Nowruz Day which marks the first day of spring for Persians all over the world.

The MPP made a speech honouring the presence and contribution of Persians to the cultural mosaic of Ontario in the Ontario Legislature that day.

Following is excerpts from his speech:

"Statistics Canada suggests that nearly 100,000 Persians live in Ontario; however, this may be a modest estimate. With so many Persians choosing to live in Ontario, it is only right that we honour their presence and contribution to the cultural mosaic of our province by proclaiming March 21 each year as Nowruz Day.

I would like to share with you a bit of history about the Persian community in our country and in our province of Ontario. Compared to other immigrant groups, Persians are relative newcomers to Canada. As late as the end of World War II, it is believed there were only about a dozen Persians living in Canada. The large influx of immigrants into Canada after World War II did not include any significant number of Persians. Many Persians came to Canada as part of a massive flow of students to North American universities that began after 1965. That was in the United States. Many would remain in Canada after completing their studies and having obtained immigrant status. Following the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the overthrow of the monarchy, and throughout the Iran-Iraq war, the rate of immigration accelerated rapidly.

There are many reasons why people came to Canada: political, economic, educational, professional and religious reasons. New Canadians enjoy Canada's democratic and stable society, free of oppression and violence. Many Persians settled in the GTA, with a significant percentage of them settling in North York in the 1980s and 1990s. It is now believed that 56% of Persian Canadians reside in Toronto, mostly in the Willowdale riding of my colleague MPP Zimmer. Unlike other immigrant groups coming to Canada, there was no established Persian community to help the new immigrants settle into the new culture. These new Canadians quickly joined the professional ranks as medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, nurses and dentists. Many of them had to upgrade their qualifications to meet Canadian standards because they got their education back home. Those who came later chose entrepreneurship, focusing on the creation of construction companies -- we have the largest high-density builders from that community -- restaurants, bakeries, dry-cleaning shops, grocery stores, repair shops and computer



stores.

The Persian business community has generously supported Persian identity in Canada through financial means and promotional Persian-language journals, magazines, radio and television programs. Advertising revenue bolsters the production and free distribution of many group publications and programs. The Persian community is extremely active in promoting their culture and Canadian culture. There is a great deal of community support available for new immigrants from Persia as well. They host many events and there are many organization websites, publications and community groups available to the Persian community.

According to the 1996 census, there were approximately 64,000 Persians living in Canada, or a 21% increase from 1991. The Persian community is a young

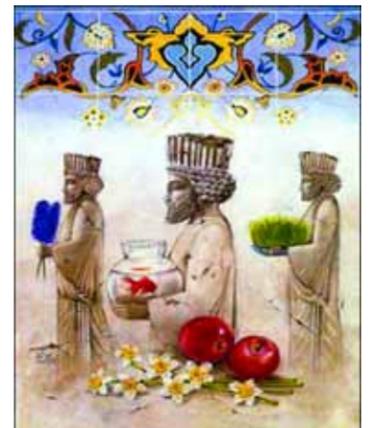


one, both in terms of the length of time it has been established in Canada and the age of the members of this community. Only 7% of Persian Canadians are over the age of 60. The largest age group is between 25 and 39. What that means is that there is significant growth within that community today. The 2001 census estimates that 89,000 Persians live in Canada. Now it is estimated that nearly 100,000 Persians are living just in Ontario. The numbers seem not to balance, but that is because there are more members of the community than the statistics seem to indicate. The exact number is difficult to determine, as data collected is determined by country of birth or language spoken. Therefore, the data do not reflect all members of the Persian Canadian community. Over the last decade, Persians have made up between 11% to 20% of the permanent residents from the Middle Eastern region. Ontario has the largest percentage of Persians, which is estimated to be 58%.

Within the community, Persians are making significant contributions in the area of academia and science worlds. There is a significant number of Persian professors at most, if not all, of the Ivy League schools in North

America. There is also a significant presence of scholars, professors, masters and Ph.D.s at York University, the University of Toronto and Ryerson. In fact, I am told that at Ryerson there are 26 Persian professors teaching. That's a huge number.

Probably one of Ontario's most well known members of the Persian community is Mr. Karim Hakim of Hakim Optical. In June 2005, Mr. Hakim was inducted as a Knight of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta, right here at Queen's Park. Sir Karim Hakimi, as he is now known, was bestowed the honour of knighthood for his generosity and humanitarian efforts. His contribution includes donating hundreds of thousands of pairs of eyeglasses to people in need all over the world. He also has participated in the Ride for Sight for the Foundation Fighting Blindness. Sir Hakimi led Canada's largest motorcycle charity parade, in which more than 1,000 motorcyclists across the GTA raised money for vision research. The motorcycle parade is one aspect of Ride for Sight, which has collected more than \$12 million in



donations for the Foundation Fighting Blindness, FFB, the only private organization dedicated to finding causes, treatments and cures for blindness. The director of the Foundation Fighting Blindness has said that Ride for Sight has raised more money than any other motorcycle charity ride in Canada.

I thank you for the time. I look forward to the support of all honourable members on Bill 63, An Act to proclaim Nowruz Day. Just before I conclude, let me say that we in this province, in Canada in fact, tend to recognize community members because we feel that Ontario and Canada are a country and a province made from many other nations from so many other parts of the world. I'm one good example. I was born and raised and educated in Italy, but I came here, and today I am in this honourable House. Like me, many other Ontarians and Canadians have had the good fortune of finding this province, this country, as welcoming as it is. We in public office should never forget how important it is to make all of us feel very comfortable where we are, because when we are happy, when we are comfortable, we can do even more than what we are doing."

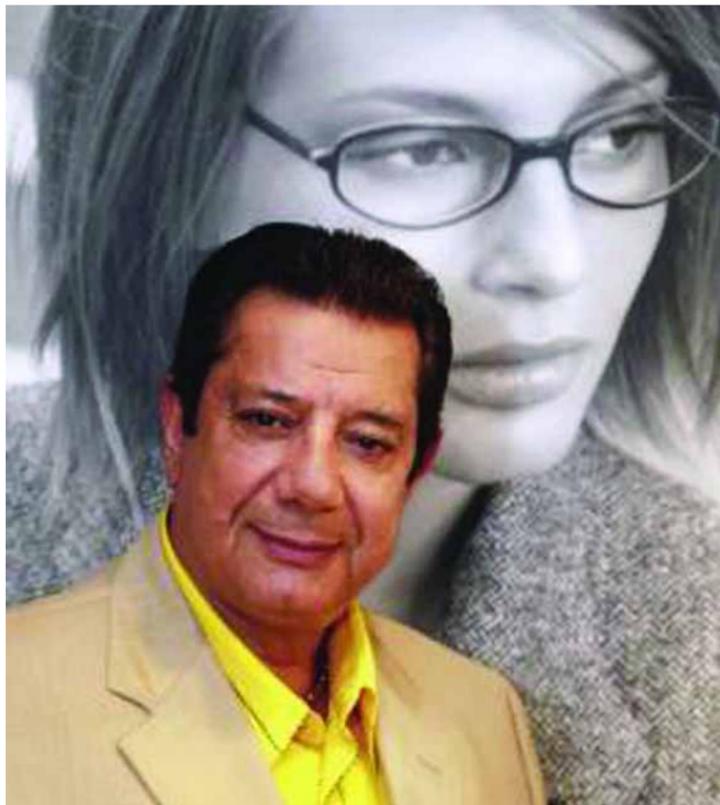
Monsoon Profile

The Captain of Eyewear

Mr. Karim Hakim of Hakim Optical, in June 2005, was inducted as a Knight of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta. Sir Karim Hakimi, as he is now known, was bestowed the honour of knight-

"I have pretty good vision," Hakim admits. "But I need glasses for reading small print in bad light."

It makes sense that the president of this 39-year-old Canadian company should own at least one



hood for his generosity and humanitarian efforts. His contribution includes donating hundreds of thousands of pairs of eyeglasses to people in need all over the world.

He is probably one of Ontario's most well known members of the Persian community.

The Digital Journal published the following profile of Mr. Karim Hakim, "The Captain of the Eyewear", a pioneer in introducing "free frames" concept in marketing eyewear:

The first thing you notice about Karim Hakim, founder of eyewear juggernaut Hakim Optical, are his naked eyes. Where are the specs?

pair of glasses, considering he has sold around 26 million pairs in wholesale and retail. Hakim Optical's trademark orange signs hang above 100 outlets in Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and even Florida. Nearly 80 per cent of its clientele are repeat customers.

Hakim's accomplishments began when he was 10 years old, honing his skill as a lens grinder in his native Iran. After enlisting in the Iranian navy at 19, he continued to ply the trade in Germany and Switzerland, and then arrived in Toronto, Canada to open the first Hakim Optical on Elm Street.

continued on next page...

PERSIAN CUISINE

The Persian cuisine is diverse, with each province featuring dishes, as well as culinary traditions and styles, distinct to their regions. It includes a wide variety of foods ranging from chelow kabab (barg, koobideh, joojeh, shishleek, soltani, chenjeh), khoesht (stew that is served with white Basmati or Persian rice: ghormeh sabzi, gheimh, and others), aash (a thick soup), kookoo (meat and/or vegetable pies), polow (white rice alone or with addition of meat and/or vegetables and herbs, including loobia polow, albaloo polow, zereskh polow, and others), and a diverse variety of salads, pastries, and drinks specific to different parts of Iran. The list of Persian recipes, appetizers and desserts is extensive.

Persian food is not spicy. Herbs are used a lot, as is fruit from plums and pomegranates to quince, prunes, apricots, and raisins. The main Persian cuisines are combinations of rice with meat, chicken or fish and plenty of garlic, onion, vegetables, nuts, and herbs. To achieve a delicious taste and a balanced diet, unique Persian spices such as saffron, diced limes, cinnamon, and parsley are mixed delicately and used in some special dishes.

Persian cuisine, apart from its antiquity in the region, has also been a very influential and standard set of fare throughout neighboring countries. Afghanistan, the



south-Central Asian states, and the cuisines of India and Pakistan derive heavily in part from the sumptuous cuisine of Iran.

There are certain accompaniments (mokhalafat) which are essential to every Persian meal at lunch (nahar) and dinner (shahm), regardless of the region. These include, first and foremost, a plate of fresh herbs, called sabzi (basil, coriander, cilantro, tarragon, watercress), a variety of flat breads, called nan or noon (sangak, lavash, barbari), cheese (called panir, similar to feta), sliced and peeled cucumbers, sliced tomatoes and onions, yogurt, and lemon juice. Persian pickles (khiyarsur) and relishes (torshi) are also considered essential in most regions.

Tea (chai) is served at breakfast and immediately before and after each meal at lunch and dinner, and also many times throughout the rest of the day. The traditional methods of tea preparation and drinking differ between regions and peoples.

Persian climate favors the goat, which is known as the "poor mans cow", but does not suit keeping fresh milk, so Iranians tend to eat a lot of dry cheeses and rich yogurt. Most families make their own yogurt, which can be used as an ingredient in many dishes or as a cool refreshing drink.

Persians pride themselves on their skill in preparation of rice, and there are a vast number of varieties of two common dishes, polo and chelo. Polo consists of vegetables or meat cooked and mixed with rice, whereas chelo is prepared over the course of many hours with crustier rice topped with sauces.

Some popular polos are polo chirin, which is made with saffron, raisins, almonds and orange; adas polo, made with lentils and meat; and shekar polo, a very sweet dish prepared with honey, sugar almonds and pistachio. Wheat bread is considered the poor mans alternative to rice, but still comes in many different varieties.

Lamb is Persian favorite meat, but kid, beef and chicken can also be found. Fish is common as well, with swordfish being a famous specialty of the areas near the Caspian Sea. Seafood is very rarely eaten, and pork, like alcohol, is forbidden.

Persians enjoy green salads with olive oil, and during the appropriate seasons, eat vast amounts of olives, grapes, pumpkins and all kinds of fruits - either eaten fresh or cooked with meat and rice. There are always plenty of dried fruits like figs, dates,

apricots and peaches.

Dolmeh most commonly refers to vine leaves stuffed with a combination of meat and rice, but in fact can be any stuffed fruit or vegetable. Popular varieties include stuffed cabbage leaves, eggplant, tomato, spinach, pepper or apple.

The Persian sweet tooth must be seen to be believed. Rosewater and orange water are typically used as flavorings, as well as pistachio and honey. Ice cream is popular and there is also a type of candy floss that is very popular. Baklava and halva are commonly eaten on special occasions. Each area has its own method for the preparation of biscuits and candies.

Persians often drink cold water with meals, but tea is the true national drink. The most common method is to hold a sugar cube between the teeth so that it dissolves as the tea is drunk. A visit to a Persian tea-house is a great experience for any tourist. Herbal teas such as chamomile, ginger, saffron, rose, violet, and jasmine are often drunk for their medicinal properties.

Coffee is also a popular beverage, generally taken black and super-strong. In the summer you can find fruit or flower syrups, taken with plenty of ice. Doogh, a cold drink made from yogurt and mineral water, is also well worth trying.

Unfortunately for the short term tourist, restaurateurs in Iran often seem unaware of the amazing variety of food their culture

has to offer, and often do little beyond kebabs and rice.

Most of Persian's excellent food is confined to the kitchen of the family home. If you are lucky enough to be invited to an Iranian home for dinner, you should without doubt accept. The meal may well be set on the floor, sometimes without utensils.

This should not be interpreted as a lack of decorum. Most meals are eaten only with a spoon and fork. Here are a few very basic tips on mealtime etiquette:

" Check to see if the person answering the door is wearing shoes, if they aren't then you should remove yours.

" Don't sit down until told where to sit by your host and don't sit next to anyone of the opposite sex.

" You will constantly be offered food and drink. Always refuse at least once before accepting.

" Try a bit of all of the dishes available.

" Eat only with the right hand if there are no utensils provided.

" Leave a little food at on your plate when you finish eating. The host will consider it his duty to provide more food than you can eat.

Nooshe Jan which means Enjoy your food is always mentioned while eating Iranian food.

So, NOOshe Jan

Contributed By Nate.V and Negin.S

The Captain of EyeWear

Continued from previous page ...

More than 60 customers lined up to buy glasses every day. "Business mushroomed because these people brought family and friends," Hakim recalls. Customers were attracted to Hakim's affordable prices - back then, glasses cost only \$20 a pair.

Today, Hakim strives to keep prices low by giving away free frames to customers. How can he do this? "At one point, I had several hundred thousand frames in my warehouse, so I wrote them off to postpone the taxes on them," Hakim explains. "I gave away free frames, something no one had ever done before."

