Monsoon Journal

A parfait media publication

VOL 4 ISSUE 11 April 2010

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Toronto's Tamil Business Community moves forward towards Nation Building

Honours Champions of Entrepreneurship at Awards Gala on April 10th at Fairmont Royal York Hotel

By Siva Sivapragasam

The Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce which represents the Tamil Business community in Toronto is celebrating the success of it's Business community in a signature Awards Gala event on April 10th at the prestigious Fairmont Royal York Hotel. With this event held annually, the Tamil business community is now moving forward towards nation building and contributing to the economy of Canada. The community is now being recognized as an important visible South Asian community in this great country.

The Awards Gala event has been held over the years to honour men and women in the Tamil Business community who have shown talent and skill in their chosen fields of business activity. Six Awards are distributed to persons who have achieved successes in different categories of business and community service achievements.

Apart from the Annual Awards function, the Chamber also reciprocates the generosity of Canada in providing opportunities for the Tamil community by engaging itself in fund raising campaigns and charitable events. Over the years the Chamber has collected well over $150,000 in fund-raising for the Scarborough Hospitals and Providence Healthcare through annual Walkathons and Golf Tournaments. This year the Chamber was also associated in a $12,000 dollar fund raising event that was handed over to Global Medic for the rehabilitations of Haitians who were affected by the earthquake.

The Canadian Tamils' Chamber is a non-profit organization formed in 1991 to develop and foster entrepreneurship in the community and help produce Business leaders who would contribute to the development of Canadian economy in general, and enrich the Tamil community in particular. The Chamber also promotes charitableness and volunteerism in the community.

The Annual Awards Gala is a well-attended event with the participation of Business leaders, Bank officials, Corporate personnel and other leading personalities.

Monsoon Journal wishes Readers, Advertisers and Well wishers Happy Passover, Easter, Tamil - Sinhala New Year and Baisakhi

Interest rate hike expectations, investor demand for Canada are driving dollar higher

Multiple forces are at play that could push the Canadian dollar past parity with the U.S. greenback this summer, according to a report from CIBC World Markets Inc.

"Indeed, we've already seen the Canadian dollar gain several cents in recent weeks as the market began to firm up expectations" of an interest rate hike by the Bank of Canada, says Avery Shenfeld CIBC's chief economist. "If as we expect, the Bank is out in front of the U.S. Federal Reserve by a couple of quarters, a higher Canadian dollar will help tighten monetary conditions. It's

easy to see the Canadian dollar running a few cents through parity after the first hike."

Contd. in Page 8...

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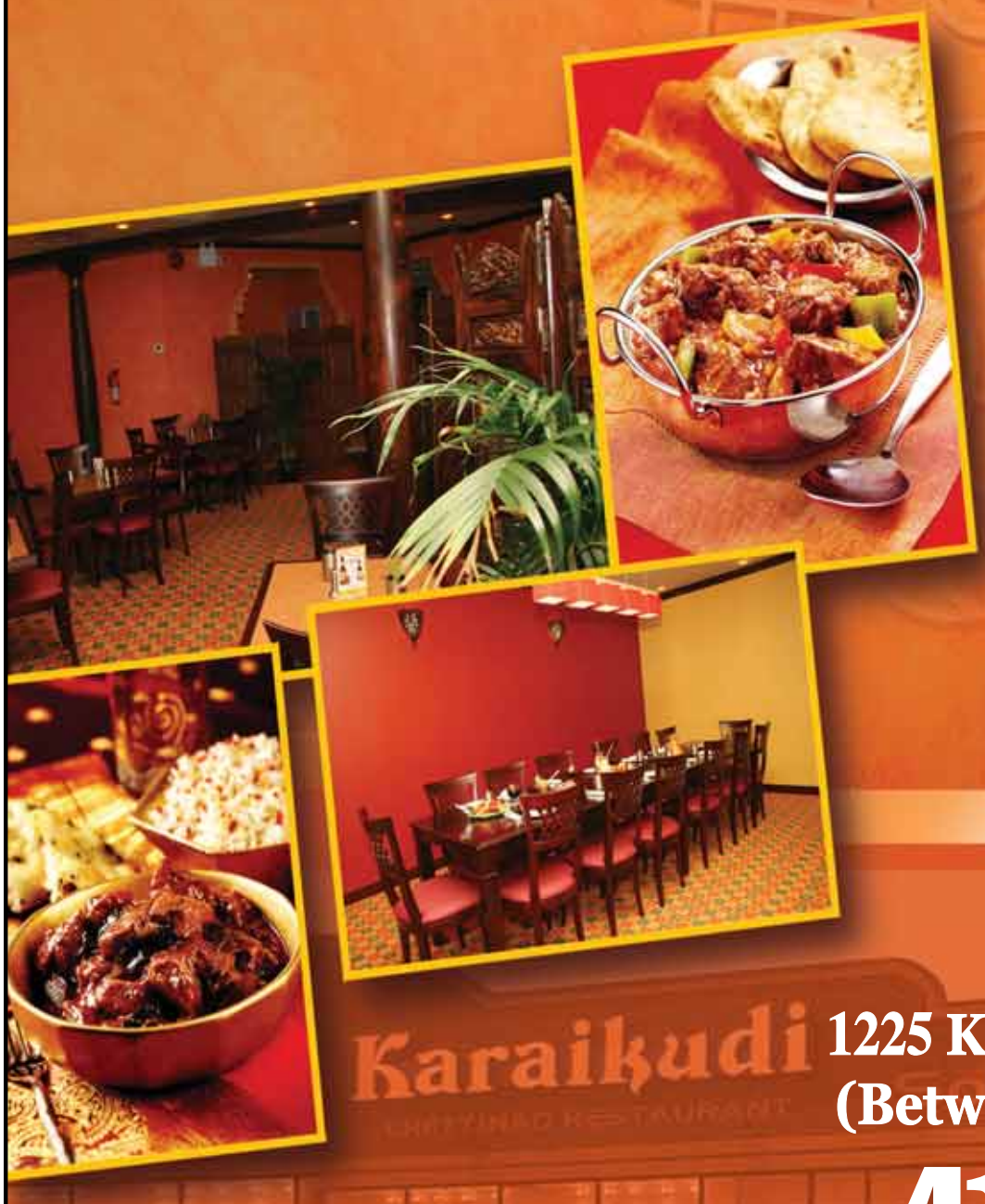

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From the Publisher's Desk ...

Marking May 19th...

This time around during last year, Tamils were gathering in large numbers in major cities around the globe, calling attention to the plight of their kith and kin in a dire humanitarian catastrophe.

They highlighted the Tamils' are brutally subjugated, their homes and livelihood bombed to oblivion and their quest for self determination and nationhood suppressed by Sri Lanka in an escalated military onslaught under the fig leaf of a "humanitarian operation".

The Government of Sri Lanka disregarded calls from many countries and UN to allow a humanitarian corridor to safeguard the civilians during this catastrophic situation.

The day 19th of May 2009 is being called an "end of the war" by Sri Lanka but free access of media and transparent aid delivery to the war affected North-East still remain behind an iron curtain.

Recently France 24 network aired a documentary, "Tamils on Probation," in which the reporter finds Sri Lanka military officers in civil uniform mixed in the camps for Internally Displaced persons (IDPs) preventing media and other NGOs getting the truth in the limelight.

The documentary also shows how the Tamils are evicted from the Eastern littoral in deprivation of their livelihoods and majority Sinhalese fishermen are settled in lieu with new houses built on development/humanitarian aid.

The paramilitary run administration conducts political rallies with people within barbed wires surrounded by armed military and people being compelled to applaud, which France 24 calls "Sri Lankan Democracy".

The administration, according to France24 employs 1,000 people to spy on the general population and whereabouts of about 5,000 abducted is still unknown.

Against this horrific aftermath of the war - continued internment of refugees, hundreds needing reconstructive orthopaedic surgery and held under incommunicado detentions - Tamils around the world will be marking the passing of this first anniversary of "May 19th."

Tamil News portal www.PuthinapPalakai.com (meaning Tamil News Board), has called on Tamils to declare this day along with other tributes and candlelight vigils to those perished together as "The Day of The Oppressed Nations," since it stands in history as how the world waited and watched a "Nation and its People" being crushed for rallying in a quest for self determination and freedom.

The News portal also points out that coincidentally, (as it being the case of "coincidence being closest to the truth,") The United Nations will also be observing "The Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories" a week later (May 25-Jun 1) from "May 19th."

The United Nations list of "Non-Self-Governing Territories" is a list of countries (mostly in the Caribbean and the Pacific) that, according to the United Nations, are non-decolonized.

The United Nations continues to be on the sidelines without invoking any of the strong measures such as "Responsibility to Protect". According to several new revelations including by former UN staff, 45,000 Tamil civilians were massacred within few months in 2009. The UN today witnesses additional escalated measures by Government of Sri Lanka to further colonize and change the demographics of Tamils' ancestral homeland.

"When people feel that their suffering is not acknowledged and recognized by the international community, they tend to develop grudges, and they remember this. And they are scarred by that experience. One sobering lesson is that, when Nations feel historic grudge, it can come back to haunt history generations later; these grudges come back to the surface, and they can re-ignite in new conflicts," said Tom Gjelten, Correspondent at the National Public Radio in Washington DC, in responding to a question recently about non-intervention by the world powers to stop the Tamil civilians' deaths in Sri Lanka.

The Monsoon Journal joins PuthinapPalakai.com in the call to declare the "May 19th" in solidarity with people and nations around the globe whose plight is not being heard and their freedom and liberties being suppressed brutally.

The Charter of the United Nations, in Chapter XI, article 73, in its declaration regarding non-self governing territories seeks,

-to ensure, with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned, their political, economic, social, and educational advancement, their just treatment, and their protection against abuses;

-to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement;

The week of observation – "The Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories" that follows "May 19th" and the aspects it focuses on makes it that Tamils too deserve this same limelight from the United Nations, just as those in the UN list of "Non-Self-Governing Territories" are getting.

MONSOON OPINION & LETTERS

Tamil vote in Sri Lanka: "Select leaders who understand the politics of international community"

By V. Elango

Tamils on the island of Sri Lanka and in the Diaspora are in the midst of one of the most trying times in our collective history. Tamils in the North-East are struggling to pick up the pieces of their lives. Mothers are struggling to feed their children. Husbands and fathers, once ready breadwinners, now confront living without their eyesight or without their legs. Children grapple with growing up without their mothers and fathers. Faced with challenging times, they are actively trying to put their lives back together.

While old underlying grievances remained unresolved, new problems have emerged for Tamils in the traditional homelands in the North-East. On the ground and outside the island, the bargaining power Tamils once had has been significantly weakened. Meanwhile, a chauvinist Sinhala government is steadily growing its military powers and acquiring more arms, even though the fighting has stopped. With free houses and incentives, the Sri Lankan government has encouraged Sinhalese settlers to colonize the Tamil homelands.

As the parliamentary election approaches, the magnitude of the issues in front of us will mean we need a strong united voice advocating for our community's concerns. We need people who do not seek to tear down what our community has left with false accusations and ulterior motives. Our leaders on the ground need to be able to advocate without fail for our people in a vastly changed world. They need to engage in vigorous healthy debate on all the issues confronting us with our people and the world's leaders.

The circumstances have changed and our community must find solutions within this altered landscape. As it is currently, there is less appetite in the international community for a separate country. While this is a genuine and heartfelt aspiration for so many Tamils on the island and outside, the foreign ministries and diplomats from India to Britain to the USA to Canada to Australia have not shown interest in creating a separate country for Tamils.

Those who read or listen to any statements that come out of these governments know that this is the case. The foreign governments are willing to listen to anyone advocating a reasonable solution. That is the reality now and for the foreseeable future. Those who cry for a separate country now will not get it right now, that is the hard truth and the consequences of May 2009.

While the Sri Lankan state with its war crimes and killings of tens of thousands nurture our dreams of the promised land one day in the future, today demands we be pragmatic about what we can actually do.

Instead of acknowledging the changed environment and adapting their strategy, those who are aspiring to be the community's new leaders in the Diaspora and some within the island are continuing to think like it's still pre-May 2009. Unfortunately, these individuals are making themselves irrelevant to the discourse by fostering the perception they are not only blind to recent events but are uncritical thinkers.

Instead, these few close-minded ideologues, unwilling to adapt or change, want to turn their own Tamil brothers and sisters into enemies to promote their agendas. They do a disservice to our people in trying to fool them to believe crying loudly, while achieving nothing, is somehow greater than engaging in the hard discussions about changing strategies and going forward. Meanwhile, many people on the ground are moving on and increasingly talking about other options in this changed climate.

While the Tamil National Alliance, like any party, has its deficiencies, it appears to be the best option right now for Tamils in the North-East. They are the only party that seems aware of what is possible at this present time and what the international community is willing or unwilling to do for Tamils. Internationally, the TNA is advocating for a political solution within the island of Sri Lanka, and self-determination for Tamils within their traditional homelands because that is pretty much what is realistic at the present time. They have the ears of the diplomats and the international governments, who are willing to talk. As they are also the only party contesting across the traditional homelands, they are the only party that can realistically claim any real mandate from the people if elected.

In the southern part of the island, our Tamil brothers and sisters are facing different problems and we need some leadership in those areas. People, like Mano Ganesan, have shown this in the past and he stood for human rights for all Tamils all across the island even risking his life. Our challenges demand we select these leaders who understand the politics of the international community and the politics of Sri Lanka.

For the good for our people in these difficult times, our challenges demand we select leaders who will work hard for our people with compassion and honesty, help to meet their present needs, and strive for our future goals. We, as a Diaspora, have a historic duty to urge our brethren on the island to elect leaders like above to make our voice stronger in the years to come.

Submit letters to Monsoon Journal at: toronto@monsoonjournal.com

Caring for our global community

By Dr. John Wright

The Scarborough Hospital, which serves Canada's most multicultural community, has long recognized a need to be more welcoming for patients of different cultures and faiths. In fact, a brand new Mission, Vision and Values recently launched reflects our role in our diverse community.

The Mission, Vision and Values were developed following more than a year of consultations with internal and external stakeholders, and I believe the result is a living, breathing document that speaks to our commitment to creating an inclusive environment for our staff and patients with the overriding objective of providing excellent care.

Our Vision, which I am particularly excited about, is "To be recognized as Canada's leader in providing the best healthcare for a global community."

For us here at The Scarborough Hospital, our ability to provide quality, patient-driven care really hinges on successfully meeting the challenges of providing healthcare in a highly diverse community. This has always been one of our strengths, but now that it has been identified as our Vision, our community will expect more and we need to expect more of ourselves.

To simply look around our hospital is to understand why.

On any given day, the patients and visitors to our two hospital campuses reflect the incredibly diverse community of Scarborough. Two-thirds of our city's population is visible minorities, compared with just 40 per cent for the rest of Toronto. Fifty-five per cent were born outside of Canada. More than 100 different languages are spoken.

For most hospitals and healthcare providers, such diversity presents challenges. Communication is the most obvious issue—translation and interpretation costs can be prohibitive when so many different languages are involved. And what about the logistical challenges of creating navigational signs or meaningful, accurate patient education materials in multiple languages?

Familiarity with the unique cultural, linguistic or religious needs of patients is another challenge. Some women giving birth, for instance, might consider medical care from a male physician to be less than ideal, regardless of his skills and abilities. Patients who require special dietary considerations, such as halal or vegetarian foods, may be unable or unwilling to eat the food prepared in the hospital kitchen.

Dr. John Wright is the President and CEO of The Scarborough Hospital in Toronto.

In many cases, the solutions to these challenges may be found through education. Our staff has become very familiar with cross-cultural training aimed at improving their understanding of the unique needs of our patients and visitors. We have a dedicated department responsible for developing culturally-sensitive training programs, as well as providing volunteer interpreters in 48 different languages. And we encourage appreciation of diversity through a number of hospital/community events including Diversity Day and religious celebrations such as Eid, Diwali and Wesak.

We are also fortunate to have a very strong Spiritual and Religious Care department that is able to provide patients with multi-faith care and access to volunteer spiritual caregivers from every major religion.

Patients and visitors will also notice that our own staff reflect the makeup of our community—rarely does a day go by that I don't hear hallway conversations between a staff member and a patient in a language other than English. For a new immigrant, having someone speak their own language can be a welcome relief, especially if they or their family are visiting the hospital for emergency care.

But the notion of diversity and the spirit of our new Vision extend beyond the obvious examples of culture, religion and language. Our Vision is really about transforming our hospital into an inclusive and welcoming environment for both staff and patients, enabling us to provide excellent patient-centred care.

Diversity is really about accepting, respecting and embracing the global community we serve. It is about recognizing all the ways we are different which can include but is not limited to: cultural, linguistic, religious, gender, disability, religious and sexual orientation.

To truly achieve our Mission and Vision, we must work to remove any barriers to accessing our institution which may be cultural/linguistic, socio-economic or systemic.

Naturally, this includes signage and translation, but it's really about being proactive and responsive to the community we serve. It's about ensuring that the attitudes, knowledge, behaviours and practices we require are in place to meet the unique needs of our patients. It's about creating inclusive policies, programs and practices that address access and equity issues to better meet the healthcare needs of diverse populations. It's about the development of measurements and strategies that evaluate and report on the quality of care in a way that is relevant, meaningful and that will help us continue to improve.

This can only be achieved through an integrated approach that sees us working closely with the agencies and other resources in our community as well as universities and community colleges. Our goal is to capitalize on our existing expertise, to learn from those who have much to teach us, and to share our learnings with others in our field.

How will we measure our progress in achieving our Vision? Clearly, appropriate metrics will need to be developed, but we expect to see greater patient satisfaction, improved patient outcomes, enhanced attraction and retention of highly motivated staff and improved decision-making at all levels of the organization.

In discussions with our staff and with our community partners, there has been a great deal of excitement about our Vision statement. The concept clearly resonates, and reaffirms that we are on the right track toward providing an outstanding patient care experience that meets the unique needs of each and every patient. We have achieved so much already, and yet we know we have a long way to go to truly realize our Vision.

Federal grant money available for home owners

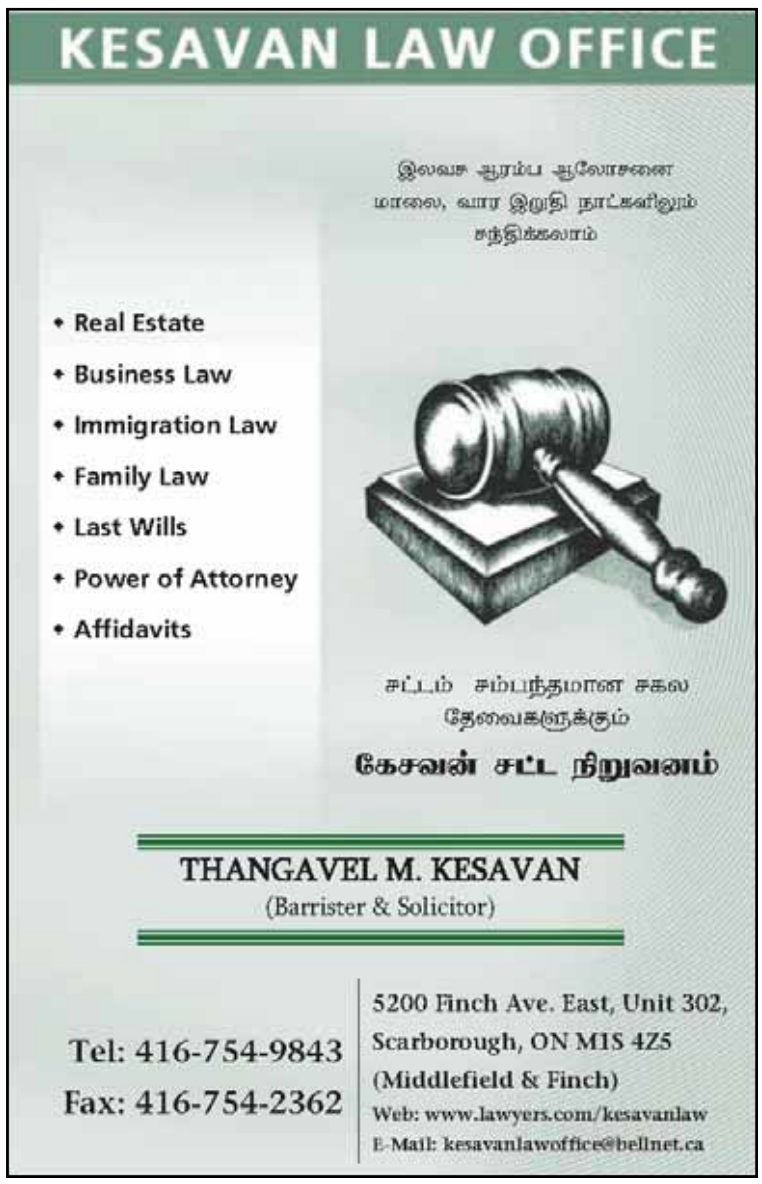
The Government of Canada's ecoENERGY Efficiency Initiative is investing more than $675 million between 2007 and 2011 to promote smarter energy use by Canadians – at home, at work and on the road. These efforts will: reduce emissions that harm our health and the environment; save Canadians money; and make the most of our natural resources – because wasted energy is our biggest source of untapped energy.

If you're thinking of ways to make your home more energy-efficient, the eco-ENERGY Retrofit – Homes Program, might qualify you for federal grants for home improvements that lower energy costs, improve comfort and reduce impacts on the environment.

Owners of single-family homes, detached, semi-detached and homes are eligible. Owners of most low-rise multi-unit residential buildings (MURBs) that are no more than three storeys high and some mixed-use buildings with at least 50 per cent permanent residential space are also eligible

Before you start your energy upgrades, hire a local service organization licensed by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), and they will send a certified energy advisor to perform a detailed, on-site evaluation of your home's energy use from the attic down to the foundation. You will receive a personalized report, including a checklist of recommended retrofits to improve the energy efficiency of your home or MURB and, in some cases, reduce water consumption. You must complete your energy retrofits and receive your post-retrofit evaluation by March 31, 2011, or within 18 months from the date of your pre-retrofit evaluation report, whichever comes first. This evaluation must be completed BEFORE you begin retrofitting your home.