An Eye for Fashion

Besides being cost-effective, glasses should be fashionable - an often neglected factor. "Your frame complements your personality," Hakim says. "Just like clothes, your glasses and your face shouldn't clash." These days, popular eyewear styles include smaller frames and lenses, "so you look only a little pregnant, not fully pregnant," Hakim adds. Square and rectangle lenses are also gaining steam, especially among urban hipsters.

Along with variety, customers look for service. Successful eyewear companies like Hakim Optical offer one-hour glasses manufacturing at the on-site labs.

Burgeoning technology can also help business, and Hakim has always kept pace with eyewear

advances. Lightweight, sun-sensitive Transitions lenses darken with increased light; Xtreme Widefield lenses offer dynamic vision with seamless shifting from one viewing zone to the other; Unbreakables are made from polycarbonate impact-resistant plastic, ensuring a thin, light and scratch-resistant product.

Besides standard eyewear, other Hakim products include UV-protected contacts, prescription sunglasses, and stylin' protective glasses. Hakim's products have earned him several awards, including the 2003 Consumer's Choice Award for Business Excellence and several readers' poll awards from the Toronto Sun, Toronto Star, Now Magazine and eye Weekly.

All Work and Some Play

Credit the head honcho for setting a strong example to employees. Hakim works 12 hours a day in his office - down from 14 hours a day, in the early years. "If you only work eight hours, you can never get anything done," says Hakim, concisely summing up his work ethic. After toiling for four decades, Hakim is now reaping the benefits, relaxing on his 40-metre yacht or swimming in his own indoor or outdoor swimming pools.

He deserves the break. Hakim has helped make sure Canadians see the world clearly.

Lamb Kabab

1 pound lean lamb tenderloin, boned and cut into 2-inch cubes
4 large tomatoes, halved
FOR MARINADE

1 large onion, peeled and diced
5 cloves garlic, peeled and



crushed
1 teaspoon salt & black pepper

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/2 cup fresh lime juice

1/4 teaspoon saffron, dissolved in 2 tablespoons hot water
FOR BASTING

1/2 cup melted butter

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1/4 teaspoon saffron, dissolved in 3 tablespoons hot water

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1. Pound the lamb pieces lightly with a heavy-bladed knife to tenderize, and make shallow incisions in them. Place the lamb in a large glass bowl.

2. Add the onion, garlic, salt, pepper, lime juice, and saffron water and mix well. Cover and marinate for at least 8 hours in

PERSIAN RECIPES

the refrigerator. Turn the meat twice during this time.

3. Start a bed of charcoal at least 45 minutes before you want to cook and let it burn until the coals glow.

" 4. Lift meat from marinade and drain briefly (reserve marinade). Thread meat equally on about 6 sturdy metal skewers.

" 5. Place skewers on a lightly greased grill 4-6 inches above a solid bed of medium coals.

" 6. Cook, turning often and basting with marinade until meat is well browned outside, but pink in the center (cut test in 10-15 minutes).

8. Serve immediately with saffron steamed rice, NUSH-E JAN!

Barberry Rice

Ingredients:

2 cup basmati rice

2 tbsp butter

1 cup barberry

1/2 tsp saffron

1 tbsp lemon juice

1 tbsp sugar

1 tbsp plain yogurt

1 tbsp almonds

1 tbsp pistachios

Directions:

1. Soak rice in salt water the night before

2. Bring a big pot of water to a boil and drain salt water from rice and add rice to boiling water. Let cook for 10 minutes then drain

3. Soak barberry in water for 10 minutes before cooking

4. Add oil and rice to pot and let rice cook for 30 minutes. Meanwhile drain barberry and add oil to pan and fry barberry for 3 minutes

5. Mix 1/2 cup of boiling water with saffron, lemon juice, and sugar, and add to barberry then add barberry mix to plain white rice.



Appreciation Pan Kanagaratnam

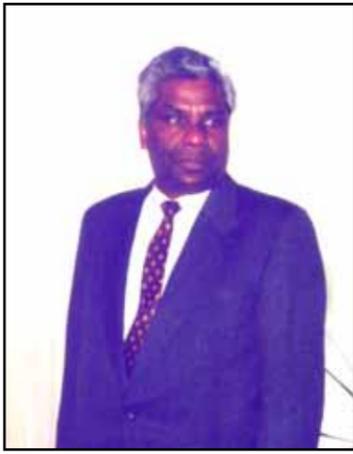
By Siva Sivapragasam

Pan Kanagaratnam was a personality whose presence was physically felt at most community events.

Kanags is no more.

Having battled with a rare type of illness for more than an year the fight came to an end last month when death snatched him away. Kanags was born and schooled in Batticaloa, the legendary land of the singing fish. He graduated from the University of Peradeniya and during his University days was actively involved in Drama and literary activities.

He was selected to serve the Sri Lankan overseas civil service in 1967 and had his first posting was Egypt. Thereupon he served in several other countries including Iraq, Japan and his last assignment being Canada. He was attached to the Sri Lankan High Commission in Ottawa from 1986 to 1989. This was a turbulent period both for his country and him. He relinquished his duties



from the High Commission and became a permanent resident of Canada. His knowledge and experience gathered in the administrative and commercial fields took him to a new job of serving the Indo-Canada Chamber in Ottawa. While working here he was a member of the Trade Delegation to India headed by the former Canadian Prime Minister Mr. Jean Chretien. Kanags had a desire to serve his community and be close to community events. This made

him move to Toronto with his family. He became closely involved with the Sri Lankan Graduates' Association and was a live-wire to the Association in its activities. He was responsible for editing the News letters and the Annual Magazine of the Association. His interest in the future of the younger generation of the Tamil community brought him closer to the Tamil Parents' Association and he held the post of President for three years. It was during his tenure as President the Association was recognized and approved by the School Board.

The passing away of Kanags is certainly a loss, and creates a vacuum in leadership for the community. He is survived by his wife Ratna, children Sabesh and Sutha.

"His Life was gentle, the elements were so mixed in him that Nature might stand up one day and say to all the world - This was a man". (Shakespeare)

Evidence of US coercion of IAEA members against Iran revealed Demand of high level investigation into use of coercion by US within IAEA.

Campaign Iran (source: CAS-MII) - 2007-02-25

Demands for an investigation into coercion of nations by the US during the vote against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), have been growing following the revelations by a former ranking official of the Bush administration acknowledging that India's votes at the IAEA in 2005 and 2006 had been "coerced."

In a talk just over a week ago at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, Stephen G. Rademaker - who left his job as Assistant Secretary for Non-proliferation and International Security at the U.S. State Department last December - said, referring to India's changing attitude towards non-proliferation, "[t]he best illustration of this is the two votes India cast against Iran at the IAEA. I am the first person to admit that the votes were coerced."

The Indian government to date has not denied this accusation and has remained silent. Whilst the US Ambassador to India, David Mulford, issued a statement, reported in the Times of India, that the statements attributed to Mr Rademaker were inaccurate, the Hindu newspaper which first reported the story on Friday 16th February, has refuted Mr Mulford's dismissals, pointing out that Mr. Rademaker spoke before an audience of 20 people and that the Hindu's Associate Editor, Siddharth Varadarajan, had taken detailed notes. Ambassador David Mulford had himself caused controversy on this issue when he warned in January 2006 that a deal giving

India US nuclear technology could collapse if India did not back the UN motion against Iran.

The growing storm comes ahead of the meeting of senior diplomats from the five permanent Security Council nations and Germany+ in London tomorrow over a new resolution to try and increase pressure on Iran. It also adds strength to those who have argued against the legitimacy of Iran's referral to the UN Security Council and the subsequent passing of Resolution 1737. In 2005, the US and the UK concentrated their efforts in the Governors' Board of the IAEA to first condemn Iran for not meeting its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and then to refer Iran to the UN Security Council, when Iran's enrichment programme had not in fact, breached any article of the NPT..

Professor Abbas Edalat of Campaign Iran said today;

"The revelation that the US coerced India into voting against Iran on this crucial issue is of global significance. It brings into question the entire legitimacy of the decision by the Governors' Board of the IAEA to refer Iran to the Security Council and the consequent passing of Resolutions 1696 and 1737 and any future resolutions against Iran the UN might pass. It also raises the question, "how many other members of the Governors' Board of the IAEA were coerced by the US to politicise Iran's nuclear file, refer it to the UN Security Council and bring about first resolution 1696 and then resolution 1737?". As in the run-up top the invasion of Iraq, UN resolutions are being used to give a veneer of legitima-

cy and provide a pretext for an illegal US pre-emptive strike against Iran. In Iraq, the invasion was ordered "in support of UN authority". The same justification is likely to be used by the Bush administration for strikes on Iran. We are demanding an immediate high level investigation to the use of coercion by the US and its allies within the IAEA."

Notes

Mr Rademaker was appointed Acting Assistant Secretary for Non-proliferation and International Security in the State Department. He quit the State Department earlier this year and is now a paid lobbyist of the Indian government in Washington. In the US State Department's website he is still referred to as Acting Assistant Secretary for Non-proliferation and International Security.

The story has been reported extensively in the Hindu and the Times of India

Siddharth Varadarajan is deputy editor of The Hindu and maintains the website, Reality, One Bite At a Time, a blog of his writings at <http://svaradarajan.blogspot.com/index.html>

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/02/16/stories/2007021605671200.htm>
<http://www.hindu.com/2007/02/17/stories/2007021709121400.htm>
http://timesofindia.india-times.com/India_coerced_into_voting_against_Iran/articleshow/1630182.cms

Ambassador Mulford's statements of January 2006 are reported by the BBC

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4649742.stm

The Academy of Science and Arts for the Tamils of Ceylon (ASATiC) organises

Ratna Memorial Conference: "Sri Lanka at Ethnic cross road"

Date: Saturday, the 24th of March 2007

Time: 10.00 - 16.30

Venue: Elvin Hall

The Institute of Education

University of London

20 Bedford Way*, London WC1H 0AL

Reception with coffee & tea

Time: 10.00 - 10.15

Introduction & Welcoming speech by the Academy

Time: 10.15 - 10.30

Part I: "Tamil Speaking Communities and their rights"

Time: 10.30 - 12.30

Session 1

Dr. V. Ameerdeen (Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Political Science, Peradeniya University):

"Tamil speaking people of Islamic faith and the Tamil liberation struggle in the Northeast."

Prof. S. Sinnathamby (Dept. Economics, Peradeniya University):

"Socio-economical condition of the up-country Tamils and the Tamil liberation struggle in the Northeast".

Tea / coffee break

Time: 11.30 - 12.00

Session 2

Mr. Ravi Sundaralingam (Academy):

"Political demarcations of the Tamil speaking people."

Part II: "Global and regional perspectives, and the needs of the people"

Time: 12.30 - 16.30

Prof. Lord. M. Desai (Director of the Centre for Global Studies, LSE and, The Patron of the Academy):

"Globalisation and the National & Revolutionary movements in the developing world."

Lunch break

Time: 13.00 - 14.00

Session 3

Dr. S. Chandrasekaran (Director of the South Asia Analysis Group, India):

"Concept of Security in the uni-polar world, and its regional implications in and around the Sub-continent."

Prof. S. Ganesan (University College London and the Academy):

"Globalisation and foreign investment: Impact on poverty in Ceylon."

Tea/ coffee break

Time: 15.00 - 15.30

Session 4

Mr. L. Bopage (Friends for Peace in Sri Lanka, Former General Secretary of the JVP):

"Working class movements in Sri Lanka and, the Tamil national struggle."

Mr. V. Kuhanendran (Academy):

"Constitutional restructuring: Importance of an Interim Administration in the North East."

End of conference?

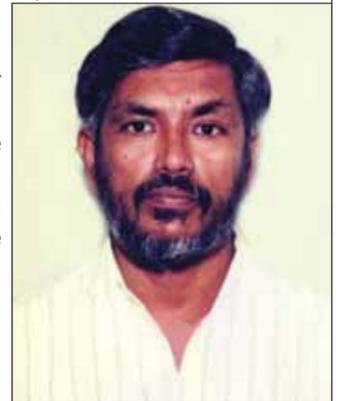
Question time.

Presided by the Academy

Between 16.30 and 17.30 the Guest speakers who are available will answer to specific questions from the floor. Please note, as our guest speakers are aware of the context and the issues, and time is limited, clearly defined 'questions' only are helpful and, can be adequately answered.

Contact details: ASATiC, P.O. Box 43366, London N5 2WG, United Kingdom

E-mail: academic.secretary@googlemail.com



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Felicitations for Canada Mayor's Trophy partners at CIMA

A reception and recognition event for CIMA Canada Mayor's trophy partners was held at Toronto City Hall on Wednesday March 7th. The event hosted by CIMA Canada also celebrated the ICC award won by CIMA Canada for best cricket promotional program in the Americas region.

Addressing the gathering, CIMA President Kanish Thevarasa thanked corporate sponsors, media partners and volunteers for their support. Representatives from City, Police, TTC, Bell Canada, Scotiabank, Coca Cola, M & M Meat Shops and media partners Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, Toronto Sun, City TV, OMNI TV and ATN received recognition awards from the CIMA.

Representing Mayor David Miller, City Councillor Adam Vaughan spoke passionately about the game of cricket he learned from his father Colin Vaughan, who played cricket in Australia. Globe and Mail Publisher Phillip Crawley spoke of his success in promoting a cricket team at Globe and Mail to take part in the Mayor's cup cricket event. Phillip Crawley praised the efforts of CIMA and wished CIMA well in the ICC global awards to be announced on March 15th.



CIMA Director Tony Thomson (Left) and CIMA Board Member Martin Saxton



CIMA President Kanish Thevarasa presenting a special award to Ken Jeffers of Toronto Parks & Recreation.



CIMA president with Christine Williams - Regional Vice President Scotiabank, the lead sponsors.



Globe and Mail CEO Phillip Crawley



Mr. Michael Lashley Consulate General of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago with Christine Williams - Regional Vice President Scotiabank, the lead sponsors.

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MONSOON SPORTS

De Silva backs Sri Lanka chances

World Cup winner Aravinda de Silva has tipped Sri Lanka to emulate the success of his 1996 side in the forthcoming tournament in the Caribbean.

"I honestly feel this side have a better chance than we had in 1996.

"The bowling looks good, the batting has depth and the fielding looks sharp. My money is on Sri Lanka," he said.

Sri Lanka begin their campaign with what should be an easy win over Bermuda in Trinidad on 15 March and then take on Bangladesh and India.

The match against India is likely to decide the group winners, with both teams desperate for a victory which will enable them to carry the points forward to the Super 8 phase.