For more information on the program, go to www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca/residential/personal/retrofit-homes/retrofit-qualify-grant.cfm?attr=4



TORONTO FILM, 1999, SELECTED FOR 10TH ANNUAL ReelWorld FILM FESTIVAL

Indie film offers rare insider's perspective on Toronto gang violence

TORONTO – Khatpanalaya Production, in association with Bagavan Productions, is pleased to announce that the indie drama, 1999, has been officially selected for screening at the 10th Annual ReelWorld Film Festival to be held on April 7 – 11, 2010 in Toronto, Canada.

Inspired by real-life events, independent Canadian filmmaker Lenin M. Sivam's captivating first feature is a sinuously provocative, edge-of-your-seat story of friendship, betrayal and courage. The film will be screened on Friday, April 9 at 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, April 11 at 2:30 p.m. at Canada Square Cinemas on 2190 Yonge St. (at Eglinton Ave. West).

A fatal gang shooting on a quiet suburban street sets into motion a chain of events over the course of a single day in 1999 that changes the lives of three young men forever. Anpu is an intelligent but isolated underachiever whose strained relationship with his strict disciplinarian father forces him to seek out respect and a sense of belonging in all the wrong places. Kumar is a charismatic gang leader desperate to break free from the cycle of violence and code of honour that hold his crew together for the sake of his brash, younger brother. Far removed from this world is the ambitious university student Ahilan who, having overcome enormous hardship, is on the cusp of realizing his biggest dreams. Bearing the unseen scars of Sri Lanka's devastating civil war, their worlds collide one fateful Saturday that begins like any other day.

Based on extensive research including interviews with youth workers and reformed gang members, 1999 offers a rare insider's perspective on the wave of gang violence that shook the Tamil community in Toronto in the 1990s. A sensitive yet honest portrayal, the movie delves into the myriad of challenges facing immigrant Tamil youth as they negotiate a new hyphenated reality in Canada while fighting the bitter memories of Sri Lanka's brutal war from which many of them escaped. A fast-paced story featuring an all-Toronto cast and crew and shot entirely in the city, the film is a seamlessly interwoven montage of sounds and images of the immigrant experience as seen through the eyes of the main characters.

1999 marks the full feature directorial debut of Lenin M. Sivam.

"My team and I are deeply honoured by the invitation to share this story at ReelWorld," said Sivam. "This film is a labour of love that was written, directed and produced on a shoe-string budget with an entirely volunteer ensemble of cast and crew who were passionate about telling a story that they wanted to add to the collective memory of our city ."

Sivam was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka and raised in Toronto where many of his own experiences provide inspiration for his work. He has a number of short films to his credit, including the award-winning A Few Good People (2006), the critically acclaimed Strength (2007), and the thriller Next Door (2008).

1999 has garnered critical acclaim since its Canadian premiere at the Vancouver International Film Festival 2009, where it was selected as one of the festival's "Top 10 Canadian Films". It also won the "Best Film Award (Midnight Sun)" at the Oslo Tamil Film Festival 2010 and is now an "Official Selection" of the ReelWorld Film Festival 2010.

Founded by actor Tonya Lee Williams, ReelWorld Film Festival

is a five-day festival that screens features, shorts, documentaries, animation, music videos from the Aboriginal, Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern, South Asian and other multi-racial communities. This unique Canadian based film festival truly reflects the racially diverse cultures of the world around us.

DIRECTOR LENIN M. SIVAM AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS.

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For more information:
www.1999movie.com.

Maple Leafs alumni vie for inaugural Zezel Cup

Scarborough World Cup of Hockey supports The Scarborough Hospital and honours former Leafs forward

TORONTO — Former Toronto Maple Leafs players will lace up their skates to honour the memory of their friend and fellow alumni Peter Zezel and support The Scarborough Hospital in a one-day fundraising tournament on April 9.

Anyone is welcome to register a team for the event at the Angus Glen Community Centre in Markham. Every team will be joined by former NHLers and the winners will be awarded the inaugural Peter Zezel Cup.

"It is such a great privilege for us ex-NHLers to be involved in this fundraising hockey tourney for The Scarborough Hospital," says former Leafs left winger Mark Osborne. "Our guys are always so willing to give back and help such great causes."

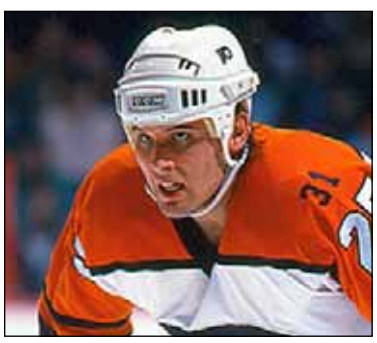
Zezel, who played for the Maple Leafs in the early 1990s, died last May of a rare blood disorder at the age of 44. A longtime friend of The Scarborough Hospital, Zezel supported many hospital fundraisers over the years.

"Zez was all about helping the community and we are proud to do this in honour of him, especially knowing Peter was a Scarborough native," says Osborne.

"We appreciate that the Zezel family supported this new event and allowed us the privilege of having teams play for the first-ever Peter Zezel Cup," says Michael Mazza, President and CEO of The Scarborough Hospital Foundation. "All proceeds from The Scarborough World Cup of Hockey will help purchase urgently needed medical equipment including two new CT Scanners for the hospital.

Former Leafs Mark Osborne, Gary Leeman, Dan Daoust, Mike Johnson, Bob McGill, Dave Reid and Kris King are some of the players confirmed for the tournament.

This full-day event includes breakfast, lunch and dinner, a personalized jersey, gift bag, three games of hockey and more.



Late Peter Zezel

Individual registration is $195; team registration is $3,000 for up to 16 players. To register for the event contact The Scarborough Hospital Foundation at 416.431-8130 or gbonnell@tsh.to or register online at www.tsh.to.

The Scarborough Hospital, Canada's largest urban community hospital, delivers innovative, high quality patient care to one of the most diverse communities in the world. With two hospital campuses and six community based satellite sites, The Scarborough Hospital is a regional centre of excellence for dialysis, family maternity services, vascular surgery, pacemakers, corneal implants, sexual assault care and community-based mental health and crisis programs.

For more information, please contact:

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Secret list reveals Sri Lanka government's media hit list

Journalist included in leaked secret service memo

A leaked list – believed to be compiled by the Sri Lankan intelligence unit – has revealed the names of 35 leading journalists and NGO officers of interest to the country's secret services.

The list then grades each of them according to their importance to the intelligence services

Amnesty International fears that the leak was a deliberate move by the government to intimidate and harass journalists in the country.

Mike Blakemore, Media Director of Amnesty International UK, said:

"Such a blatant leak can have only one purpose and that is to intimidate those individuals on the list and deter anyone from speaking to them.

"Journalists are often at the forefront of protecting and defending individuals' human rights. It is their bravery that can help expose abuses and bring them to an end.

"Sri Lanka needs to respect media freedom and allow human rights defenders to go about their work freely and without harassment."

Amnesty International is calling on all its supporters to write to the Sri Lankan authorities expressing their concern for the safety and well-being of the 35 people on the list.

Two human rights defenders, Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu and J C Weliamuna, are at particular risk.

Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, executive director of the Sri Lankan NGO, the Centre for Policy Alternatives, and J C Weliamuna, Sri Lanka director of international NGO Transparency International, have both been threatened previously and are graded as being of great interest to the intelligence services on the list. Other colleagues from their organisations are also named.

Background:

In September 2008, a grenade was thrown at the house of J C Weliamuna, damaging property but causing no injuries. That attack was thought to be in retaliation for his legal representation of clients in human rights cases where the Defence Ministry was implicated. Despite demands from local and international human rights groups, there was no credible inquiry into this attack.

An article on 20 February in the national daily newspaper, Sri Lanka Guardian, reporting on a meeting between President Mahinda Rajapaksa and a group of ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party lawyers, singled out J C Weliamuna, specifically, saying "something must be done about him".

Meanwhile, Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu received a death threat via an anonymous letter posted to his home in August 2009.

At least 14 media workers have been killed in Sri Lanka since the beginning of 2006. Others have been arbitrarily detained, tortured and allegedly disappeared while in the custody of security forces. More than 20 journalists have left the country in response to death threats. None of these attacks has been properly investigated or prosecuted.

Sri Lankan journalists have given Amnesty a list of 56 of their colleagues who face serious threats, including some working for the government-owned Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, as well as the Independent Television Network, Lak Hada and the Lake House Group.

The politics of Akon visa denial have a wider impact on Sri Lanka and Buddhism

by Dushy Ranetunge in London

The Sri Lankan government this week has decided to deny a visa for the American rap star Akon, even before he had applied for one. The politics of this decision is obvious.

The electorate that listens to and will participate in a Akon musical is perceived as being overwhelmingly liberal, Colombo centric, affluent UNP voters. While the cabal that opposes the Akon musical, are perceived as being less affluent UPFA voters, many of whom would have not even heard of Akon.

If the government had granted permission despite the protests by the radicals, it would have antagonised a part of its electoral home turf, which consists of Sinhalese Buddhist radicals.

Although President Rajapakse himself may not be a Akon fan, there is a high possibility that his son educated in St Thomas's College, Mt. Lavinia, and later at Cardiff University in Wales and drives a BMW X5 may have heard of Akon. He may have even listened to his music at that nightclub in Horton Place, Colombo 7, above the Coffee house, as he like many of his generation aspires to the lifestyle of the Colombians.

But leaving aside politics, decisions of this nature have a wider impact on Sri Lanka and Buddhism.

Buddhism is perceived in the West as being a tolerant passive religion and Buddhist statues are perceived as creating an aura of calm and tranquility. As a result, the use of Buddha statues is somewhat different in the West.

Buddha statues are commonly used as garden ornaments and are found as a part of water gardens. In the Akon Video it is near a pool. Buddha statues are also used as a part of table lamps.

Tibetan/Chinese art also depicts Buddha in an erotic pose and could be found on the World Wide Web.

Buddhism is perceived and interpreted in different societies in different ways. Even within Sri Lanka Buddhism is perceived differently by individuals.

A few years ago, a visit to the Dambulla temple by a 11-year-old girl wearing just above knee high shorts was denied entry. According to the "Taliban" style dress code guard, shorts should be below the knee and shoulders cannot be exposed and should be covered.

They will not be visiting Dambulla temple again.

This year I witnessed another 11-year-old girl wearing seriously short shorts walking into Madhu Church for a service and there was no "Taliban" style guard stopping her from entering the church.

Later she walked into Tiruketisvaram kovil near Mannar. There was no dress code Taliban present to stop her and advise her on entry requirements to one of the five great Isvarams in Sri Lanka.

It was obvious that the Catholic Church in Madhu and the great Isvaram in Mannar were more tolerant in dress code than the Buddhist temple in Dambulla. Other than the issue of tolerance, there are financial implications. Those who wear shorts tend to be from the affluent classes in Colombo, and in this instance, individuals who are generous and make four figure donations.

The use of "Taliban" style dress code will merely drive this class of individuals away from visiting these Buddhist temples and reduce revenue.

More importantly, it will alienate them from Buddhism, increasingly reducing the participation of this affluent class and their future generations from Buddhist activity as is evident today.

The dress code and other rules and regulations increasingly demanded by Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka is a new phenomena, and follows a similar trajectory to the rise of Sinhala nationalism.

At the early part of the last century a majority of men and a significant number of women in Sri Lanka were topless and was widely photographed and sketched. Other than these photographs, which are found on post cards produced at the beginning of the last century, many of the prints published by travelers to Sri Lanka, such as the Russian Prince Alexei Soltikoff in 1841, depict these scenes all over Sri Lanka.

There was no "Taliban" to stop them or demanded a dress code when visiting Buddhist temples topless for most of our history. Therefore this "talibanism" creeping into Buddhism is a new phenomena, nothing to do with Buddhism, but recently introduced by present-day radicals and purists.

They argue it as being a present day requirement and point out that you cannot enter the Vatican or Mecca wearing such clothes, as they demand respect.

This argument is self-defeating as the attraction of Buddhism to the liberal and the educated is because it is different to the Vatican and Mecca. By bringing in rigid practices into Buddhism, they are in effect closing the doors to a certain segment of society, which cash strapped Buddhist temples could ill afford. It also destroys the reputation of Buddhism of being liberal and tolerant of all things.

In Buddhism we were taught that it was important to identify the thought behind the action.

Let us examine the Akon Video.

Akon has no known anti-Buddhist hostility. The film set with the Buddhist statue and pool where the Video was filmed would have been selected by the record company's artistic director and the video itself would have been funded and produced by the record label that has contracted him and in effect owns him.

Akon would be a small cog in a bigger wheel where he would have been driven to the set by the record company, and asked to perform to record the video. To Akon, the presence of the Buddha statue would have been as natural as seeing a Buddha statue at most garden centers in the West, where Buddhism is regarded differently to Christianity and Islam.

From a Western perspective, Akon would have not had any intent, in thought or action to insult or be seen to be hostile to Buddhism.

In this light, the actions of the Sri Lankan government are high handed and it damages both Sri Lanka and Buddhism. It creates a perception of Talabanism in Sinhalese society and the government succumbing to it.

It also damages the perception of Buddhism as being tolerant and understanding and being different to Christianity and Islam.

The situation is compounded by the fact that this same government recently invited members of the Burmese Military Junta to Colombo. The Burmese Military Junta has been responsible for the death, torture and incarceration of hundreds of Buddhist monks who have risen against their tyranny in Burma.

None of these champions protested during that visit.

It exposes the hypocrisy of the present regime and raises more fundamental questions as to how the regime intends to provide space for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, when it is incapable of providing space for the English speaking Sinhalese in the Capital. In both instances, Sinhalese radicalism seems to have a veto over the cultural space of minority groups.

Thinking difficulties following injury

By: Dr. J. Douglas Salmon, Jr.

**Adapted with permission from Multi-Health Systems & Dr. J. Douglas Salmon, Jr. from Rehabilitation Education and Coping Pamphlet Series*

Is Something Wrong with My Brain?

Permanent and lasting injury to the brain is uncommon for anyone who has remained conscious, or who was unconscious for only a brief period of time, immediately after an injury to the head. The longer the person has been unconscious or unaware of events following injury, the more likely that a serious brain injury may have occurred. Referral for neuropsychological evaluation is often the best way to determine whether injury to the brain has occurred, and if so, how it is actually affecting the person's thinking abilities.

Other Factors Interfering With Thinking Abilities

Memory and thinking difficulties are common among people who have experienced many types of injury, illnesses, or stressful life situations. These difficulties are generally considered to be temporary and will usually go away completely once the person's recovery has progressed far enough. Several factors may cause such thinking difficulties even if no brain injury has occurred.

These factors include:

1. **sleep difficulties** in general, and not getting enough sleep in particular.

2. **pain** related to injury, which often interferes with concentration, preventing information from getting into memory in the first place.

3. **dizziness**, which may distract or overwhelm the individual while trying to learn or take in information.

4. **medications**, which may produce drowsiness or create specific problems in concentration and memory (many sleep and anxiety medications, and some depression and pain medications are the worst in this regard).

5. **anxiety or stress**, which interferes with concentration preventing information from sinking in.

6. **depression**, which can temporarily alter the chemical balance of the brain.

Each of these factors alone is known to produce concentration, memory, and thinking related difficulties, even when the other factors are not present and even when physical injury to the person has not occurred. When all these factors or many of them are present together, then it becomes quite likely and typical that the person will develop temporary disturbances in concentration, memory and/or thinking.

Pointers to Improve Concentration

1. Avoid distractions caused by others or yourself. In order for a person to remember anything, he or she must be concentrating on the information so that it gets into memory in the first place. To ensure that the maximum amount of information is stored into memory, it is crucial to make sure that the environment is free from distraction. Thus, when it is important to remember something, make sure that you are in a quiet environment, free from distractions like people passing by, T.V., radio, noise, and a lot of activity. At a restaurant you might ask to sit at a quiet table and face a wall rather than in the open restaurant area or window, both of which may be distracting. Sit near the front in a movie, play, or lecture to avoid distractions.

2. Write down important information.

3. Repeat information that you have heard from someone and watch the speaker's lips while he or she is talking.

4. Use timers or notes to remind yourself to do things.

5. Take care of the most important tasks at times when you feel the most alert.

6. Upon your doctor's advice, minimize your use of medication by seeking other solutions such as massage, heat, cold packs, rest, etc.

7. Deal with your feelings - don't bottle them up - by talking about them or writing them on paper.

8. Keep active by participating in hobbies, doing light chores around the house, visiting people, doing volunteer work, reading, writing letters, or doing anything that will help to keep your mind off of your condition and prevent you from worrying too much.

9. Eat nutritious, well-balanced meals.

10. Minimize your alcohol intake.

11. Exercise regularly, but consult your physician first.

12. If you feel it may help, speak to your family doctor about a referral to a mental health professional.

13. Educate yourself about your condition by asking your family doctor questions that you have and by reading educational material.

Additional Non-Brain Injury Related Reasons for Thinking Difficulties

Concentration and memory are very sensitive functions that can be easily disrupted by a wide variety of underlying conditions including the common cold or flu. Various commonly occurring psychophysical conditions like medication side effects, stress, headaches, depression, sleep problems including insomnia, excessive daytime sleepiness, disrupted sleep patterns (say from shift work or jet lag), and other sleep disorders such as narcolepsy, etc. may cause secondary memory and thinking difficulties until the underlying problem is resolved. Studies have revealed that people who had respiratory, gastrointestinal or other infections or even bumps and bruises from a fall are more likely to experience varied types of cognitive decline due to a protein (tumour necrosis factor-a) involved in the inflammatory process. Caregivers of these patients may observe the effects of the secondary cognitive impairments as thoughtless or hurtful remarks or unreasonable, demanding requests. In most instances like when one experiences the common cold/flu, the thinking related symptoms will readily disappear as the person's health improves. If however, the underlying condition persists, then many of the above techniques may be helpful. In addition though, it is important to inform your family doctor of any persistent concentration, memory and/or other thinking difficulties in case they should be investigated in more detail.

Interest rate hike expectations, investor demand for Canada are driving dollar higher

Contd. from Pg 1

A rate hike isn't the only event that could lead the Canadian dollar above the greenback. In the latest Global Positioning Strategy report, CIBC Analyst Zafar Bhatti identifies four other factors that could help lift the loonie. Among them are:

- World demand for commodities: increased demand for commodities such as oil, minerals and fertilizer "could result in a stronger Canadian dollar as exporters repatriate profits."

- Resurgent capital markets: Canada is one of the friendliest environments for foreign acquisitions, says Mr. Bhatti. "If the capital markets finally get an appetite for merger and acquisitions then Canada could be one of the first places to see the benefit of foreign inflows."

New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton in the meantime has called The Bank of Canada to pay more attention to the impact of the strong Canadian dollar.

Speaking to reporters outside the parliament recently he said, "The Bank of Canada needs to keep a very close eye on this situation, because it can be devastating to parts of our country."

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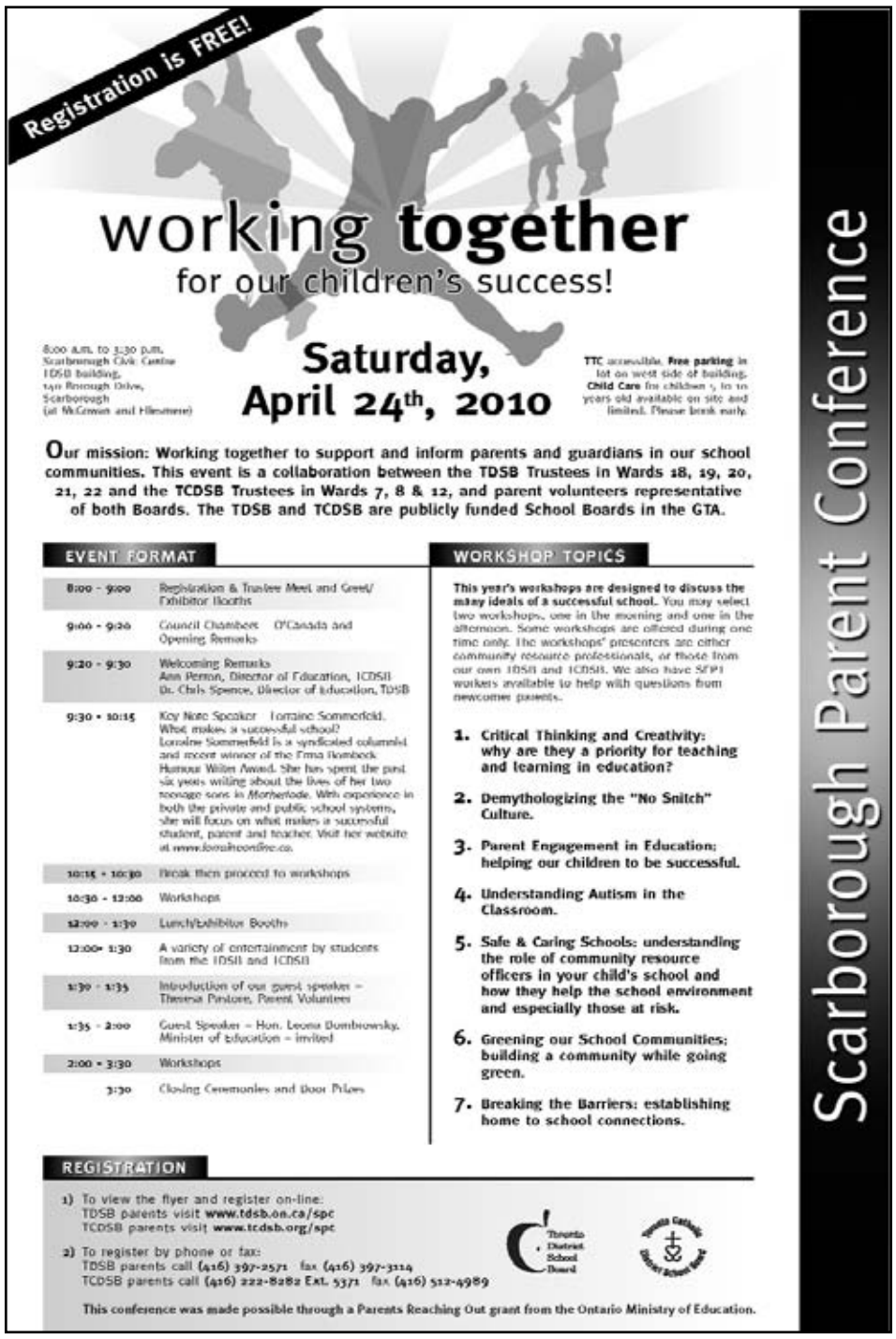