Sri Lanka recently lost a warm-up series in India 2-1, but



they were without their two main bowlers, Muttiah Muralitharan and Chaminda Vaas, who were given an extended break.

De Silva expects both to shine in the Caribbean, saying: "Murali is a world-class performer and a lot of people under-rate Vaas. He's a quiet achiever and played a vital role in the last World Cup."

The middle order batting is De Silva's only serious concern and he has backed the inclusion of for-

mer skipper Marvan Atapattu, who can bat anywhere in the top six.

"Marvan's presence should sort things out. He brings experience and should be able to bat according to the situation," he commented.

The win over Australia in the 1996 final was the biggest day in Sri Lankan cricket history and De Silva fancies a repeat of that result if the two sides meet again.

"Australia are an ageing side. There's pressure on most of their players.

"Their bowling is not what it used to be. [Glenn] McGrath can contain but the traditional bounce won't be there [for him] in the Caribbean. Brett Lee provides a bit of variation, but the rest of the bowling looks very average," he said.

[BBC.com]

'Lanka in 1996 was better'

Muttiah Muralitharan believes that Sri Lanka may go into the coming World Cup in the Caribbean as a strong contender but the 1996 victorious team from the island nation was a better side than the current one.

"Some experts are tipping us to surprise a few at the World Cup and maybe even win it. I think we have a good chance but I still believe the Sri Lanka team of 1996 was better," said Muralitharan who will be playing in his fourth World Cup.

"When we won the World Cup in 1996, batting-wise the team was more experienced, had flair, everything was there in that team," the record-breaking off-spinner wrote on bigstarcric.com.

"It's difficult for people to say we are better now because I played in both eras and the batting was much stronger then.

"This team now has a better bowling attack than what we had that time but we had a better balance in the '96 World Cup because there were four spinners in the side and only two fast bowlers," he added.

The Sri Lankan, who is the world's second highest wicket-taker after Australian Shane Warne, said the current team did not solely depend on him for Cup success.

"We are not a one-man



team. To win a World Cup the batters have to do well and then the bowlers chip in. That's the way you win the World Cup," he said.

Muralitharan said being a senior player, he would carry more responsibility and pressure. "I am more experienced now but I was still experienced then, just that the pressure (of expectation) was less.

"I was 22-years-old at the time when the captain would say 'do this' but now it's up to me to work things out myself and the pressure is on me more."

"I enjoy playing under pressure, though, because I am used to it. If there is no pressure you are not going to do well," he wrote. [PTI]

WORLD CUP 2007

Opening Ceremony - Highlights



Players look on as fireworks illuminate the night sky during the World Cup opening ceremony in Trelawny



Luuk van Troost leads the Netherlands during the opening ceremony of the World Cup



Stephen Fleming address the media ahead of the opening ceremony, 2007 World Cup



Tendulkar arrives in Montego Bay, 2007 World Cup, Jamaica



Craig Wright, the Scotland captain, speaks to reporters at a press conference



Rahul Dravid turns his gaze elsewhere during a press conference in Montego Bay



Upul Tharanga takes applause for his hundred, NZL v Sri Lanka, 2007 World Cup warm-up



Peter Fulton belts a boundary during his 59, New Zealand v Sri Lanka, 2007 World Cup warm-up



Percy Sonn speaks during the opening ceremony of the World Cup



Brian Lara looks on during the opening ceremony photoshoot



MONSOON REAL ESTATE

Home Buyers Beware!

Why You Need a Home Inspection

It's easy to get so caught up in the speed, drama and pressure of bidding on a house that you are willing to skip a few steps to make sure you acquire the house of your dreams. Don't let yourself fall in love with a house until you've had the house examined by a professional. The house could have any number of problems in structural, roofing, exterior, foundation, heating, plumbing, electrical, insulation etc. Even with newer homes, or ones that look flawless in your eyes, you'll never know what lies beneath the surface unless you hire a registered home inspector to check it out for you.

Home inspections have been around for quite a while, and for good reasons. This process, which can cost between \$300 and \$500, is often a condition on buying the house. Hiring a professional home inspector is a small investment of your time and money. But, it's well worth the expense because you won't have to deal with costly and unexpected surprises once you've bought your home. Also you can gain a wealth of information about the condition of a property before they buy it. A home inspection is not intended to provide warranties or guarantees, and is not to be mistaken as a warranty on the house.

The final sale of a home can hinge on the results of a home inspection - even for a million dollar home. While a home inspec-

tion is a critical component of buying and selling a home, knowing your home inspector is just as important.

Recent surges in the popularity of home inspections have created an over-populated inspection industry where not all inspectors have the training or experience to do a good job. Be wary of low-priced home inspectors whose only credential is a certificate acquired online, or by correspondence, or from attending a three day course.

Home inspection is a discipline that requires special training, knowledge and communication skills. Anyone can say that they are a home inspector. That is why it is important to choose an inspector wisely.

Reputable home and property inspectors generally belong to CAHPI-Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors, which has set standards, which is recognized by the Real Estate Associations and federal and provincial governments. To become a member of CAHPI, an inspector must meet professional and educational requirements followed by a review.

Home inspectors should have a general understanding of all the various systems and components in a home. Many have practical experience or a background in engineering, construction and related building trades. Look for people who belong to CAHPI and who have taken some courses,

such as defect recognition, building sciences or civil engineering, for example. The more experienced a home inspector is, the more they have seen, the more likely it is they will be able to detect any less obvious problems. Seasoned, professional home inspectors will be full-time home inspectors. Professional home inspectors are bound by a strict code of ethics and must adhere to specific standards of practice. You should ask to see proof of their membership in a provincial association.

To guard homebuyers against incompetent, negligent and bogus home inspections, the association in your province will be pleased to clarify their membership categories and any particular inspector's membership level. Determine if the inspector intends to meet the CAHPI national standards of competency.

What home buyers need most is a source of trustworthy, competent, qualified home inspection professionals. It's well worth contacting the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors, a national organization that has links to the provincial associations. Check out www.cahpi.ca. The site will refer you to a list of Registered Home Inspectors in your area. Visit www.ashi.org to find more detailed information about home inspection.

Since the 1980s, when Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) ended its

consumer protection role through construction inspections, housing quality has suffered. For instance, CMHC estimates that more than 65,000 homes in B.C. suffered serious water infiltration problems in B.C.'s leaky condo crisis of the 1990s - a crisis that continues to this day. Defective homes are a serious problem across Canada. In 2005, the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) estimated that 10 per cent of Canada's builders are problematic. Other estimates find 20 per cent to 25 per cent of home builders as problematic. Although there are good builders in Canada, consumers and Realtors have no reliable means of knowing who they are. Consumers who find themselves with a defective home and an unresponsive builder naturally turn to their home warranty program for assistance. This too can be problematic. In Ontario, for example, new home purchasers face a mandatory payment to TARION for warranty coverage. Purchasers should recognize TARION as an insurance company that will require that you prove your claim. TARION does not serve as an advocate for purchaser. The TARION claim process is complicated, and, therefore, must be pursued with great care in order to avoid pitfalls.

Municipal government officials involved in the home construction process usually acknowledge home construction industry and

warranty program problems, but often simply advise the homeowner that they can settle their issues through civil litigation. Given the time and high costs involved in the legal system with no guarantees of success, the courts are not a viable option for most Canadians.

Given a system that is not conducive to construction dispute resolution, many homeowners conclude that they have no option but to quietly sell their flawed homes without disclosing the known problems to potential purchasers, despite the fact that sellers are required by law to disclose known defects. Home buyers protect their investment by retaining a competent registered home inspector to inspect the home, regardless of whether it is newly built or a resale home.

It can be heart breaking to find out many problems after a home inspection, but be realistic. Remember that no home is perfect. What you need to decide is whether or not you are willing to fix the problems. Ask yourself these questions:

Can you afford the recommended renovations or repairs?

Does the house meet your needs in its current condition?

Knowing these problems, is the house still a good investment?

Once you've had a home inspection, you'll have peace of mind that you've made an educated decision on buying a home. It's worth it!

By Ponniah K. Sritharan CGA

The Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada organized a seminar on Income Tax updates



Mr. Athy Ariaran

on February 24th, 2007 between 2.00 to 5.00pm at the Scarborough Civic Centre. The seminar was presented by Mr. Tom McCallum FCGA, CBV, a famous presenter among the accounting and tax professionals. The seminar was attended by over 80 accountants and business people. The topics covered in the seminar included personal and corporate tax updates and it was very useful for the people who prepare tax return in their work places or in their own practice. The business community was benefited with some useful tips on how to save taxes. These are some of the pictures taken on the

Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada's Seminar on Income Tax Updates

seminar day.

We also like to take this opportunity to explain what Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada is about. It is a non-profit organization and one of its main objectives is to provide quality seminars to its members, business community and general public in our community. The seminars are usually free of charge and it also includes free refreshments. The association was formed in 2003 May by a group of accountants and since then many members have joined and currently it has over 100 members. In the past years, over 15 seminars were organized by the association and each of these seminars worth couple of hundred dollars if someone wish to attend the seminar anywhere else.

To finance these seminars association use the funds raised through the dinner dance souvenir advertisements revenue. Many business people generously provide us a great support and without them it is extremely difficult to organize these seminars. We would like to thank Kanish and Partners, Scotia Bank and all

other sponsors who have given their great contribution to help association continue its affairs.

The association annual dinner dance organized at very grand fashion in famous banquet halls in the town with great programs for adults and kids. Also there are free gifts for kids and many variety of Sri Lankan style food to enjoy there. If you haven't really got a chance to participate in the dinner dance, you should not miss this year one. Tickets are fixed at an affordable rate.

The association is look forward to provide many other programs to its members and the community in the future months and year. The objectives of these programs are to enhance the knowledge of the members in rapidly changing environment and keep them up to date with the latest developments in the profession.

The association's executive committee led by the President Ms Meera Kandeepan, is committed to provide the best services to its members and the community. We welcome any suggestions, concerns or questions. Please e-



Ms. Meera Kandeepan

mail your comments to the Secretary Mr. Athy Ariaran at csaassociation@yahoo.com See the president and secretary's photos here.

As we always ask the members, there should be commit-

ment and dedication among the members and if everybody contributes your time and effort the association would grow much faster. We invite membership from individuals who wish to join us in professional growth and development, mutual assistance, networking, and cooperative efforts in areas of common business concerns. Membership is contingent upon Executive Board approval and receipt of membership dues.

Membership is the lifeline and lifeblood of our association. We invite your membership to help us continue our programs and activities at the level so many of our current members have been kind enough to praise, and praise highly. Your membership will also enable us to expand our regular programs.

Finally, we would like to thank Monsoon Journal publishers for giving us the opportunity.



WATERLOO REGION NEWS

TAMIL CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
OF WATERLOO REGION

(Kitchener - Waterloo - Cambridge - Guelph)

Tamil New Year 2007

Saturday, April 21st

Delta Hotel, Kitchener, Ontario
Invitation to South Asian Artists

We are looking for local artists in the following field

Dance	-	Indian Classical and Modern
Tamil Musicians	-	Group
Tamil Singers	-	Classical and Modern
Tamil Drama & Speech		

Theme: " TAMIL NEW YEAR & OUR CULTURE "

Kindly, submit a summary of the program and a recent photograph. Children of South Asian descendants are encouraged to perform either in Tamil or English. (Please, note that the event organizers reserve the right to give preference to young artists and to lengthen or shorten the program due to limited time.)

Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region (TCAWR) is a non-profit Multicultural organisation established in 1989. It's based in the region of Waterloo and promotes Arts & Culture from South Asia. The organisation encourages the participation of Artists from diverse cultural background.

Please e-mail mail@tamiltculturewaterloo.org to book a spot

KW Multicultural Festival 2007

Waterloo Region's largest Multicultural Festival. This year marks the festival's 40th anniversary. Close to 40,000 people visit this two day festival. The festival will have food vendors, performers and exhibitors. Area performers include Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region, European Community organisations, Chinese Cultural Center, Asian & African Community groups. Visit Kitchener Waterloo Multicultural Center website www.kwmc.on.ca

Time: 12.00pm -8.00pm**Location:** Victoria Park, Kitchener, Ontario.

Food & Exhibition Vendor Stall applications are now available. Community groups are given first priority when vendors are selected. Application deadline: April 16th 2007

Contact:

Jennifer O'Connor - Festival Manager, Brava! Special Events & Arts Management

Telephone: 519-578-7570**E-mail:** jennifer@bravaspeialevents.comVALERIE HILL
RECORD STAFF

Hoda Mohtar and Maedith Radlein will be honoured by the group Focus for Ethnic Women at a March 8 event called Focus On Friends. (Mar 3, 2007)

Two immigrant women, two very different stories, yet they share a common goal: to help other women who have experienced the same upheaval of moving to a new country, starting a new life.

Hoda Mohtar and Maedith Radlein will be recognized for their contributions to Focus for Ethnic Women at a fundraising event entitled Focus on Friends. Now in its sixth year, the gala evening helps support the organization while celebrating women like Mohtar and Radlein, who have become role models for others.

Mohtar came from Lebanon in 1989 and learned early "there is a stop sign," a barrier that prevents immigrants from succeeding to their full capacity.

"You have to fight," she said. "Yes, the fight is long and we get

Audit clears Waterloo Tamil Students'
Association of wrongdoing

By Narmeen Lakhani

The Waterloo Tamil Students' Association (WATSA) has been cleared of charges of mishandling funds through an independent audit enforced by UW and the Federation of Students last year.

After the arrests of three UW alumni and one undergraduate student in August 2006, the UW HR and Student Services department teamed up with the Federation of Students to initiate a forensic audit on WATSA. The men arrested were former members and officers of this organization, and the allegations followed that they might have used WATSA funds to support the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an allegedly terrorist organization in Sri Lanka.

According to CTV news, beginning April 8, 2006, "The Conservative government has outlawed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, making it illegal for anyone in Canada to support or participate in the group's activities... The change was partly motivated by reports of the Tamil Tigers raising funds through alleged coercion in this country."

In an interview with Imprint at the time of these arrests, Feds president Michelle Zakrisson commented, "The forensic audit is to determine that students' money is being spent on legitimate things."

Deloitte and Touche conducted the audit, covering the financial documents from UW, Feds and WATSA over the 10 years prior to August 2006. UW news release reported on the findings of the audit, "Approximately 60

per cent of disbursements were for the rental of on-campus facilities. The balance covered a donation to the non-profit Tamil Children's Endowment Fund as well as reimbursement of individual expenses and small-dollar items." Therefore, WATSA's activities were declared legitimate and void of illegal aid to the LTTE.