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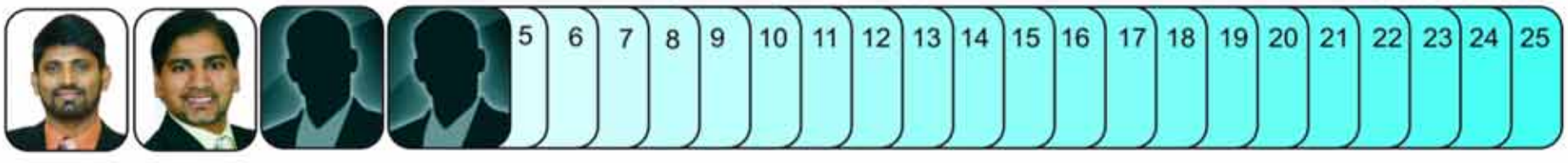
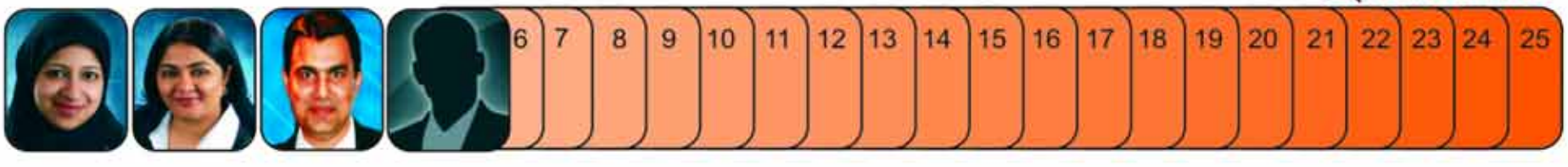
Plan 1: Platinum Plan for Re/Max/Royal Lepage Agents — 21 MORE TO GO

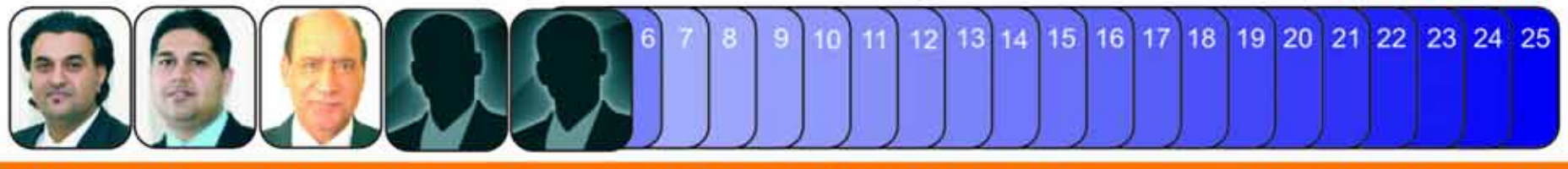


Plan 2: Gold Plan for Coldwell Banker/Sutton Group Agents — ~~24~~ 21 MORE TO GO



Plan 3: Silver Plan for Homelife/Mincon Agents — 19 MORE TO GO

Plan 4: Bronze Plan for Right At Home/No Name Agents — ~~25~~ 20 MORE TO GO



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Hon Jim Karygiannis, MP with Owners of Ashok Travels

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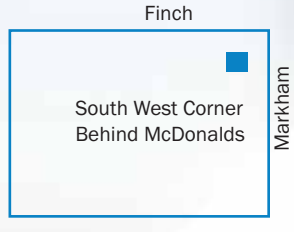

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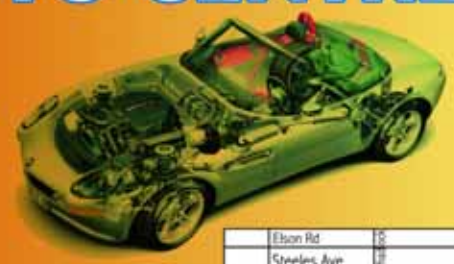

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Canbe Foods is the latest addition of a food outlet in Scarborough offering customers a variety of some tasty and delicious take-away food items.

Canbe Foods located at a convenient location in Ellesmere Road between Bellamy and McCowan offers Sri Lankan & Indian food for Take-Out and Catering. With ample parking in a free standing building, Canbe Food has many items to serve the customers.

Several items are displayed at the store including the favourite Roti which has become the attractive and most sought after item for the customers. Other favourite items available at Canbe are Biriyani, String Hoppers, Pittu, Idli, Dosa, Samosa, Rolls and many fresh, dry and frozen items.

Canbe's s Take-out and Catering outlet was opened at this location recently to serve better for Scarborough customers. Many customers travel from various locations to Canbe Foods for their food as they know the owner Antony Charles who has several years of experience in this food industry and has a lot to offer to the customers. The owner's desire is for customers to visit the outlet once to sample the taste of the items sold. Canbe Foods is located at 1760 Ellesmere Road and their phone number is 416-298-2219. Canbe Foods marketing punch line for their food items is "Spicefully Yours".

Some of the pictures taken at Canbe Foods can be seen here.

Scarborough Rangers Soccer Club - Teams Performance

"The well recognized Scarborough Rangers Soccer Club was formed and created by Anton Sandrasagra in 1999. Since then, in 2003, the Scarborough Rangers Under 17 Representative team was one of two teams formed and acknowledged by the Scarborough Soccer Association and Ontario Soccer Association.

The team played for the Central East Soccer League (C.E.S.L) for three consecutive years and finished first in their under 12 division in 2005. Under the guidance of Shan Shanmuga-nathan (head coach), Roshan Chandrasekara (assistant coach/ trainer) and Chitra Mylvannan (manager), the team was promoted to the Central Soccer League (C.S.L) under 13 regional division in 2006. The team worked hard to finish second in their under 14 regional division in C.S.L and was later promoted to the C.S.L Premier division under 15 in 2008. In 2009, the team finished second in their under 16 premier division (C.S.L) and was promoted to the under 17 C.S.L. level three division. In the summer of 2010, they will play the highest division in C.S.L. and second to O.Y.S.L (Ontario Youth Soccer League).

With the dedication and encouragement of their parents, the team continues to work together to bring the team to new levels. Since the team was created, all but one player makes up the 17 member league. This is a strong indication of the dedication of the coaches, players and parents. In showing their potential, it is important to recognize that this is the only representative team to have been promoted consecutively within the Scarbo-rough Rangers Soccer Club. Go Rangers Go! "

The Scarborough Rangers under 12 Boys representative team had the unthinkable season in 2009. The team coached by Rohan Sandrasagra finished first in their Division in Central East Soccer League (C.E.S.L) going unbeaten with the record of 12 wins and 2 tie. This was the first time a Scarborough Rangers team had ever gone unbeaten in their 10 year existence.

The under 12 boys will be promoted to Central Soccer League (C.S.L) this season where they will be playing under 13 Level 4. With the wonderful support from the parents, players and coaches, the team looks to build on their success for 2010.

Scarborough Rangers Soccer Club provides a healthy activity through its recreational and small sided games programs. These programs emphasize FUN, and de-emphasize winning at all costs. Every child is guaranteed playing time and the game is taught in a fun and enjoyable atmosphere.

Scarborough Rangers 2010 registration is underway for Summer House League programs for ages 4 and up. For the player with advanced skills and greater ambition, highly competitive leagues are offered for 8 – 17 years of age. For further information or other inquiries, please visit the Scarb-orough Ranger's website at www.gor-angersgo.com or contact Anton at 416-937-9900

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Author Sarah Malini Perera held 'for offending Buddhists' in Sri Lanka

An expatriate Sri Lankan woman who wrote two books about her conversion from Buddhism to Islam has been arrested while on holiday in Sri Lanka, apparently for causing offence to Buddhists.

Sarah Malini Perera, who was born in Sri Lanka but has lived in Bahrain since 1985 and converted to Islam in 1999, was arrested recently under the country's strict emergency laws, according to the police.

Alex Fernando, counsel for Sarah Malani Perera, told BBC Sinhala Service that he is yet to be informed of the reasons for the arrest.

"She too has not been informed of any reasons for the arrest," he said.

Mrs. Perera, who converted from Buddhism to Islam, was forced to remove the face veil by the officers at Mirihana police station, he said.

A family friend who wished to be anonymous told the BBC that "they had made a video out of it and they were taking photographs against her will."

But the police spokesman said that he was not aware of such harassment.

A Sri Lankan Woman Of Courage

Jansila Majeed, one of tens of thousands of civilians displaced during 3 decades of violent conflict in Sri Lanka, has been selected by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to be one of 10 recipients of the Department of State's International Women of Courage Award.

Ms. Majeed is the Managing Trustee of Community Trust Fund in Sri Lanka's Puttalam district. The Trust oversees a number of programs on minority and women's issues, including women's rights, peace building, relief work, working with young people, and mine-risk education in the North and East. Ms. Majeed's own particular focus is on uniting the Muslim and Tamil communities in her province.

First lady Michelle Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton present the 2010 International Women of Courage Award to Jansila Majeed of Sri Lank on March 10, 2010.

Having lived as an internally displaced person (IDP) for almost 20 years, Ms. Majeed has become an energetic activist for services for displaced Muslim and Tamil civilians. She focuses particularly on grassroots programs on life skills, health, and women's empowerment. Her activism began in 1992 with a working group of 5 people. She overcame struggles both as an IDP and as a woman activist, going on to build a broad-based organization that works on minority and women's issues in a highly sensitive and politicized environment. "This award is not just for me but for all the women who have suffered as I have," said Ms. Majeed.

The International Women of Courage Award was started in March 2007 to recognize women around the globe who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and advancement.

The other awardees this year are: Shukria Asil and Colonel Shafiqa Quraishi, of Afghanistan; Androula Henriques of Cyprus; Sonia Pierre of the Dominican Republic; Shadi Sadr of Iran; Ann Njogu of Kenya; Dr. Lee Ae-ran of the Republic of Korea; Sister Marie Claude Naddaf of Syria; and Jestina Mukoko of Zimbabwe.