Renjie Butalid, Feds vice-president administration and finance commented on the report: "We have strict guidelines and procedures that all our clubs and services follow regarding any financial transaction, and we are glad to see that WATSA's name has been cleared with the release of this report."

The goal of WATSA is to foster a better cultural understanding of the Tamil society and increase interaction among students to achieve better academic and social support within the UW community. Former president of WATSA, Mario Pushparatnam, had this to say about the clearance of the organization: "We are certainly glad that this unfortunate incident is behind us so that we can return our focus to promoting our club's mandate and purpose... WATSA and its members have always played an active role in the campus community, promoting acceptance and diversity of cultures..."

UW is following up on plans to increase the monitoring of international co-op placements. In September 2006, Imprint reported the implementation of these plans as a result of the involvement of Suresh Sriskandarajah, one of the arrested UW students,

in Sri Lanka during his co-op term. His placement during that term, secured independently of the university, was at a volunteer organization called the Vanni Innovation Group, which he founded.

This self-directed job was accepted as an "unpaid placement" at the time. Co-op placements fell under greater university scrutiny after allegations first emerged of possible illegal activities involving both the members of his organization and VIG itself.

UW representatives reported, "The committee reviewing work experience overseas endorsed the university's assessment and pre-approval process for the small number of self-employment work terms abroad... [and] stressed the importance of ensuring that all procedures - which include a designated contact person and on-site visit - are rigorously followed and suggested ways on ensuring compliance."

UW will follow these guidelines and check their progress after three years. It will also create an effective training program that will be required of all students traveling out of the country on activities authorized by the university.

Martin Van Nierop, UW communications and public affairs, said, "We are satisfied that an independent auditor has confirmed the integrity of our Tamil student group, and look forward to implementing the recommendations related to students working and studying abroad."

[Courtesy: Imprint: University of Waterloo's official student Newspaper]

Two area women honoured for
efforts to aid immigrants

punched back and forth."

Radlein came from Jamaica 20 years ago and was shocked to discover her impressive teaching credentials held little weight.

"I was under the impression my skills were needed," said Radlein. "We were told we were the type of people Canada needed."

Frustrated by not even being granted an interview, Radlein took a job at Tim Hortons. She eventually was placed on a substitute teachers list and began teaching full time in 1992. Most recently Radlein was appointed principal of MacEachern Public School in Waterloo.

Mohtar's story is similar. A teacher and vice-principal in Lebanon, she also ran an international school and speaks five languages fluently. But the Ontario system suggested she get a Canadian teaching degree. "Now I have two teaching degrees," she said with a sardonic laugh.

Mohtar is now a full-time teacher with the Waterloo

Catholic District School Board.

Both women say there are many obstacles for immigrant women. They often dress differently, have heavy accents, different religions, different credentials.

Radlein said hiring practices are "culturally skewed" and anyone of colour or with an accent is often overlooked. "Every immigrant woman I know finds the same thing.

"Fortunately I'm a strong personality. I don't get put off by things. If I see barriers, I find ways to go around them."

But immigrants often don't understand the culture, don't know they have rights and often lack confidence. "It's a process that needs to be kinder," Radlein said.

With so many challenges, Focus on Ethnic Women executive director Olga George-Cosh said her organization is all the more necessary to help immigrant women learn computer skills, job-search skills and to understand Canadian culture. Most important,



they can draw strength and motivation from women who have gone before them, women such as Radlein and Mohtar.

They are, she said, the perfect role models.

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Violence against women deserves deadly serious consideration, says UN Secretary General

Violence against women should be considered with the deadly seriousness it deserved, not just on International Women's Day, but every day, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on March 8th at a special Headquarters event in observance of the commemoration.

Gender-based violence should be brought out into the open, through frank discussions within the United Nations, he said. To realize gender equality worldwide, Member States should replace current gender-issue structures with one dynamic entity within the Organization, and the General Assembly should include an item on violence against women on its yearly agenda. Similarly, the Security Council should establish a mechanism to combat it on the basis of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

He said the United Nations must take the lead in allocating adequate resources to close the gaps between international standards and national practices, and to strengthen the understanding of violence while building effective local and national strategies. Member States should draw support from proposals presented by the High-Level Panel on United Nations System-Wide Coherence, which hopefully would lead to the creation of an entity that could inspire country-level changes and spur stronger accountability on the part of individuals, communi-

ties and nations.

Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa (Bahrain), President of the General Assembly, noted that most sexual and physical violence against women and girls happened at home and, as such, changes in attitude must also begin in the home. A study on violence against women, issued during the Assembly's sixty-first session, included strong recommendations for action that could end the impunity with which serious crimes were committed. "The burden is on our shoulders," she stressed.

Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, President of the Security Council, said a presidential statement adopted by the Council yesterday was the most comprehensive since the Council's adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). It touched on the need to increase women's participation in preventing and resolving conflicts and stipulated the task of all States to end impunity and prosecute those responsible for all war crimes, including sexual violence against women and girls.

The Secretary-General and other speakers paid tribute to the late Angela King, former Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, describing her role as a great champion of women's rights and an inspiration to women and men everywhere.

Moderated by Shashi Tharoor,

Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information, the two-hour event included a panel discussion involving six speakers - Carla Del Ponte, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; Dilian Francisca Toro Torres, President of the Senate in the Congress of Colombia; Antero Lopes, Deputy Police Adviser in the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations; Raghida Dergham, Columnist and Senior Diplomatic Correspondent, Al Hayat; Jacques DeGraff of 100 Black Men; and Todd Minerson, Executive Director of the White Ribbon Campaign.

One panellist called for creative thinking in making justice processes "feel safe and comfortable" for women coming forward to tell their stories, while another urged a creative, repeated and systematic telling of the story, adding that the rape of girls should not be hushed up, but rather turned into an outcry.

A third panellist called on all women parliamentarians to unite in sensitizing their political partners and parties to the importance of protecting the well-being of women, girls as well as boys. "A woman in politics is a woman changed; but many women in politics can change politics," she concluded.

[UN.org]

Work to earn respect, Kanimozhi tells women

Women's Day has become a day of celebrations now, but it should be used as an occasion to mark the struggle for women's rights, said activist Kanimozhi. She was speaking at a function where she received an award with other women achievers.

The event was organised by Madras Anchorage Ladies Circle 92. The others honoured were founder-president of Madras Craft Foundation Deborah Thyagarajan, Arundhati Mohan, principal of Sindhi Model School and Vidhya G of D Group Security Force.

Ms. Kanimozhi said more than

love, women need to get respect. To earn this, they should get out of their protective cocoons. "For this you need strength from within, because society is not going to lie back and say claim your rights," she said.

Elsewhere in the city, cardiologist Sengottuvelu highlighted the need to be aware of women developing cardiovascular disease. "Women have symptoms that are different from men. The symptoms include muscle pain and difficulty in breathing. Normally, they are ignored."

Dr. Sengottuvelu urged



women and their family members to be pro-active. "Women with high blood pressure and diabetes, particularly those approaching menopause, should not ignore these symptoms."

[Courtesy: hinduonnet.com]

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Sonia Gandhi sounds alarm on India foreign retail entry

Ruling Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi has sounded the alarm over fears that letting giant foreign retailers into India could drive small "mom-and-pop" stores out of business, reports said on Tuesday.

In a letter to Congress Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Gandhi called for the government to "consider having the relevant issues properly examined before further

the "great Indian retail gold rush".

Gandhi was quoted by the Times of India as saying that she had "received suggestions from many quarters about the desirability to first study the possible impact of transnational supermarkets on the livelihood security of those engaged in small-scale operations."

The Congress chief, who turned down the job of prime minister when the party won office in 2004, is widely seen as the political power behind the throne.

The government still bans foreign retail chains from selling directly to consumers but they are using a backdoor to enter the market by starting wholesale and sourcing firms which supply a local retail partner.

India's 15-million dusty, chaotic and cramped corner outlets fear that competition from the giant retailers, with their air-conditioned stores and plastic-wrapped produce, will drive them out of business.

There was no immediate comment from Congress or the prime minister's office on the reports, which come amid a media flurry that the government will liberalise foreign investment in the retail sector in the coming months.

Last week, India's trade minister Kamal Nath said Carrefour, the world's second biggest retailer, was in talks with India's Wadia group to clinch a deal to enter India, according to media reports.

Foreign retailers are keen to penetrate India's market to tap the increasingly affluent 300 million strong middle class among the 1.1 billion population.



decisions."

The reports of the letter came after Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, teamed up late last year with India's Bharti Enterprises, the nation's top private phone firm, to start a nationwide store chain.

To counter weakening domestic sales, retailers like Wal-Mart, France's Carrefour, Germany's Metro and Britain's Tesco have been pushing to enter India's 300-billion dollar retail industry in what commentators have dubbed



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Who is a Guru?

Continued from page 7

Verse 5; 14-18.

In the spiritual journey of a person these Guru's played a very important role. One may ask whether it is important to have a Guru to achieve spiritual knowledge. Gaining spiritual knowledge is by proper discipline. This spiritual exertion towards an intended goal is called Sadhana. It is not about gaining knowledge, but



about a way of living. What ever number of manuals one may read it is of no use unless some one teaches the practical aspect.

The analogy can be pursued further. If one wants to learn to drive a vehicle, he goes to a driving school. If the school just sold the person a driving manual, he certainly will feel short changed. Like wise, the practical nature of spirituality can perhaps only be learnt from a guru, a teacher who has himself acquired wisdom from study and practice at the feet of his own master.

These Gurus are one who gives the transcendental knowledge (Vidya) which is the goal of Hindu religion from which the Guru's hail. In the great liturgical book Bgavat Geeta is a dialog between God who incarnate in the form of Lord Krishna and Arjuna a noble warrior. The discussion and the relationship between the two considered to be expression of the ideal Guru/disciple relationship. In Geeta itself, Lord Krishna speaks of the importance of finding a Guru to Arjuna;

'Find a wise teacher, honour him,

Ask him your questions, serve him;

Some one who has seen the truth

Will guide you on the path of wisdom' Ch4; Sl 34

Saint Manickavasagar hails Lord Shiva as his Guru. He sings on the third line of Sivapuranam;

'Hail, foot of the Guru-pearl that rules Gogali'

Again in his Achopathgam psalm on verse three he sings

'Me trusting every lie as truth,-plunged in desire of women's charms,-

He guarded that I perished not with soul perturbed,-the Lord Supreme,

On whose side the Lady dwells! He brought me neigh His jewelled feet,-

'Twas thus my Guru gave me grace: O rapture! Who so blest as I?'

A Hindu is expected to find a good Guru who will enlighten his path on transcendental knowledge. We see in the life of Lord Buddha the great rebellion of Hindu religion who roamed all over India to find a good Guru. He learned under many Gurus. Once, when he had learned all that could be taught by his Guru Alara, his Guru said to him "Well done Siddhartha, you have reached the same level of concentration that I too have reached. I have nothing more to teach you. You are my equal. Join me in instructing others here who are trying to reach the highest". When Buddha refused the offer and asked permission to leave his reply was "Siddhartha, you were the best pupil I ever had. I am sorry to see you go. But this is all I can teach you. If you find something superior, please come back and instruct me. May you reach your goal without obstruction". The above gives the need of a Guru in training a person in spiritual achievement. The spiritual learning is a journey on a lonely path. Guru helps the person with the orientation but it is the duty of that person to go on his journey.

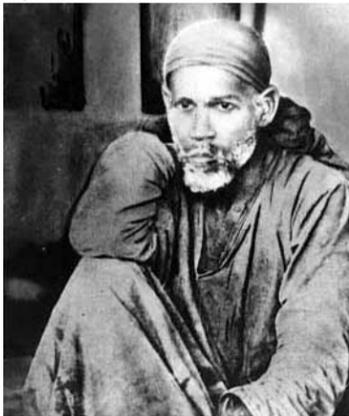
There are also circumstances where the disciples had become the Guru. St. Arulnanthi was the Guru of St. Meykandar's father. One day when St. Arulnanthi met his disciples' son St. Meykandar expounding St. Arulnanthy system of philosophy, in his great vanity, asked him, "Define anava (ego). St. Meykandar without even parting his lips pointed his finger at St. Arulnanthi himself. The elder came to his senses immediately; he got over his false ego, and fell at the feet of St. Meykandar and there after became the disciple of his disciples' son.

One could see it is the role of the Guru to teach transcendental knowledge to the disciples. They are venerated more than the God



himself. St. Pathirakiriar the Hindu saint disciple of St. Patinathar attained beatitude before his Guru by worshiping his Guru and no other deity. This clearly shows the important role a Guru occupies in the journey of a seeker.

By virtue of the unique position and control a Guru has on his disciple one cannot over stress the need in selecting a good liberated person as the Guru. Frequently we find many unscrupulous persons making use of the title. Spiritual teachers should have high standards of moral conduct and that followers of Gurus should interpret the behavior of a spiritual teacher by using common sense, and, should not naively use mystical explanations unnecessarily to explain immoral behavior. Nothing should compromise morality. Another point to remember is that the bigger the claim a Guru make, such as the claim to be God, the bigger the chance is that the person is unreliable. Self-proclaimed Gurus are likely to be more unreliable than Gurus with a legitimate lineage.



There are two other categories of people we come across in ones religious aspiration. They are clergy and priests. People have a tendency to call them Guru. Clergy is the generic term used to describe the formal religious leadership within a given religion. The term comes from Greek term meaning heritage. Clergy usually take care of the ritual aspects of the religious life to teach or otherwise help spreading the religion's doctrine and practices. They often deal with life cycle with rituals like naming ceremony, wedding, death etc. They

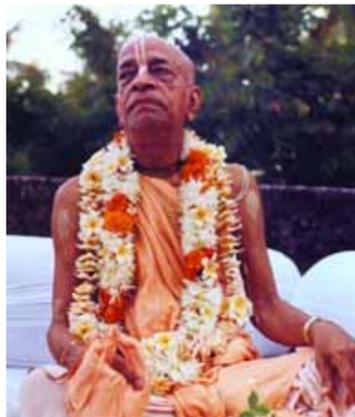
also found to do the temple worship and outside life cycle rituals.

The other one is the priest or priestess is a person having the authority to perform and administer religious rites. Priests are generally believed to have contact with the deities of the religion of their priesthood. This is the reason for the tendency of an average person to respect them. After all is said and done they too are humans and do have the tendency to exploit the situation. These priests were called panda in Indian dialect. After his visit to Kasi Visvanath temple Mahatma Gandhi observed in his auto biography I quote; 'If any one doubts the infinite mercy of God, let him have a look at these sacred places. How much hypocrisy and irreligion does the Prince of Yogis suffer to be perpetrated in His holy name? He proclaimed long ago "Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap" There is thus hardly any need for God to interfere. He laid down the law and, as it were, retired'.

There was another great King of Yogi's in the west. I refer to Lord Jesus. I quote from bible Matthew 23; "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Mosses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men 'Rabbi, Rabbi'. In the last two millenniums much hasn't changed. We see men of religious order the same in every religion. They cannot be called Gurus.

There are many who do perform miracles. These men and women are also are frequently called Guru. When some one does something which does not fall into the normal intelligent comprehension we tend to call them either miracle or magic. If a divine connotation is given it is called miracle! I do not trivialise the great saints of the past and present. The greatness of these holy men is not the miracles but the guidance they gave to the world. The miracles they performed benefited those who were fortunate to come into contact with them. But their teachings are for ever. Take

the case of Lord Jesus. If he made a lame to walk it is of no use for the rest of us. But the Sermon on the Mount has guided many generations and will contin-



ue to generations.

There is a tendency to make use of the awe of the devotees to propagate the religion, and trivialize the teachings. It was Lord Jesus who said in Mtt24: 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away". One must also note true mystic person don't go from one place to another blowing the trumpet. Only tricksters and magicians do so. Sathaka or spiritual students should go in search of a Guru and not the other way about. Please remember men flocked to see Lord Jesus and Lord Buddha not them went around looking for disciples. Another interesting fact to remember is that Lord Jesus again and again referred to himself as son of man for he was indeed great and need no authentication by divine lineage.

So coming to the original question who is a Guru we may sum up as follows. He is the teacher who guides you in the journey of spirituality to attain transcended state of mind. He is a person to be venerated as much as the God himself. Calling other teachers as Guru is senseless. It is like when an adult male and female agrees to live together and raise a family we call the bond a marriage. But it is wrong to call a marriage when two persons of the same gender agree to live together. It is true in both cases it is joining together, but it will be a case of taking meaning of the word out of context. When two persons of same gender living together it is better to coin a new word so that one could understand the true meaning and differentiate the two situations. The teachers of various subjects' like tap dancing and pole dancing may be called as achariyas if you must use an East Indian oriental name, certainly not Guru!

By Kumar Punithavel



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MONSOON FEATURES

The Teaching Experience of a UFT Undergraduate in Vietnam...

On board the twenty-one hour Viet Nam Airlines flight to Ha Noi, it is difficult not to notice with some confusion an Air France logo hidden under a thin wash of paint or still engraved on the back of one of the forks. Most of Viet Nam Airlines' older jets were bought on discount from the French airliner after independence; a small compensation for the long colonial history between the two countries. On board, well-groomed attendants see little irony in handing out immigration forms to the 'people's socialist republic' at the same time as glossy duty-free catalogues ped-

On Board to Vietnam

By Tony Navaneelan

war - taxis from the Hilton and Sheraton now waited to whisk American tourists to the new glass-clad towers sticking into the Ha Noi skyline.

This is the not Viet Nam from American war movies. It is the Viet Nam that I and thousands of other foreigners had come here to experience following the country's two decades of economic growth, second only to China's in its voracious pace. But that is not to say the old Viet Nam is not still ever present. Once my taxi sped away from the airport the land opened up into a flat, green plateau of rice paddies full of women toiling away in the country's iconic white cone-shaped hats. These women earn less than US\$2 per day and they represent the vast majority of Vietnamese society still. They, like tens of millions of others, work not only in the shadow of the country's modern airport, but in the shadow of the country's economic miracle as a whole. As I would come to learn, Viet Nam is, if nothing else, a land of tenuously co-existing contradictions.

* * *

A few after arriving and I am on the back of a Honda motorcycle - ubiquitous in Viet Nam - heading into the countryside. Motorbikes are a cheap and efficient way of moving around which has made them extremely popular in Viet Nam since the 1990s. At every intersection in Ha Noi, hundreds of motorbikes will stream haphazardly into one another, oblivious to any concept of traffic laws or helmets. In Canada I do not even have my learner's permit, so in Viet Nam I am confined to my bicycle. This means, like all other cyclists, I am relegated the very bottom of Vietnamese society along with recently arrived migrants and people who have sold their motorbikes for drugs. But bicycling in Ha Noi rush hour traffic is difficult enough. I tend to hug the curb and hang out with the bicycling ladies who are carrying rice or vegetables on their head while they peddle. They give me the 'thumbs up.' In the countryside, however, we have escaped the traffic of Ha Noi and my driver and I are able to speed easily towards our destination: an all-female labour prison inside a national park.

Most North Americans come to Asia to teach to middle-to-upper class students eager to study at universities abroad. My class was somewhat different. To begin with, they were all recovering drug addicts or sex-trade workers. Secondly, they were still in prison. I had been hired to work in a pilot UNDP project which was providing vocational training to soon-to-be-released inmates in these 'special' prisons. Viet Nam has an entirely separate prison system for individuals convicted of a special class of 'social

crimes: drug use, sex trade work, sexual indecency, homosexuality, etc. Typical of Communist governments' fetish for strange rhetoric and even stranger institutions, these women are officially termed victims of 'social evil' and the facility they are housed in was operated by the Ha Noi Sub-Department for the Prevention of Social Evil.

While the prison I worked in only housed drug users and sex workers, the government has also launched campaigns against such social evils as gambling and has even targeted karaoke bars and foreign-language signage as being counter-revolutionary. The prisons are officially known as rehabilitation centres which made me cringe at what the conditions in an actual Vietnamese prison must be like. Our 'rehabilitation centre,' like all others, was overcrowded and underfunded. The women sleep 35 to a room with only 20 beds. Most sleep on bamboo mats on the floor. They work

other places where US foreign policy has been defeated, Vietnamese have developed a very positive impression of the United States. Most Vietnamese in the cities express a desire to work and live in the US for some time and every tourist is inevitably approached by youth looking to practice their English. The people I spoke to seemed almost disappointed when they found out I was not American but Canadian. The land lady at the small apartment I rented in Ha Noi was certain I was mistaken and that "Canada is in America. No? America very rich. Don't you want to be rich?" All of this is testimony to the new and dogmatic focus in Viet Nam since the onset of a period of relative peace since 1988. Far from dwelling on the lost decades behind them, Viet Nam has chosen to direct its attention squarely on a forward-facing obsession: economic development.

Like most people in Viet Nam, the lives of the 30 women I was soon to meet and teach mirrored the large social upheavals that have come along with Viet Nam's drive towards development. After



Car used to transport the women

dling imported luxury items. And despite the numerous non-smoking signs all over the aircraft, I keep finding a suspicious number of cigarette butts in my armchair ashtray.

These contradictions - jarring and yet so commonplace in contemporary Vietnamese society - were still novel and disorienting for me as I flew towards Ha Noi. Most of what I knew of Viet Nam to that point came from a handful of American war movies and the Vietnamese ph? restaurant near my university. In the seven days that past between when I was accepted for the job posting and when I actually stepped on the plane, there wasn't much time to consider the experience ahead of me. But there I was, after flying across eleven time zones, stepping off the plane to spend half a year in one of the world's last and most infamous Communist states.

* * *

I arrived in Viet Nam last February with a well-thumbed Lonely Planet Guide and a six month working visa from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A few weeks earlier I had applied for a volun-

exactly and then told her I'd take the job. When did you need me to be there, I asked? "How's February 26?" I looked at the calendar. It was February 21.

We touch down in Ha Noi airport through a cloud of crisp fog. It is wintertime in the north and far from scenes of lush tropical rainforest, the city feels damp and there a lingering fragrance of mildew. The airport is not what is expected. The new building is sleek and modern, complete with polished black marble floors and an elderly lady doggedly sweeping away footprints as soon as they are deposited. The airport is intended as showcase of the new Viet Nam: prosperous, technological, modern. But the very cleanliness of the building, a sign of its under-use, belies that fact that new Viet Nam is still in its infancy. As I glanced at the Western products being sold in the gift stores, I was immediately regretted the ten tubes of toothpaste and deodorant sticks I had nervously packed for my half-year stay. And outside on the curb, under the portrait of Ho Chi Minh - the man who had orchestrated the US' only military defeat in a foreign



Outside the classroom

in factories most days painting plastic toys. Everything smells of mildew. This was not the Betty Ford Clinic.

* * *

For too many North Americans, Viet Nam isn't so much a country as it is a war. It is easy to lump this state alongside a few infamous others - Bosnia, Rwanda, Iraq - as places which have been flattened in our memories to a few newspaper photographs of a distant and violent conflict. Indeed, the word Viet Nam itself has become shorthand for military quagmire and terrible sacrifice. But with the exception of a US B-52 bomber wreckage that is still floating in the lake into which it crashed in Ha Noi, the country harbors almost no evidence of, and even less resentment over, the Viet Nam War - or the American War, as they refer to it. From the Vietnamese perspective, the country was essentially in a state of continuous war for independence and territorial unity from WWII until 1988; a small and poor country which successfully fought back invasions by the Japanese, the French, the Americans and the Chinese.

But what is done is done. Far from the venomous perceptions of Americans in Iran, Cuba and

the drying up of subsidies from the USSR at the end of the Cold War, the Communist government in Viet Nam began a process of serious reform, opening up the country to trade and allowing private business. The hope was to mirror the successes of nearby China and Thailand in catapulting themselves away from decades of warfare and beyond the status of a low-income country. What followed was an economic boom that has seen the country grow at an annual rate of 8% for nearly twenty years, producing the fastest rate of poverty reduction in human history. In no other country have so many people escaped poverty so quickly than in Viet Nam between 1988 and the present. Just last year, the Viet Nam Stock Exchange increased by 150%. The sense of optimism in the country is almost palpable. Everyone is smiling.

But along with imported Taiwanese DVD players and American cigarettes, the newly opened economy also generated an appetite for heroin and along with it, HIV. And so on my first day I entered a classroom of women who represented the physical cost Viet Nam was paying for its rapid growth - "the waste products," I once heard someone



Me and my teacher Nancy

distastefully say, of the country's famed economic machine. Most were struggling with addictions, most commonly to heroin or for the more affluent, to ecstasy. Many concealed prized - yet banned - photographs in their

declare success. Of course the women themselves had their own varying incentives for succeeding. Letters (opened by the prison of course) from boyfriends in their hometowns, visits from their children and parents on weekend, or

and vodka. For health and longevity, of course. Delicious. But when the meal is over, the discussions with my UN co-workers would inevitably turn into a verbal browbeating of the state over the conditions of the prisons. The prisons have been termed by many critics as forced labour centres or even concentration camps for people living with HIV/AIDS. And on days when my classes with the women are cancelled because they failed to meet their work quota for the previous day, I was tempted to agree.

But while the prisons may seem crude, they represent an honest (although futile) attempt to address an epidemic by a country which, until a few years ago, did not even have a word for HIV. Indeed, it is part of the promise but also the problem that such rapid poverty reduction has brought to Viet Nam. A society that twenty-five years ago was preoccupied with Chinese invasion and rice famines, is now trying to absorb Korean soap operas, Microsoft, admission to the WTO and HIV/AIDS simultaneously. The results are sometimes tragic, often comedic and never perfect - there is still an infuriating lack of social norms governing where and when cell phones can be used. But they represent the best attempt of a society to deal with a total economic and social upheaval the likes of which Canada has never experienced. To put the scale of growth in perspective, the total wealth of Viet Nam's 88-million people doubles every nine years. Greater countries have come apart under lesser strain.

And even amongst those who have paid the highest price in the country's race for modernization there exists no less enthusiasm for the project as a whole. I would have expected the women in the prison - most victims of the new imports of cheap Thai rice and Cambodian heroin, a lethal mixture for rural Viet Nam's rice-based economies - to be the most critical of the new reforms in the country. Instead they seem to be completely enthralled by, and well adjusted to, it. As if we were at a café instead of a prison, the women feverishly inquire what foreigners think about Viet Nam, ask what Canadian girls wear dancing and if Canadian boys live

with their parents, and are proud to pass on to me their new email addresses - even though many will not be able to check their inboxes until their release in two years. With few exceptions, the women in the prison know that even with a criminal record, the pace of growth means they will enjoy a quality of life greater than their parents and almost unimaginable to their grandparents. And perhaps most surprising of all is the constant requests for Bee Gees and Lionel Ritchie CDs. The Bee Gees and Lionel Ritchie, like most foreign music, are big in Viet Nam.

* * *

Packing up my apartment in Ha Noi at the end of six months was a bittersweet experience. I

time you spent there.

In Viet Nam, the sense of optimism and renewal is almost tangible. The country is literally reinventing - remanufacturing - itself every few years. The experience of living inside such a society at this time was invaluable and the memories, one year later, are still fresh. And so is my affection for friendships I formed while I was there. The women who worked in our program, with the exception of a few, will all have been released by now - quietly and unceremoniously deposited outside the gate of the prison like many before them where they wait for a bus to take them to the nearby city. I rode that bus, stifling and crowded in the summer heat, every week coming back to



Women in the program

jacket pockets of children living in Ha Noi. And one-third of them were battling HIV in perhaps the most unfavourable of circumstances: in a rural prison, in a poor country, and without any form of medication.

Over the next six months, myself and a team of six UN workers ran the vocational training program inside the women's prison. The course work consisted mainly of computer training, English lessons and information

rumors of a famous South Korean movie playing in Ha Noi would all bring them all pangs for home.

* * *

The problems of our project were frequent table conversation when our UN team would go out for dinner. This helped distract us, at times, from the food. The diet in Viet Nam is largely a function of the population. In a country of 88-million living in an area half the size of Saskatchewan, nothing can go to waste. Dog meat, pig



Women in the program

sessions on drug counseling and social networks when they are released. Our ambitions were low. When we arrived, the prison we were working at had a return rate of over 90% -- 9 out of 10 women would relapse and be sent back for another 2-year stay. Just having 5 women in the program gain stable employment following release would be enough to

stomach, cow cheek and insects have all staked out a place for themselves on the Vietnamese menu. Ordering snake at a restaurant in Ha Noi entails a live snake being brought to the table, killed on spot and its still-beating heart placed on a dish on the table. Then the oldest guest eats the pulsating heart while the others drink a shot of snake blood



Women's prison in Vietnam

had become tired of making a fool of myself on a daily basis while trying to complete such basic tasks as grocery shopping or finding an internet café. The novelty of everyone staring at me as I drove by on my bicycle also became less enjoyable. And I longed for a conversation with friends that did not take place over email and across eleven time zones. The addition of Ha Noi summer heat - so humid it made the wallpaper in my apartment peel - did not add much incentive to stay. I was ready to go home. When our UNDP program finished in August, I booked a ticket for my long, twenty-one flight back to Canada. But this is a natural experience for people working in different cultures from their own. The daily frustrations of culture-clash and language barriers can be trying but they are passing. Those feelings quickly melt away once you get home, allowing you to appreciate the true value of the

Ha Noi which is a unique experience in itself. Some former inmates are greeted by friends and the hesitant smiles of family and some are stoic and simply stare out the window. They are like the country itself, with many bad memories behind and so much turbulent development left ahead. They have confidence in the tide of progress they have been swept up in and yet fear their inability to properly control the course it will take them on. But like Viet Nam as whole, I think most of those women seem sure they are at least heading in a direction better from where they came.