Secretary Clinton said that the United States is making women's issues a cornerstone of its foreign policy. "Investing in the potential of the world's women and girls," she said, "is one of the surest ways to achieve global economic progress, political stability, and greater prosperity for women and men the world over."

[VOA News]

Tamil National Alliance highlights Sinhalese influx into North Lanka

"In the intense competition for the ethnic Tamil vote in the run up to the April 8 Sri Lankan parliamentary elections, parties touting Tamil nationalism are highlighting the "dangers" arising from the post-war influx of Sinhalese into the predominently Tamil Jaffna peninsula and the Wanni. Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which is the strongest of the Tamil nationalist parties, is drawing attention to the construction of permament Sri Lankan army camps in the Wanni, writes by P.K. Balachandran in the Indian News Service, Express Buzz.

His report further says:

Suresh Premachandran, who is contesting from Jaffna district, told Express that the construction of permament camps meant the transformation of the existing camps into family stations, which in turn, would mean a great increase in the population of the Sinhalese. This fear stems from the fact that the Sri Lankan army is almost exclusively Sinhalese.

"The army has about 40,000 troops now in the Wanni. Very soon, the troops' families will join them. Once a permanent settlement comes up, infrastructural facilities like Sinhalese schools and Buddhist temples will come up, and the ethno-cultural character of the Wanni will change," Premachandran said.

Tamil nationalists point out that the predominantly Tamil Wanni has been substantially denuded of Tamils by the war, which had gone on for 30 years. The existing Tamil population has been impoverished by the war, especially in the last two years of it. C. Sridharan, another TNA candidate in Jaffna, is quoted by Sudar Oli daily as saying that the army is constructing 4,000 family quarters at Kokkavil. There would soon be at least 8000 school going Sinhalese children, for whom Sinhalese schools would have to be opened, he said.

"Similar family stations will come up in Iyakkachchi, Palai and Jaffna," he warned.

A lawyer, who did not want to be named, said that Buddhist temples (most Buddhists are Sinhalese in Sri Lanka) were mushrooming in Jaffna. He said that a Buddhist temple had come up recently near the ancient Thiruketheeswaram temple in Mantottam in Mannar district in west Wanni.

Visiting Sinhalese traders have put up temporary shops all over Jaffna. " Very soon, these shops will be regularised and we can do nothing about it because the municipality is not under our control," the activist said. " Sinhalese shops have come up even around the Nallur Kandaswamy temple, when our custom does not allow it. Traditionally, shops are allowed only temporarily, during temples festivals. But who has the power to question these things?" he asked.

The Sri Lankan government's view is that just as there are Tamils living amicably among Sinhalese in south Sri Lanka, Sinhalese should be able to live among Tamils in the north, because the country belongs to all ethnic groups. There were Sinhalese in the north before the Tamil movement became militant, it is recalled.

On the charge that army camps were mushrooming in the Wanni, Military Spokesman Maj. Gen. Prasad Samarsinghe said that these were not new camps. "And they are there to protect the Tamils from the LTTE," he added.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa had only recently told Straits Times that there still were "sleeping cadres" of the LTTE, who could be activated by interested parties both at home and abroad. There were still people in the north who believed in Tamil Eelam, he pointed out.

India keen on direct involvement in the North

Economic and Commercial Counselor of Indian High Commission (IHC) in Sri Lanka, Santosh Jha, accompanied by his assistant Dinesh Kumar, met Jaffna Government Agent (GA), K. Ganesh, Friday at Jaffna Secretariat to discuss matters related to finding a suitable location in Jaffna to open a branch of Colombo IHC, sources in Jaffna said. Though it is said that the aim of opening a branch in Jaffna is to expedite issuing visa, the real motive is to extend India's activities directly in the North in the context of Chinese presence and involvement in Jaffna peninsula, civil society circles in Jaffna said.

The visiting Indian emissaries inspected certain locations in Jaffna, including the area near Duraippah Stadium, which had been selected for the purpose by Jaffna Secretariat.

India plans to extend its activities in the North in the spheres of culture and sports and to engage directly in projects of rebuilding the various structures destroyed during the war, Jaffna Secretariat sources said.

Meanwhile, Jaffna GA said that the IHC Counselor's purpose of visit to Jaffna was to explore avenues of India's direct involvement in the fields of sports and culture.

Chinese firms and men are already engaged in several development projects including road development funded by China in Jaffna peninsula.

(TamilNet)

Chola era temple excavated off Jaffna

The History and Archeology Department of Jaffna University has excavated a temple of the Chola era in Nedunthivu or Delft Island, off the Jaffna coast in Northern Sri Lanka.

The leader of the team, Prof P Pushparatnam told India's Express News Service over the phone on March 9th that the 40-ft long 10-ft wide temple belonged to the era of Raja Raja Chola or 10th Century BC.

Asked how he was able to date the temple, of which he had only the walls, the foundation and some vimana relief art work, Pushparatnam said that he had gone by two things: Firstly, coins of Raja Raja Chola had been found in the vicinity. Secondly, so far, historical structures found in the Delft Island had been of the Dutch and British periods only. This was the first time a structure predating these two periods had been found there, he pointed out.

Pushparatnam said that more of the temple might be found as the excavations go on. Essentially, only a survey of the area had been conducted so far, he clarified.

Sri Lankan Tamil archeologists have been complaining that they have not been encouraged to excavate or look for historical material in the Tamil-speaking North and East by Sri Lanka's Sinhalese- dominated archeological establishment.

Housing tops returnees' wish-list in Northern Sri Lanka

PULLIYANKULAM,
[IRIN News]

The latest UN figures show that 160,000 houses in northern Sri Lanka have to be repaired or rebuilt as the conflict-displaced return to their home areas.

"That's what I want the most," said Nagarajan Kallaiamuda, 22, a returnee to Pulliyankulum village in Mullaithivu District outside her temporary shelter.

Her home today is nothing more than four poles surrounded by mud brick walls, topped with a piece of tin roofing that her family has managed to cobble together.

She spent much of last year in Menik Farm, a sprawling government camp for thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the town of Vavuniya, returning to her village in January.

"We had a small, but nice house. Now there is nothing left. Not even the bricks."

Her story is echoed across much of Sri Lanka's Vanni - an area comprising Mullaithivu and Kilinochchi districts and parts of the Mannar, Jaffna and Vavuniya districts - in former rebel-controlled areas of the north.

Along the A9 highway running through the north, few homes or buildings escaped unscathed, as fighting between government forces and the defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam - who had been fighting for an independent Tamil homeland for over two decades - intensified.

In addition to ongoing landmine clearance activities on the ground, which has slowed the activities of aid agencies, there is limited local building capacity to meet the demand, while financial resources remain a concern.

Current available funding allows for the repair and reconstruction of just 22,120 units. These include the World Bank-sponsored North-East Housing Reconstruction Programme of 14,000 homes, as well as 4,500 by the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 3,220 by the Arbeiter Samariter Bund (ASB) and Solidar, and 400 by the Sri Lankan Red Cross with German Red Cross funding.

"Meeting immediate needs for shelter is key to safe and dignified returns, and is a basic condition if people are to start to rebuild their normal lives and to begin earning an income again," Neil Buhne, the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator for Sri Lanka told IRIN.

But that will take time.

"We can slowly rebuild our lives, but we don't have any money. If we wait to build houses with our own money, it will take years," Nagarajan's neighbour, Viggneswaran Sinngamuththu,

Nagaranjan Kallaiamuda, 22, outside her makeshift home in Pulliyankulum

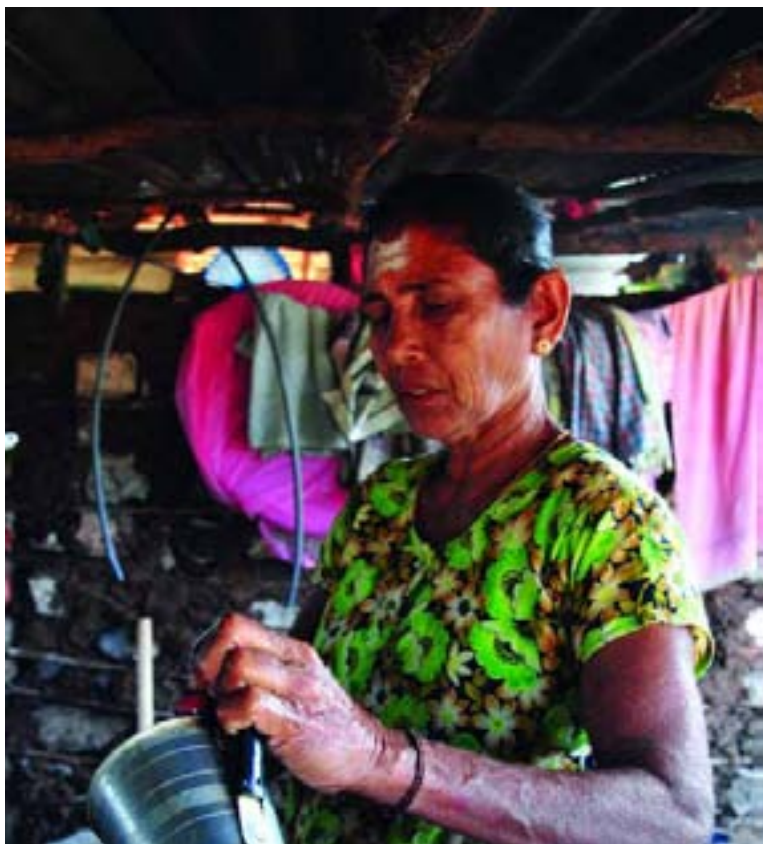
said. The 59-year-old is starting to cultivate his own land to grow vegetables and says he can earn some money, but "not enough to eat and build a house".

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) provides each returning family with a shelter grant of about US$220 as a first step towards helping them rebuild their homes and lives.

The grant is calculated to be sufficient to build a shelter that will last for two years.

However, many returnees are using the grant for other expenses.

"While the grant is intended to provide for initial emergency shelter, returnees in the spirit of regaining control over their lives



A woman prepares tea in her makeshift home in Mullaithivu District. Thousands of people have returned to their places of origin and are in need of permanent housing

are not limited in the use of the funds," UNHCR senior programme officer, Laurent Raguin, explained.

At the same time, the agency lacks immediate funds to maintain the shelter grant for the 88,000 displaced or more than 25,000 families still in camps - the vast majority in Menik Farm.

UNHCR is operating on less than half of the $39.8 million needed for this year, Raguin said. "For the shelter grant alone, we urgently need $13 million in 2010," he said, warning that if immediate donor assistance is not forthcoming, funds will run out.

According to the UN, of the 192,000 who have left government IDP camps, more than 99,000 have returned to their places of origin, while 92,000 are living with host families.