Anthony Navaneelan is a Canadian of Sri Lankan heritage who worked in Viet Nam from February to August 2006. He is currently studying for his law degree at the University of Toronto.

Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana - Carnatic Music Festival

By Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai

Carnatic Music Festival to celebrate the genius of Sri Thyagarajah was held at the Indian Cultural Centre in Colombo recently. Thyagaraja Aradhana was held for the first time in Sri Lanka.

The 160th annual Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana celebrations were held in Thiruvaiyaru on 8th January, 2007. Musicians from all over the state gathered and, sat before the Saint's Samadhi on the banks of river Cauvery, sang "Pancharatna Kritis" and paid homage to him.

Saint Thyagaraja was born on May 4th 1767 in Thiruvarur in

Thnjavur district. He was born as the third son of Ramabrahmam and Seethamma. His father's was a story teller. His family moved to Thiruvaiyaru soon after Saint Thyagaraja was born. Saint Thyagaraja got married to Parvathy in 1784, when he was 18 year-old. His wife Parvathy died in 1789, when he was 23 year-old. He married her sister Kamala in 1790, and got a daughter. Saint Thyagaraja named his daughter Seethalakshmi. It is believed that on January 6th 1847 would be the day when he was excepted to become Mukthi. He attained Samadhi on Pushya Bagula Panchami in Thiruvaiyaru.

Saint Thyagaraja was an eminent composer in classical music, poet and a philosopher. He was an extraordinary personality born to teach humanity through music and Rama Bhakthi. He saw Rama as a chief, as a saviour of mankind and a s a Lord of whole universe. Saint Thyagaraja praised him, cajoled him, taunted him, served him and cried for him,

He studied Sanskrit and astrology. He was very well versed in his mother tongue Telugu. Saint Thyagaraja has composed several Kritis. He made use of 200 ragas to compose different Kritis.



The Divyanama Sankeerthanas and Utsava Samprathaya Kritis composed by him are melodies. He composed 1,800 Kritis. He has created two operas namely "Prahlada Bhakthi

Vijayam", " Nowka Chittram" and "SitaRama Vijayam". He wrote most of the Kritis in Telugu, and the rest in Sanskrit.

Saint Thyagaraja's music delights and inspires everyone. The Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana is a solemn tribute of all Carnatic artistes to one of the greatest composers ever. It's a unique festival.

"Without peace, there can be no happiness" said Saint Thyagaraja.

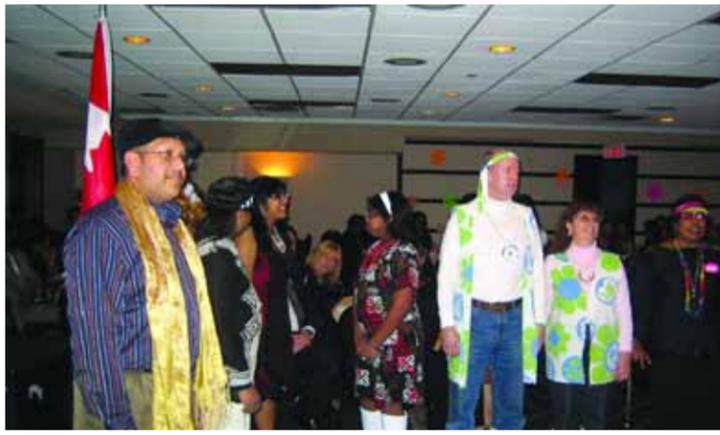
Saint Thyagaraja lived with Raman every moment. The name Thyaga-Raja means "Prince of Renunciation". Saint Thyagaraja was the greatest among the music composers of South India.

[HumanityAshore.org]



'Go Go Gala 2007' 'Bringing Back the Sixties'

held on February 3rd 2007



On behalf of the St. Bridget's Convent, Past Pupils' Association of Ontario, I am honored to welcome fellow Bridgeteens, families and friends to the 'Go Go Gala 2007' - 'Bringing Back the Sixties' Dinner Dance.

Today we also celebrate 105 years of our alma mater, St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo.

Tonight's sixties festivities represent the pinnacle of another successful year of uniting and celebrating the green and white spirit.

The symbolism of the sixties permeated many areas of our daily life, which as women we continue to enjoy today. Some of them are: Women's lib, civil rights, freedom, a love for humanity and of course the mini skirts.

Therefore, what better way to celebrate this milestone of our alma mater?

This evening is important in many ways. I am particularly grateful to have worked with such dedicated, tireless and enthusias-

tic members of the Executive Committee, who came together with immense team spirit to plan this sixties night. We, as a committee have volunteered our time, which took us away from our families, to make this evening a night to cherish and remember. I hope every one of you enjoys this evening as much as we have enjoyed creating it for you. Not only has the planning process given us the opportunity to work with fellow Bridgeteens, it has also promoted the sisterhood we

enjoy as alumni of St. Bridget's Convent.

Tonight, I extend sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to make this event possible through generous donations and commitments of time. My special thanks go out to our lead sponsor, other corporate sponsors and donors for willingly pledging their support. I also acknowledge Individuals and fellow Bridgeteens who supported this endeavour in many different ways. A dance of this magnitude would

not be possible without them. Finally, to our guests here tonight, THANK YOU! for making the "Go Go Gala 2007" a tremendous success.

In conclusion, I raise a toast to the Bridgeteen Spirit using our school motto -

"GENTLY & FIRMLY".

Namita Kanishkan Thevarasa
President
2005 - 2007
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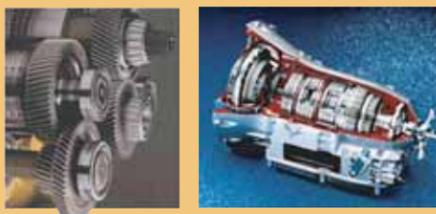
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* Keep your engine tuned up. A misfiring spark plug can reduce fuel efficiency as much as 30%.

Follow the service schedules listed in your owner's manual. Replace filters and fluids as recommended.

* Check your tires for proper inflation. Underinflation wastes fuel your engine has to work harder to push the vehicle. Wheels that are out-of-line (as evidenced by uneven tread wear or vehicle pulling) make the engine work harder, too. Properly maintained tires will last longer, meaning fewer scrap tires have to be disposed. Every ten days, motorists who drive with under-inflated tires and poorly maintained engines waste 70 million gallons of gasoline.

Car Care Council

* Keep your air conditioner in top condition and have it serviced only by a technician certified competent to handle/recycle refrigerants. Air conditioners contain CFCs--gases that have been implicated in the depletion of the

ozone layer.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, almost one third of the CFCs released into the atmosphere come from mobile air conditioners; some simply leaks out, but the majority escapes during service and repair--so it's important to choose a qualified technician.

* Do-it-yourselfers: dispose of used motor oil, anti-freeze/coolant, tires, and old batteries properly. Many repair facilities accept these items. Or call your local municipal or county government for recycling sites. Never dump used oil or anti-freeze on the ground or in open streams. Each year twenty times the amount of oil spilled by the tanker Exxon Valdez in Alaska is improperly dumped into America's environment by do-it-yourselfers.

Automotive Information Council

* Observe speed limits. Mileage decreases sharply above 55 mph.

* Drive gently. Avoid sudden accelerations and jerky stop-and-go's. Use cruise-control on open highways to keep your speed as steady as

* Avoid excessive idling. Shut off the engine while waiting for friends and family. Today's vehicles are designed to "warm up" fast, so forget about those five-minute warm ups on cold winter mornings.

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Construction shows Rouge Valley's progress for patients



- A year of positive change for Ajax and Pickering and for Centenary hospitals -

Construction on three major projects shows daily proof of Rouge Valley Health System's leadership in expanding and improving healthcare for its communities.

The pace of progress is so intense that this year will see more multi-million-dollar construction in one year than Rouge Valley's two hospitals have seen since they were built some 40 and 50 years ago.

"We are on track for a terrific year of building, expanding and improving facilities at both Rouge Valley hospitals," says one of RVHS' busiest people, Rick Gowrie, Director of Planning and Capital Redevelopment. "Planning and implementing a capital construction project, not to mention three at the same time, is not without its complexities and challenges, but well worth it given the results we can all see everyday at both hospitals," says Gowrie.

Natalie Bubela, Vice-President of Programs and Support Services, says, "Our community, staff, physicians, volunteers and Auxiliary have much to be proud of in getting us to this position this year. We can't thank them enough. Rick's work has been instrumental and key in advancing each project."

REDEVELOPMENT OF ROUGE VALLEY AJAX AND PICKERING

The largest of the three projects is the redevelopment and expansion of Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering, which includes:

- A new Emergency Department and related services amounting to about 140,000 square feet of new and/or renovated space and services;
- New or renovated facilities for Diagnostic Imaging;
- More Cardiac Diagnostic Services;
- Plus new or renovated facilities for Mental Health, Complex Continuing Care, Ambulatory Care Unit, Laboratory and more.

Substantial completion of the redevelopment is scheduled for March of 2010.

REGIONAL BIRTHING AND NEWBORN CENTRE

The birthing and newborn centre, at Rouge Valley Centenary, will provide expectant mothers and their families with a modern, comfortable home-like environment for low-risk, uncomplicated births, while also providing all the equipment and expertise needed to handle more complicated high-risk deliveries.

The centre will address an east Toronto and west Durham regional need for those more complicated deliveries.

Labour, Delivery, Recovery and Postpartum rooms, post-partum beds, new Advanced Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, four

private care-by-parent rooms, a family lounge and two overnight hostel rooms.



Substantial completion of the centre is scheduled for June 2008.

PHASE TWO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

"Phase Two will offer seriously mentally ill people proper accommodations and care, getting many of them off the streets or out of sub-standard housing," says Program General Manager Uwe Marshner.

It's called "phase-two" because it augments existing housing the Mental Health Program has in the community, accommodating only a handful of patients at one time.

Located across the street from Rouge Valley Centenary, the new housing project will have 30-townhouse-style units and a clinic for patients needing care for major depression, bipolar, rehabilitation counselling, residential counselling (including life skills training in banking, cooking and more), but not criminal cases.

Substantial completion of Phase Two is scheduled for September 2007.

More detailed descriptions of each project are available at www.rougevalley.ca.

* A printable version of this news release is attached.

Rouge Valley Health System is an innovative leader in quality family centred care, with regional programs in cardiac care, mental health and paediatrics. Rouge Valley consists of several health sites, including two hospitals: Rouge Valley Centenary, in east Scarborough; Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering, in the west Durham Region. Together a team of doctors including 224 general practitioners and 325 specialists, more than 1,000 nurses and many other professionals, care for a broad spectrum of health conditions. In consultation and partnership with community members, other hospitals, healthcare organizations and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Rouge Valley continues to improve its programs and create new ones catering to the needs of the growing communities of Scarborough, Ajax, Pickering and Whitby. It's in our nature to care. www.rougevalley.ca.

For more information, please contact:

David Brazeau

Manager

Public Affairs and Community Relations

Rouge Valley Health System

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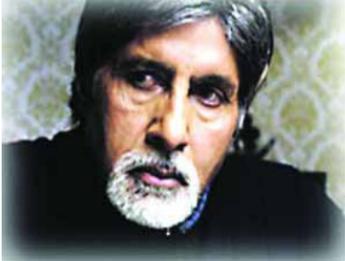
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CINE JOURNAL

Slow 2007

If 2006 was the year of blockbusters, then 2007 might be the year of disappointments. Guru being the lone glowing exception, all other big budget, big banner films have fallen by the wayside in 2007. Some have managed to garner some respect while others have fallen flat on their face. The season of disappointments kicked off with Salaam-e-Ishq and has stretched along till Ekalavya. The jinx does not seem to be over as



yet. Recent releases Nishabd and Nehle Pe Dehla have both got off to nearly disastrous starts at the box office. Never expected to take big openings during the inauspicious (for the box office) Holi weekend, no one expected the films with such star value to crawl at a 15-29% opening. And to make matters worse, the word of mouth has not been too good. Critics have found nothing other than Amitabh Bachchan and the cameraman to point out as positives in Nishabd. Nehle Pe Dehla is waiting to be reviewed, three days after its release. These are not things that normally happen to films starring the Big B, Saif Ali Khan and Sanjay Dutt. For Nishabd, the blame is being put on the theme which is being labeled as one with severe limitations. The treatment is sensitive they say, but there are not enough twists and turns to keep the viewer interested. Things look bleak. So what happened after

BOLLYBLITZ

by Anand. J

write your comments to: cine@monsoonjournal.com

farewell was said to 2006. Is Bollywood yet to get over its hangover of the dream run or is it just the great cycle of fortune that is playing tricks. Whatever it may be, the truth is that the industry now needs a hit and there are quite a few candidates in the coming weeks. 1971, Sarhad Paar, Cheeni Kum among others. Let's wait and watch.

Mercedes Salman

It seems to be the season of cars gifting. First it was Amitabh (or was it Amar Singh of Samajwadi party) to gift Abhishek Bachchan a car, then it was Vidhu Vinod Chopra who gifted Amitabh the Rolls Royce and now it is the turn of Salman Khan to show his love and gratitude to actor Govinda. Salman surprised Govinda with a Mercedes Benz when the latter was in shooting. Govinda's market in Bollywood is down after getting into politics joining the Congress party.



Govinda has done a dance number in the Tamil movie "Three Roses" along with Rambha. After long gap Govinda featured along with Akshay Kumar in the Priyadarshan directed "Bhaagam Bhaag" which did not do good business at the box office. It is

said that Salman Khan was instrumental in Govinda's come back. "I was in the midst of shooting when Salman asked me to come to the gate. I saw a brand new Mercedes there and knew he is up to some surprise. I was thrilled" said Govinda. Govinda is now all praise for his new found friend.