Durham Tamil Association organizes fund raising event on May 15th

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary, Durham Tamil Association is organising a fund raising event on May 15th Saturday evening at Toronto Don Valley Hotel (formerly Crown Plaza), "Harmony 2010" is a fund filled event and the evening will be filled with entertainment by Durham Tamil youth and a full course dinner. All proceeds raised from the event will go towards funding the growing number of Free Tamil Classes in Durham run by DTA and several Youth and Seniors activities at present and throughout 2010. For tickets and information, please contact Kanga Sivanathan at 416.984.4937 or 905.428.7007. More details are available at the DTA official website - www.durhamtamils.com.

Durham Tamil Association is an organization representing members of the Tamil community in the Durham region. The Association is involved in a variety of activities for it's members with special emphasis for the youth and Seniors. The Association enters it's tenth year of founding and is hoping to expand the activities of the Association for the benefit of it's members. The proposed event scheduled for 15th. May is to celebrate it's tenth Anniversary.

The minimum wage is going up.

If you're an employer, here's what you need to know.

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Current wage rate	$9.50/hour	$8.90/hour	$8.25/hour	$47.50	$95.00	110% of the minimum wage
Mar. 31, 2010 wage rate	$10.25/hour	$9.60/hour	$8.90/hour	$51.25	$102.50	110% of the minimum wage

On March 31, 2010, the general minimum wage will increase to $10.25 per hour from the current rate of $9.50 per hour.

To find out more about how the new minimum wage guidelines affect employers and employees, call or visit the Ministry of Labour web site.

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More Classrooms at Carleton University

Open Ontario Plan Means 20,000 More Spaces for Students

Ontario is creating more student spaces at Carleton University as part of its Open Ontario Plan.

The renovated Steacie Building for Chemistry opened in September 2008 and is home to a new Superlab. Carleton estimates they could now handle up to 700 additional first year chemistry students.

The Waterfront Project will mean new classrooms, lecture theatres and programs from public affairs to biomedical engineering, creating 2,600 new student spaces.

The 2010 Budget shows the Ontario government is moving its Open Ontario Plan forward in three specific areas: helping 20,000 more students go to college and university, investing in infrastructure, and helping northern Ontario businesses compete and grow.

"Our five-year Open Ontario Plan is what we need to create jobs and growth, while helping to eliminate the deficit caused by the global economic recession. We're doing this because we're committed to strengthening our economy, investing in our people and the priorities Ontarians share." – Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario

Ontario invested $5 million to renew the laboratories at the Steacie Building for Chemistry. The Waterfront Project is the result of $52.5 million investment shared between the federal and provincial governments. An additional 20,000 college and university spaces this September will be made possible through new funding of $310 million.

Trillium School's Grade 5 donates to Scarborough Food Bank

On March 3rd, Grade 5 class along with their French teacher, Madame Essoo and homeroom teacher, Ms. Jose organizing and putting on a wonderful feast, called Cafe Soleil. After learning about various foods in French, the kids along with their teachers held a cafe in the gym, where they made all sorts of delicious desserts, sandwiches and drinks, and sold them to the students and teachers of Trillium. Just like any cafe found in the corner streets of France, students and teachers were seated at tables and served meals in French. All money collected was donated to the Scarborough Food Bank. Altogether the grade 5 class managed to raise $406.00.

On March 11, Lee Soda and Eric Cheung from the Agincourt Community Services Association came to Trillium to accept their cheque and discuss with the students the importance of helping out organizations, such as the Scarborough Food Bank.

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'UTHAYAN' TAMIL WEEKLY'S INTERNATIONAL AWARD'S FESTIVAL 2010

by PUDHUVAI RAMAN

Uthayan, a weekly Tamil News Paper for the fast 15 years in media hosted International Awards Festival recently. Mr. R.N. Logendralingam, the Chief Editor of Uthayan has been indentifying and honouring people from Canada and abroad for the past 3 years. This year event was held on 21st March 10 at Peter Banquet Hall (Milner & Markham) witnessed by VIPs from various businesses, political, Medias, writers and family circle. Several personalities were honoured and garlanded at the function. Former Minister and present mayoral candidate George Smitherman, Derek Lee, M.P, Indira Naidoo Harris, Director of communications, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr Eric Hoskins, (representing the Premier) Hon. Rob Oliphant, M.P, Mr Brad Duquid, M.P.P Maria Minna, MP, Mr Thomas Saras, President of National Ethnic Press & Media Council of Canada, Dr Eric Hoskins, M.P.P., Andrew Kannia, M.P and Chief Police officials of GTA, Municipal Councillor Logan Kanapathi, Neethan Shan, Ms Meleni David, Mr Manuel Jesudason and Mr Warren Vigneswaran from Margosa Credit Union.

Following dignitaries were honoured with International Award of this year

Uthayan Literary and Artistic Award to Mr K.S. Balachandran, a famous Film Producer, Director and veteran actor

Uthayan Business Entrepreneur Award to Mrs Kamalanayaki Vivekananandarajah (Raja Ram Caterers)

Uthayan Inter Communal Relationship Award to the Honourable Maria Minna, MP.

Uthayan International special Awards to Mr Ravi Thamilvanan, Manimekalai Publishers, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Uthayan International Special Award to Mr B.H. Abdul Hameed from Sri Lanka, Famous Radio & TV Announcer.

As per our Hindu convention, the program started with prayer, National Anthem, mark of silence to the bereaved souls in Sri Lanka. The master of ceremony by Miss Swarna Anandaraja and Mr Datchanan from the beginning to end was so impressive since their active role of introducing the guests and cultural program was unique and appreciable in addition to their message of condolence of their music master Mrs Bhavadharini.

For Bhaarathi Arts, selected recent and old Tamil film songs were sung by Miss Anusha Sivalingam, Mr Prabha, Tushi, Jude, Annanathan, Sajeeka, Tulasi, Mayuran and Thayabaran Arumugam as well the Bharatha Natyam Dance by Narthana Seshtram, Chilompoli Shethram, Shakthi Narthanalayam were also pleasing.

The whole credit goes to the excellent stage management and arrangement done by Mr Ratneswaran, Priya and Bhaarathi Arts Volunteers in absence of their pioneers which added festive mood throughout the function.

The President of Canada Tamil Chamber of Commerce Mr Ken Kirupa, Geethavaani Radio President Mr Nada Rajkumar, Canadian Tamil Congress spokesperson Mr David Poopalapillai also extended their greetings with their special speech on this occasion.

The chief Editor R.N. Logendralingam welcomed all, introduced the guests, award winners and the music troupe. In his

speech he highlighted the growth of Uthayan for the past 15 years and paid tribute to late Mrs Bavadharini, the director of Bhaarathi artists and praised their achievements in imparting fine arts to the younger generation. He also briefed out the selection of the awardees and the impact on this function.

Dr Vasanthakumar (Computek) presided over the function and in his presidential address he mentioned the greatness of the editor, who has been regarded by all a very good social service minded man, and through his media activities he has achieved an identity of success.

Uthayan International Special Award recipient from Sri Lanka Mr B.H. Abdul Hameed a well renowned International Broadcaster in his address thanked Uthayan and appreciated his media services, for having established a friendship bridge throughout the world with dedication and immense hard work to run this weekly edition for the past 15 years with great success. He also honoured Mr and Mrs Logendralingam by presenting a shawl as a token of gratitude.

The whole event was really conducted in grand manner with pleasing light music program rendered by the students of Bhaarathi Arts, reflected as a musical tribute to the recent death of the music director Mrs Bavadharini. Main speakers were the mayoral candidate George Smitherman, Derek Lee, Lawyer Meleni David, Abdul Hakeem.

Bhaarathi Arts singers and musicians performed latest film songs and got very good appreciation.

The award ceremony was covered by the local televisions Tamil One, TVI that too live broadcast through net by NETIZONES (NAG RAVI) watched in 32 countries. Gold, Silver and Bronze sponsors were also felicitated on the stage. Above all the refreshments and delicious dinner served by Yogas Catering under the direction of the proprietor Mr Chandran with team of volunteers as well the volunteer service rendered by Gurukulam Iyyappa seva sangam were altogether beyond words of appreciation.

Monsoon Journal extends its good wishes to Uthayan and congratulates for its successful efforts and dedicated services to public through his free weekly edition.

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Mrs. Gnanie Nalliah:

04.02.1918 – 21.03.2009

A lady with a passion for teaching

An appreciation by Ms. RanjanaThambirajah (Nee Sabaratnam)

March 21st 2010 marks the first death anniversary of Mrs Gnanie Nalliah who passed away in Vancouver, Canada at the age of 91. The nonagenarian was a well known mathematician in the Jaffna circle and taught at Chundikuli Girls College Jaffna for more than 25 years.

Some teachers leave an indelible mark on the young hearts and the memories linger with those when they become adults. One of the teachers who made a mark in my younger days was the Late Mrs. Gnanie Nalliah. The first impression I had of Mrs. Nalliah was not in person but from the senior students and my older siblings who studied under her at CGC. In time I came to learn that she was a strict teacher, good at teaching math, who never raised her voice and was funny at times.

I remember vividly when she became our Maths teacher in 1970 in the seventh standard. She taught Algebra, Geometry and Arithmetic to our class. I still remember how she explained congruent in Geometry, simple and compound interest in Arithmetic and the pronumeral applications in Algebra. She always referred to zero as "poochiyam" in Tamil than "cypher" which was commonly used by other teachers. We had her for two terms and then she was delegated to a senior class.

Two years later, she returned to us as our Maths teacher in the ninth standard. This was the time when young girls in their early teens went through their adolescent years becoming mischievous and having an attitude on every facet of life. To top up the situation, a newly appointed teacher, fresh from the University was delegated to our class not only as a class teacher but also to teach us Biology. Our class took the advantage of her inexperience as the opportunity to disrupt her classes. The fun we had lasted for a term or two until the news reached the Principal's ears, Mrs. GES Chelliah. One can guess who was replaced as our class teacher, none other than Mrs. Nalliah.

This time around we saw Mrs. N as a different person. She was very strict and stern as our class teacher. Since she had been teaching math when she wasn't our class teacher, she had a better understanding of the culprits who were disruptive in class. Set a thief to catch a thief became her motto, and she made the naughtiest students as class monitors. A threat also came to us as that she would personally meet our parents or send warnings out through our older siblings. Sending a warning home through an older sibling was of course detested by every younger sibling so we were brought to our senses very quickly. The psychological warfare she imposed on us made a vast difference in our class behaviour. She came with a mission; she didn't stop until her mission was accomplished. Nor did she enforce the threats she made.

In the Seventies, the salary for the tutorial staff was paid mid-month and the Principal had to go to the bank personally to make the cash withdrawals. Mrs. Nalliah accompanied the Principal to the bank and assisted in the distribution of salaries to the entire tutorial staff. Students eagerly wait for their "free periods" to have some fun when she disappears for her monthly chore. Mrs. N was too conscientious of her missed classes and she would use her lunch time to teach us the missed components. As teenagers, we did not like the idea of spending our time in "calculations" as we were more worried about our lunch time game such as "killi-thattu" (a grid game). Mrs. N also made special Saturday classes if she happened to miss the school for personal reasons. Such was her wholehearted devotion and dedication to her profession. Now as a parent I believe that teachers don't come in the calibre of Mrs. Nalliah with such dedication and passion.