Hollywood Aishwarya

The most talked about and the most written about lady in the recent times could only be



Aishwarya Rai who continues to remain in spot light for various reasons. Announcements have finally started pouring in about her impending wedding with Abhishek Bachchan. Now the next question on everybody's lips is - will she continue to act in films after wedding? Despite society's tall claims about the improvement in equality of gender, a lady artist in Indian films after her wedding receives a volte-face treatment. She is no longer considered fit enough to play somebody's beloved or spouse. However the same cannot be said about the male artists. One cannot ask Abhishek Bachchan if he would continue to act in films after wedding. It would certainly be a 'breaking' or 'flash news'. But as

per the grapevine, former Miss World has decided to consider acting as any other profession and plans to shift only her workplace after her wedding. It would be more of Hollywood movies this time for this talented actress. Though her earlier films Provoked and Bride and prejudice were received with a lukewarm response, she continues to be flooded with Hollywood offers, says her international manager. After completing her domestic assignments, she would concentrate on her Hollywood projects as there is a steady market for her there. Good Luck Aishwarya.

Bollywood Cricket

The cricket fever will grip world over this March 2007. Cricket world cup is to start in West Indies on March 11th. The Indian team has reached the Caribbean islands on March 1st. A grand send off was organized in Mumbai for the Indian cricket team. Pepsi cola under the banner "Blue Billion" has organized such extravaganza with Shankar, Eshan and Loy performing for the cricket stars. How can Bollywood left behind in such functions. Priyanka Chopra too contributed her bit by singing along with Shankar Mahadevan. King Khan Sharukh was also seen cheering



the Team with his wits and comments. Singer Adnan Sami too sang for the team. What is a cricket function without Mandira Bedi? She played her part as the hostess. The Indian cricketers were seen enjoying themselves and there were some bullying going on in the team and Dhoni, Sreeshanth and Yuvraj were the men behind. Sachin, Harbhajan, Munaf, Sehwag and Uthappa were also present. Later in the show Dhoni and Sharukh were seen pouring Pepsi over the media and visitors. If Indian team wins the World cup it will be after 24 years since they last won the World cup in the famous 1983 World cup.

International
A R Rahman

Rahman is all set to rule the international music charts. With the release of his self-composed-and-sung English track titled 'Pray For Me Brother' produced by Universal Music, it could just be possible. However, notwithstanding the commercial reasons, Rahman has composed the number for a noble cause to support the vision of Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was formed from the pact that was signed in the year 2000 at the significant UN Millennium Summit held at New York by



Prime Ministers, Presidents, and other noted leaders from 189 countries. Rahman is an ardent supporter of MDGs that functions with an aim to eradicate poverty, hunger, and disease in the world by 2015. 'Pray For Me Brother' will be made available on the Millennium campaign's website www.millenniumcampaign.org, for free downloads according to Salil Shetty, director of the Millennium Campaign, New York. The song will also be used for the organization's global campaign to propagate its goals around the world including Europe and the US. Rahman mentioned that this song would be India's rendition to the world in achieving the cause of MDGs. "Hunger is the only common thing among people and it is only to survive that people beg. I hope that this song will inspire people to do something to eradicate those kind of social evils", the maestro added. Not many people knew that Rahman has been appointed by the UN as Brand Ambassador to eradicate tuberculosis. "It was while planning to compose a song for the same that I started to think about the much bigger universal issue - poverty and hunger. I decided to shift the focus and with the help of my friend Blaaze came up with the song", revealed Rahman.

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CINE JOURNAL



Kollywood TidBitz

Kollywood's Leading Pairs

Vijay-Asin - The latest best star pair of today is undoubtedly the 'POKKIRI' pair Vijay and Asin. They had earlier paired in the Superhit 'Sivakasi'. Vijay has acted with Simran, Devayani, Sneha, Suvalakshmi, Trisha, Rambha, Shalini, Kausalya and many others. His first on screen pair was Sanghavi and rumour mills heavily alleged that these



two were involved in a love affair. But later it turned out to be just a sensational stir that was made up to create some publicity for Vijay. Now Vijay is happily married with 2 children and strives hard to stay out media controversies. As everyone agrees he is a strong contender for the Superstar throne, Vijay has openly admitted that he is no match for the one and only Superstar Rajinikanth. Vijay and Asin have both agreed that they have a very good on screen chemistry that works well for their movies. Vijay when answering to a question on 'Who is his best pair Trisha or Asin?', silently to avoid controversies answered that they both are good in their own way. But the fans feel that Asin is more vibrant and suits Vijay's image and characters.

Ajith-Nayanthara - Ultimate star Ajith kumar, another strong contender for the Superstar throne has paired with Meena, Devayani, Vasundhara Das, Rambha, Simran, Suvalakshmi among others. He was paired with Shalini in the superhit Amarkalam and during the shooting of this movie love blossomed between the lead pair. Ajith and Shalini later married and are a happy couple now. Ajith has not got a matching pair who can vibe well with him in his movies. He was last seen shaking legs with Asin in the movie Aalwar which proved to be a dud in the box office. His last successful pair was Simran with whom he delivered back to back hits 'Vaali' and 'Aval Varuvaala'. But after Simran bid goodbye to films, Ajith never got a lucky pair on screen although his last blockbuster Varalaaru starred Asin and Kanika in lead roles. All eyes are now on the forthcoming movie of Ajith 'Billa' which will be a remake of Rajini's blockbuster 'Billa'. In Billa, Ajith is being paired with Nayanthara and Ajith's fans are thrilled. Superstar Rajinikanth himself suggested Nayanthara for Ajith and he has supposedly given some interesting tips to Ajith to make his Billa a success. Remember Nayanthara was roped in for 'Sivaji' at the last



minute by Rajini. Impressed by the young actress talent, Rajini has also recommended Nayanthara for Ajith's Billa. Lets wait and watch whether Rajini's prediction about this hit pair becomes true.

Surya-Jyothika - The best love birds of Kollywood Surya and Jyothika has starred together in over four films including Perazhagan, Kakka Kakka, Mayavi and Sillunu Oru Kadhal. They were looking good together in all the movies they paired. The onscreen Jodi became real life jodis as well late last year. They were in love for over 7 years and finally they married in a star studded wedding. Jyothika has decided to quit films and her last offering was 'Mozhi' which has been declared a runaway hit. Jyothika has been criticized for her negative role in 'Pachai Kili Muthucharam' but she feels that she decided to don the role because the character was inter-



esting. Surya on the other hand has had a slump in his career after his marriage and he is looking forward to his forthcoming

'Vaaranam Aayiram' directed by Gautham Menon. He is being paired with a newcomer in this movie.

Vikram-Trisha - National Award winner Vikram has acted with Jyothika, Trisha, Asin, Sada, Priyanka Chopra, Sangeetha among others. Vikram is a hard worker and always strives for perfection. His hard work was well appreciated for his performance in 'Pitha Magan' which won him National Award and he is the only top actor other than Kamal Hassan to have earned the award for Tamil films. His pairing with Trisha in 'Saami' worked magically at the box office



and it was one of the biggest hits of that year when Saami was released. Vikram and Trisha was liked by one and all in 'Saami' and they are getting together again in 'Bheema'. It will be a treat to their fans to watch them on screen together and the movie supposedly has some intimate sensuous scenes between the lead pair. Trisha is believed to have shed all her inhibitions while paired with Vikram since she considers that Vikram is her best onscreen pair. Will Bheema recreate the Saami's magic?

Vishal-ReemaSen - Vishal, a strong contender to Ilaya Thalapati Vijay, is a rage among the masses after his four-some hits 'Chellame', 'Sandai



Kozhi', 'Thimiru' and 'Thamirabharani'. His other movie Sivapadhikaram also fared well but was not declared a hit. He has not acted in a lot of movies to have a lucky pair. But he has paired with Reema sen already in two films Chellame and Thimiru. Chellame was Vishal's debut film and Reema Sen's first big movie as heroine. Rumour mills were busy churning out love stories between the two but Vishal and Reema Sen has maintained stoic silence. They were again paired in 'Thimiru' which turned out to be a super hit and going by their hit ratio Vishal and Reema Sen can be considered as a hit pair.

Vadivelu-Kovai Sarala - The comedy star pair Vadivelu and Kovai Sarala has tickled our funny bones many a times with their fine performanc-



es in many movies. Incidentally it was Vadivelu who used to get beat up by Sarala instead of the traditional man beating woman. Vadivelu is supposedly charging a whopping amount as his salary if he has to act as a hero. He has not raised his salary for being a comedian. When quizzed about

this, Vadivelu mentioned that he wants to maintain the standard and quality of his movies in which he features as hero. He wants to deliver only hits as a hero since he feels even one failure can take him to dumps. Although his hero salary might sound unreasonable to many but he sure has a point. Let us wait and watch whether his forthcoming 'Indralogathil Naa Azhagappan' will be smash hit like his earlier blockbuster 'Imesai Arasan 23am Pulikesi'. Apparently Simran, Trisha, Nayanthara, Asin and Shilpa Shetty were approached for the lead role opposite Vadivelu and all of them except Simran turned down the offer. When Vadivelu came to know about this, he turned down Simran and is now looking for a fresh face.

Sathyaraj-Namitha - The lollu star of Kollywood Mr Sathyaraj has starred opposite



Namitha in more than three films and they have all proven to be duds at the box office. Still Sathyaraj feels that his best on screen pair is Namitha taking into account the height and weight of her. Namitha is the tallest heroine available in Tamil filmdom and she has the rare distinction of pairing with both father and son as her onscreen pair. Namitha feels that she suits Sathyaraj more than his son Sibiraj since they have a good onscreen chemistry. Sibiraj feels that Namitha is his best pair since she matches his height and no other heroine does. There is an interesting tussle brewing between father and son as to who should pair with Namitha. But as before, Namitha continues her film service by acting opposite both Sathyaraj and Sibiraj with same ease and élan.

by Anand. J

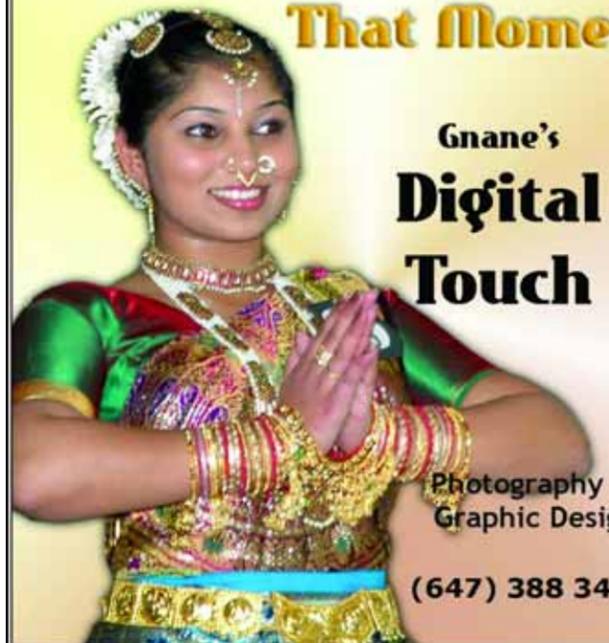
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CINE JOURNAL

FILM REVIEWS

by Anand. J

DEEPAVALI

Director Ezhil might have planned to release his movie Deepavali during the festival time of Deepavali 2006 but fate had the movie release only by February 2007. February being a month of no festival saw 4 other competent releases in the form of Lee, Mozhi, Pachai Kili MuthuCharam and Paruthi Veeran made the month look like it was a festival month. Timing of release of this movie didn't do any good to the Box office collections since it had to compete against four other good movies plus the title 'Deepavali' didn't have any justification.

Billu (Ravi) is a tough lovable young man, son of Mudaliar (Vijayakumar) who is a sort of kingmaker of Royapuram area in Chennai. Enter Susi (Bhavana) a down to earth rich girl who



comes to live as a guest in his neighbourhood. It is love at first sight for Billu as he picks

her up from the railway station and on the way back she too falls flat for his brawns as he

fights a dozen thugs single handedly. Once again it is the same old dad of the heroine who is the bad man. He is Chidambaram (Lal) a dreaded don in Bangalore who is a killing machine. Susi had a miserable childhood and her mother was killed in a car accident planned by Chidambaram's enemies. Adding more woes to her life, she survives a head injury in that accident but suffers from "Post traumatic event amnesia". Tamil cinema tradition has enlightened the viewers about the various unknown diseases in the medical world. What a selfless service to the film going public ???!!! Susi forgets what happened in the last three years of her life and is literally scared of her dad. Now Chidambaram lands up in Chennai, beats up Billu to pulp (seeing the mayhem, Susi once again loses her memory) and now she forgets the Chennai episodes in her life including our poor Billu. At this juncture, even the film viewers go through a post traumatic event amnesia and are forced to forget what happened in the first half of the movie. Such is the confusion in the screenplay that it makes viewers wonder as to "What is it about memory?". Our Superhero wakes up in the hospital bed and straightaway heads to Bangalore to bring back Susi who is all set to marry another guy.

All actors in Deepavali disappoint, and the blame should go to

the ridiculous plot and the lifeless characters that they've been hired to play. Director Ezhil has not been able to establish the love between the lead pair convincingly and hence we are unable to empathize with the hero's anguish and pain in the climax. If you are looking to watch a film that's worth a paisa vasool and entertaining, Deepavali, most clearly, is not for you. It is a poignant love story that showcases the myriad histrionic abilities of the lead pair, Jayam Ravi and Bhavana, in a storyline which could have been more beautiful and screenplay which could have been much better. The film definitely disappoints you since it doesn't evince any interest with none of the characters portrayed making an impression.

Jayam Ravi, undoubtedly is a promising and rising young actor but the actor has to concentrate more on choosing his stories and roles. No comments about heroine Bhavana. Vijayakumar, Lal and Raghuvaran are also in the cast. Yuvan Shankar Raja has come up with two hummable numbers in 'Kannan Varum Velai' and 'Dole Baje'. A big sore point of the movie is that it has no comedy track. To sum up, Deepavali, disappoints with its weak storyline and screenplay. Better luck next time for the entire film crew.

Deepavali
pusssssssssssssss pusvanam.

EKLAVYA

Eklavya is a movie from Vidhu Vinod Chopra who gave us '1942 - A Love Story', 'Mission Kashmir', 'Munnabhai MBBS', 'Parineeta' and 'Lage Raho Munnabhai'. The expectations are sky high when you start watching 'Eklavya' since it has come from a man who has delivered quality



blockbusters. Does Eklavya live up to the hype? Does Eklavya live up to the huge expectations? Does Eklavya impress the viewers? Is Eklavya a good film? The answer to all the above questions is 'NO' but that doesn't mean that the movie is bad. Eklavya as a movie crosses lots of barriers and reaches new heights in film making especially with its breathtaking cinematography and life like performances.

Eklavya starts off great in a huge candle lit palace where Rana Jayawardhan (Boman Irani) discovers at his wife Rani's (Sharmila Tagore) deathbed that his twin children were not born to him but to his loyal guard Eklavya (Amithab Bachchan) after some ancient ritual to get an heir, when the king fails at the task. Eklavya,

whose father had died saving the life of the Rana, believes in all sincerity, that any disloyalty to the royal clan will result in nine generations of his family going to hell. Intrigue builds up as Rani's last wishes of seeing Eklavya are left unfulfilled by Rana who eventually ends killing Rani forcefully. Soon the viewers are introduced to a flurry of characters who are the members of Rana's family Jyotiwardhan [Jackie Shroff] (Rana's younger brother), Harshwardhan [Saif Ali Khan] (Rana's son), Nandini [Raima Sen] (Rana's daughter), Udaywardhan [Jimmy Shergill] (Jyoti's son) and Rajjo [Vidya Balan] (Daughter of Rana's chauffeur (Parikshit Sahni) and Harsh's childhood sweetheart).

The movie continues with the jealousy angle of Jyoti and Uday. A twist in the tale in the form of a murder will take the viewers by surprise just during the intermission point. A fantastically executed action scene where Tinu Verma excels in combining the fire of bullets with the running of camels in a desert with a running train behind. Harshwardhan discovers the truth about his parentage, when his mother breaks her promise and reveals it in a letter. The second half of the movie stagnates with Eklavya setting out on revenge against the killer of the King Rana and he is pitted against his own son thanks to another twist in the story. The climax is a huge let down and has a typical bollywood filmi ending which will draw more criticism from film critics.

Eklavya, a character straight from the epic Mahabharat, truly stands by dharma and ended up sacrificing his thumb as a guruhakshina to his guru when he is asked for it. Eklavya would have been the best archer in the world had he not sacrificed his thumb. But he felt that he owes big time to his guru and he acts accordingly to dharma. This is Eklavya in Mahabharat. But the modern day Eklavya as depicted by Vidhu Vinod Chopra's Eklavya is more cinematic in characterization and leaves the viewers high and dry towards the climax.

Amithab Bachchan stands tall with his towering performance doing full justice to the role. His subtle expressions conveys a lot and he has done the role with a lot of conviction. Whether it is his best performance on screen till date will be a moot point. Nevertheless he has done a tremendous job. Saif Ali Khan as the son caught in between duty and responsibility does a good job. Vidya Balan has nothing much to do except to sob and play a part in the one and only song in the movie. Raima Sen as the twin sister of Saif has an insignificant role but she is better than Vidya Balan.

Boman Irani as King Rana with shades of gray in his character portrays his character well as usual. Jackie Shroff and Jimmy Shergill as father and son doesn't have much to do. Another big let down is the character of Sanjay Dutt which evokes interest during

introduction but fades away inconsequentially with out a trace.

Technically the film is brilliant with slick editing, beautiful sets, superb lighting, breathtaking cinematography, high quality action and sound. It's a royal treat and experience to the eyes and ears of the viewers on the big screen. Pure technical highs cannot make this movie great since the story neither falls into a fantasy category nor a reality category. In other words its neither like a Dhoom II fantasy nor a Lage Raho Munnabhai reality to capture the viewers hearts.

On the positive side, the film boasts of short running time (120 minutes) which is a rarity these days especially when you have movies with 2 intervals.

To sum up, the movie would have been lapped up by masses if the climax was a tragedy but that is not the case. Box office might reject this movie not sustaining the huge hypes and promotions of this movie. Viewers will have to give another chance to Vidhu Vinod Chopra to come up with a better movie next time.

Eklavya - Avoidable!!!!

LEE

Actor Sathyaraj becomes a producer with this movie 'Lee' especially to make and market his son Sibiraj a saleable actor in Kollywood. Director Prabhu Solomon has come up with a convincing story line and has extracted good performances from his lead actors which makes 'Lee' worth watching. His earlier movie 'Kokki' was also an off-beat movie with a man being chased by unwanted elements from start to finish with an engrossing screenplay. Kudos to Director for selecting a story with Foot ball sport as the backdrop. Not many movies



have been made with Sports as the background and what stands fresh in every filmgoer's mind is Aamir Khan's Cricket bonanza 'Lagaan'. Being a cricket crazy nation, Lagaan was viewed and appreciated by one and all.

'Lee' opens with Leeladharan alias Lee (Sibiraj) and his group of friends living in a slum

like area in Chennai. They work as pizza delivery boys, auto driver, newspaper boy etc but they

pool together whatever

money they make to fund their dream project. They want to buy a gun at

any cost! In one of their outings they bump into Chellammal (Nila) lovingly called Chellam who works in the hospital for the mentally challenged. She joins them and soon develops a soft corner for Lee but he does not pay much attention to her. Soon she witnesses a botched up assassination bid, when Lee tries to shoot a powerful politician and Central Minister Rangabhashayam (Zahir).

Post interval, in a flashback, Lee and his friends tell Chellam about their past and motive behind

their failed assassination attempt. The flashback unfolds with all of them being aspiring and promising football players at college level coming from lower middle class families who had that fiery ambition to represent India and make Football a National game. Their moving spirit, mentor and coach was Buthiran (Prakash Raj). Rangabhashayam had put pressure on Buthiran to make his son (supposedly a drug addict) the captain of the football team which the coach politely refuses. A peeved Ranga shoots Buthiran and also wrecks the career of all the players and one of them even commits suicide! The rest of the film turns into a revenge potboiler as Lee finally turns into a terminator and kills the baddies on the streets of Chennai. In the end, Lee does not just become another victim of a corrupt system or at the other extreme, a vigilante. He has after all committed crimes, necessary though they may have been, and so he serves his prison term and resumes his passion for football - he becomes a coach, just like his inspiration, Butthiran.

Lee is a different and sensible film. The topic of sports amongst our youth and opportunities for young sportsmen has not been dealt with before and is truly essential in this day and age. It is admirable that director Prabhu Solomon has conceptualized as well as implemented such a thoughtful story. But he should give more strength through the treatment. For Sibi, it is the most important film. He has done a commendable job. He also comes across well in the action scenes.

Prakashraj has done a great job as the inspiring and fiery Buthiran and keeps the tempo of the film in right time. D.Imman's music and re-recording keeps the phase well. The soundtrack moves with the moods in the film and really adds to the film's quality. Rajesh Yadhav's camera work is good.

Lee - Not Silly

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WANGS KITCHEN - Fusion cuisine

The word fusion cuisine is used commonly to define a food type that combines flavors from different food types. Hakka Chinese cuisine is one such fusion of flavors from India and China. Wangs Kitchen in Mississauga serves this fusion cuisine.

Wangs Kitchen serves the regular hakka food including chilly chicken, Manchurian chicken, gobi Manchurian etc. But diners, who love this food need to know there is more to hakka food than these regular dishes. The newly introduced LUNCH BUFFET is an apt platform for diners to get a feel of all the dishes available in

this restaurant. Vegetarians have options like Empress Delight, Sweet and Sour Vegetables, gobi Manchurian in the main course to choose from. Shanghai potato, a delicately spiced potato starter is a treat to be savored. I wonder how something as simple as a tuber can taste this good. I guess that is what the chefs and their talent is all about. Honey crispy beef is a new item specially created for the buffet. There is chicken variety like pepper chicken, (dry). Chilly chicken or Manchurian chicken, depending on what the chef plans for that particular day.

There is fish bell pepper and



fish in chilly sauce. Hakka Noodle, fried rice with chicken, egg, or vegetables. There are 14 dishes and five desserts to choose from on a weekday. Weekend 16 dishes. A rice and noodle combination dish named Tshing Hai Rice and Noodle is an attraction in the weekend buffet.

Warm colors adorn the walls of this quaint little restaurant that

has become a hot spot for diners who love the dishes cooked and served by chefs trained in India.

There is a lot to choose from for all diners walking in to have a bite of delicious dishes. There is a business lunch deal for \$7.99. It is a set meal/lunch with soup, spring roll, main course comprising either vegetarian or non-vegetarian dish and served with rice, noodle or steamed rice. Weekday lunch deal for \$4.99 is another option available. This deal has a rice or noodle option with chilly chicken, manchurian chicken, and other varieties to choose from. This one is available only as a take-out option, more for people in a rush.

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Food, shelter scarce in Sri Lanka war refugee exodus

Continued from page 1

The rebels have warned of a bloodbath across the island if the military pushes on with its plan to completely defeat them within the next 2-3 years.

Government officials and aid workers in Batticaloa, a district of scrub jungle, lagoons and paddy fields whose coastline was ravaged by the 2004 tsunami, are struggling to cope with the influx of displaced.

"It's very difficult to maintain the IDPs (displaced) and look after them," said Sinnathamby Baskaran, government Divisional Secretary of Eravur Pattu, an area of Batticaloa district now home to over 40,000 refugees in 17 camps. "The first problem is providing food. Day to day the IDPs are increasing."

"We can manage to accommodate 25,000 people. The prob-

lem is now more than 40,000 have come here," he added. "So we are finding water and sanitation problems, toilets are a problem, we have shelter problems."

The World Food Programme says its food stocks are low and desperately needs help to be able to feed everyone.

"Presently the sheer number (of displaced), 150,000 approximately, is overwhelming the resources available," said Sacha Bouter, head of WFP's Batticaloa operations. "We estimate the gap at the moment is probably somewhere between 30,000-40,000 people in terms of food."

"The majority of those are residing with host families, so there is some minimal safety net around them," she added. "This is the first time in the history of this area that this level of displacement has taken place."

Authorities are trying to reset-

tle civilians displaced from the former rebel stronghold of Vakarai further north to ease pressure. But it is a slow process and troops are still clearing landmines in the area.

Back in the camps, the refugees are hostage to the same uncertainty that has prompted a recent sell-off on the stock market and raised fears investors could shun the \$23 billion economy as tourists are doing.

"I want to go back home. There is no livelihood here," said 52-year-old vegetable delivery man Amarasingham Logetherajah, standing in a blue traditional sarong and showing scars on his forearm and shin made by the shrapnel of army shells.

"The fighting is still going on. Whether my future is dark or bright, I don't know."

Tax planning is a year round activity

- not just at tax filing time - A. Ari Aran, Certified General Accountant.

Most of us do not give much thought to reducing their personal taxes until the early spring when the deadline to file their return is fast approaching. Unfortunately, by then, many tax saving opportunities have been lost. With some careful attention, planning ahead and developing a tax strategy for the year, you can save money at tax time and all year round. Tax planning should be an important part of your efforts to get the most out of your financial resources. Though you only have to file your tax return once a year, it's the tax planning steps you take throughout the year that will help you save money at tax time.

Tired of handing over almost half of your hard-earned money to the tax collector? Here are few tips to trim your family's tax bill - and put extra cash in your pocket.

Make RRSP contributions automatic

Set up an automatic contribution plan throughout the year.

Either arrange to have deductions taken directly from your paycheque or have the funds debited from your bank account each month and deposited into an RRSP.

Borrow money to save money

If you don't have extra cash for an RRSP contribution, you may be better off borrowing the money than not contributing at all. The long-term benefits of deferring taxes and earning compound interest outweigh the interest costs of borrowing to make a contribution.

Avoid getting a tax refund

While getting back a juicy tax refund may feel good, a large return is actually a sign of poor tax planning. Think of it as giving the government an interest-free loan. While that money was sitting with the government for 12 months, it could have been earning you interest in an investment. To keep that money in your own pocket, ask your employer for a T1213 Form to reduce the amount of taxes taken off your paycheque each month.

Spend less

Spending less money is the most overlooked way of reducing your tax bill. We always think in terms of income tax and forget

that we pay GST plus provincial sales tax for most of the products we buy.

Invest in your kids

If you have school-age children, consider contributing to a registered education savings plan (RESP). You won't get a tax deduction, but the earnings will grow tax-free for up to 25 years or until the funds are withdrawn by your college-bound scholar.

Reap the benefits of the self-employed

If you own your own business, consider paying your kids or a lower-income-earning spouse a salary or wages and deduct it against your income. For example, you can pay your son or daughter to file and answer the phones in your home-based business instead of giving an allowance.

Make moving costs count

While moving house and home is never easy, there are some major tax breaks to help ease the pain. If you relocated at least 40 kilometers in 2006 to start a new job or business, you can deduct most of the costs.

Add up all your medical expenses

Many of us assume we don't have enough medical expenses to get a tax credit (the total amount

of receipts must exceed \$1,844 or three per cent of net income, whichever is less), but they can add up quickly. Look for things that aren't an eligible expense under your group plan and don't forget to include any health-care premiums you're paying at work.

Claim all your child care

A lot of parents think if a neighbour is taking care of their child, they can't claim it. But if you're paying someone and getting a receipt for it, it's a child-care expense. Generally, the lower-income-earning spouse makes the claim, which is either two-thirds of your earned income or the total of the individual maximums for each of your children (\$7,000 for each child under seven and \$4,000 for children seven to 16), whichever is less.

Pool your charitable donations

If you and your spouse both make charitable donations, combine the receipts and claim them on one return (you only get a 15.5 per cent tax credit for your first \$200 of donations but 29 per cent for everything over that). Donations you made in 2006 can be claimed any year up to 2011.

Get credit for caring

If you're the caregiver for an ill or aging parent, grandparent or other disabled dependent who is over 18 years old, you may be able to claim the Caregiver's Tax Credit.

Travel the tax-friendly way

If you or a family member uses public transit, make sure you save those pass receipts. They could add up to \$100 in tax savings per family member per year, thanks to a new nonrefundable tax credit that kicked in July 1, 2006.

Sign the kids up for fitness

The Children's Fitness Tax Credit kicks in for the 2007 tax season for children under the age of 16, so save any receipts for your child's ballet, swimming or other physical activity programs.

Make maximum use of your investment losses

You can use any 2006 capital loss to decrease your taxes as long as you've realized at least an equal amount in capital gains. Let's say you bought a stock for \$100 last year and it was only worth \$90 when you sold it at the end of the year. That's a capital loss of \$10.

You can appoint the lower-income-earning spouse the investor

If you and your spouse are both earning income, but one is in a much higher tax bracket, it's a smart move for the higher-income spouse to pay all or most of the family expenses while the lower-income spouse invests all or most of his or her savings.



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