Mrs. Nalliah was a also good educator in the ways she handled the young minds. She was good at throwing idioms and phrases aptly to the situations. If we were are unable to tackle a maths problem and ended up in tears she would say "Kalvi ennum payirrukku kanneer enum malai miha miha avasiyam(tears of rain are essential to a plant of education). One of the most popular idiom was "pandriyodu serntha kanrum pauvi arunthum "(a good natured calf will also learn to eat 'dirt' if it chose to live with the pigs). This idiom was very popular in our class for two reasons. One was that "pauvi" was colloquially used differently and the other was that we had a bevy of marked mischievous girls in our class. Whenever Mrs. N starts this

particular phrase it will be finished as a chorus by the whole class.

She hated being disrupted when explaining a concept in Math. If she caught someone chatting with the neighbour, she would immediately stop and stare at the offenders. Every eyes would follow her glance, even at that moment if the offenders do not realise the situation, then the chalk would fly like a rocket from her hand over to the girls concerned, and most of the time the chalk would find its target. I was not an exception for this situation and I quickly learned not to talk in class.

Mrs. Nalliah was well known for her Mathematical skills for the GCE Ordinary Levels, and she was well sought after by the wider community for Maths tutoring. She held her private tutoring lessons at her house "Gnanasthan"at Perinpanayagam lane, Chundikuli Jaffna. She maintained a principle that she wouldn't take any girls from CGC if she teaches them at school indicating that she was not going to teach anything different from the class.

Our College Monday morning Prayers were generally conducted by our Principal or by a teacher. I thoroughly enjoyed the times when Mrs. N took the podium. She always came up with a story which had a moral at the end.

Mrs. Gnanie Nalliah hailed from Thunnalai, a village in the Vadaimarrachi region. Her father was a Principal of Hartley college of Point Pedro in the early twentieth century. She was named as Gnanapooranammah at birth shortened as Gnanie in later stage. One of her siblings was also known for his principalship was late Mr. K.Pooranampillai who had been a School Principal at The Hartley College and then at St. Johns College, Jaffna.

In her conversations she had mentioned that her studies were disrupted to a halt when her mother was bedridden for nearly six years. She pursued her studies after she got married to Mr. LWD Nalliah and she had to sit for her exams when her son was a baby. She received her degree from the University of London, United Kingdom. These may be the reasons that she was reiterating the value of studies to us girls. She always encouraged girls to study to and use the time wisely and also instilled high morals and principles in life. One of the concepts she inculcated to the girls which was passed on to her by her mother was that if you do a good deed at school, most of the people won't notice it but if you do a bad deed that the whole school community will carry the story home. So think about your actions before you commit yourself to a task.

In my GCE Ordinary Levels year she would open a lunch time session weekly for all the girls, irrespective of the class, to voluntarily come up with their mathematical problems. Even though I was studying under a different teacher, the offer was put to good use by some of us. Closer to the examinations she would extend invitations to interested students to come to her house to have a go at the past examination papers. I am always grateful for the services she rendered to us during that exam time free of charge! Her moral values were never matched with monetary values.

Mrs Nalliah was always neatly dressed in pastel colour saris and her falls was always pleated and pinned to the side. Her hair was always coiffed to a neat bun. One of her saris was quite popular among students coined as "rocket sari". This was the post era time when the Apollo 11 has landed on the moon. The sky blue colour sari falls was painted by her artist husband depicting the landing on the moon by the three astronauts. Whenever she wore that sari there will be someone at school wanting to examine the detail of her falls.

She was a virtuous lady with a humble manner and was highly respected by the wider community. Nick-naming a teacher was the norm in every school and these names were generally referred names instead of given names. However Mrs. N escaped without a nick name.

Mrs. N did retire from her teaching service in the mid-seventies after serving Chundikuli Girls College for more than twenty five years. The college is in debt of her service to a generation of students. The retirement didn't deter her from tutoring students at her home and then in Colombo. The 1983 communal riots in our Island brought a massive emigration of Tamils abroad. Mrs. Nalliah emigrated to Vancouver Canada to be with her son and family. The emigration did not prevent Mrs. N from tutoring math. Math was her life. I did hear from her relatives and friends that as an octogenarian she was able to keep her mind active by teaching maths for the younger generation.

She was a regular church goer and had faith in God and spiritual values and worshipped at the Methodist churches. She also had preached in some of the churches when she was requested. Once she was asked to preach at the Vannarpannai Wesley Methodist Church for a women's day service. She mentioned that she was a bit nervous to get on to the pulpit among the strangers until she saw my late father's face as the only known person.

Mrs. Gnanie Nalliah had the genuine passion for teaching and mastered the art of paedogogy to the amazement of students. May God bless her family for her services rendered to the community. As Paul says in the New Testament her life can be described as "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race and I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7)

Gnanie Nalliah did light a candle of understanding in our hearts which shall not be put out. I wonder why God does not make Mrs. Gnani Nalliahs' anymore with high morals and values. The current world requires many more Gnanies!

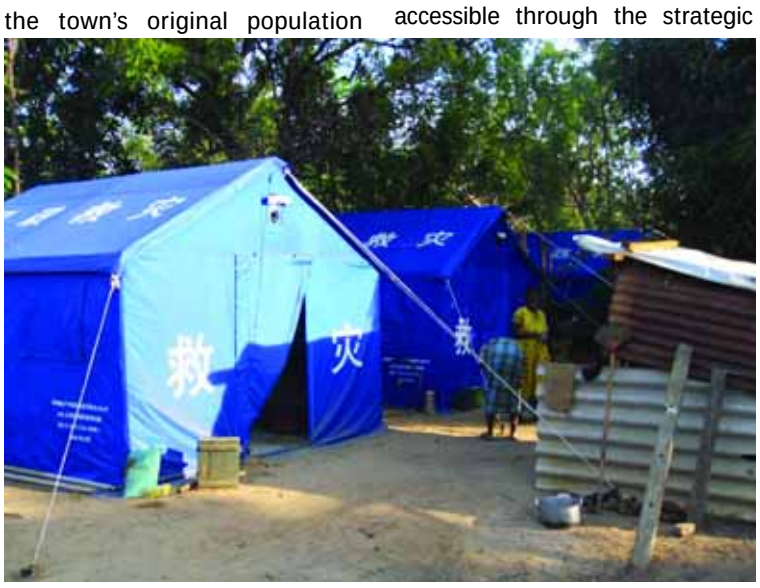
May her soul rest in peace.

Kilinochchi struggles with returnee influx

by IRIN

The northern Sri Lankan town of Kilinochchi – former capital of the defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – is struggling to address the needs of thousands of returnees.

According to Sri Lankan military officials, more than 24,000 people or close to 30 percent of the town's original population have returned since December – many of whom are living in tents.



Many returnees now live in tents

Aid agencies pulled out of the town in September 2008 as the decades-long conflict intensified.

The Sri Lankan Army successfully captured the political headquarters of the LTTE in Kilinochchi in January 2009.

"This was an unparalleled victory," President Mahinda Rajapakse said at the time.

"Kilinochchi was the capital of a state dreamt of by a terrorist organization. It will no longer be available to them. We should pay the gratitude of the whole nation to those heroic soldiers who achieved that victory."

But 10 months since the government declared final victory over the LTTE in May 2009, Kilinochchi is grappling with an influx of returnees.

Before 2008, more than 90,000 people lived in the town, accessible through the strategic A-9 highway than runs between Kandy and Jaffna.

According to military officials from the Sri Lankan 57th Division, the town was completely evacuated during the Kilinochchi offensive, while much of the infrastructure - including schools, hospitals, water and electricity supplies - was badly damaged or destroyed, with nearly 80 percent of all homes affected.

A family outside their home in Kilinochchi. Many residents use the tarpaulins provided to cover their homes.

"The Tigers destroyed the town when they were retreating," a senior military official claimed.

Thousands of residents fled the city en masse in the conflict's final days, only to find themselves in displaced people's camps in the town of Vavuniya or elsewhere.

But since the government decision to allow residents to return to their places of origin, ensuring quality returns over quantity is also proving a major challenge.

"Lack of proper housing and water facilities is a major problem," one local aid worker in Kilinochchi, who asked not to be identified, told IRIN.

Many homes were damaged, leaving occupants particularly vulnerable to the southwest monsoon rains, which begin in June and run to October.

"Our makeshift houses lack proper roofs," Kumari Devarasa, a housewife who resettled last month, told IRIN. "The houses lack basic toilet, water and electricity facilities. It's a very hard life."

Residents say the government has provided assistance, including wood, to build and repair their homes, while others continue to live in tents provided by NGOs or have covered their shelters with tarpaulins.

Others still complain about access to health and education.

"We don't have proper jobs," Nalini Jabesan. "We live from random amounts/stipends that the government gives us and doing odd jobs."

David Sivasundaram, a shop owner who resettled last month, described life as "a daily struggle".

"I don't think the government has enough money to help us on a large scale," he said, repairing the war damage to his shop. "Where can they find money?"

Returnee Kumari Devarasa has just returned to her home in Kilinochchi

"I have many complaints, but right now I don't want to say this is somebody's fault. Whatever the situation is, we have to fight ourselves for a better life," another returnee said.

UN aid agencies are gearing up to assist the government in the resettlement process, including food, emergency education, shelter, health and access to safe drinking water.

According to the UN, more than 185,000 have returned to their homes or are staying with host families since the return process began, while some 93,000 continue to live in camps, the vast majority in and around the town of Vavuniya, northern province.

Difficult homecoming for Muslim IDPs

By IRIN

Resettlement efforts are under way for thousands of displaced Muslims from Sri Lanka's north who have been languishing in refugee camps for nearly two decades, officials say.

The internally displaced people (IDPs) were forcibly evicted in October 1990 from the northern districts of Jaffna, Mannar, Kilinochchi, Mullaithivu and some parts of Vavuniya by the insurgent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

About 75,000 Muslims are estimated to have fled, making their way towards government-controlled areas in Vavuniya and Anuradhapura, as well as to Puttalam District on the north-western coast, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG).

The Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services, Rishad Bathiudeen, announced in December 2009 that the government would start resettling more than 100,000 Muslim IDPs in camps in Puttalam to their places of origin.

"We are currently carrying out a survey for resettlement," Bathiudeen told IRIN, noting that resettlement areas still had to be cleared of mines from the conflict.

"Once the demining is completed we will resettle them in their places of origin," he said.

The minority Muslim community comprises about 8 percent of Sri Lanka's population of 20.2 million, according to the Department of Census and Statistics.

Rights groups say their plight of the Muslim IDPs has been largely ignored throughout most of the conflict.

While international attention has focused recently on the thousands of ethnic Tamil IDPs displaced near the end of Sri Lanka's 26-year conflict, analysts and aid workers have expressed concern that the Muslim IDPs will continue to be overlooked.

"While we recognize the urgency for the resettlement of the IDPs, northern Muslims are worried that there is hardly any acknowledgment of their existence and needs, and they are left out of any planning of the entire resettlement process," said Shreen Saroor, a Muslim IDP and activist.

In a January 2010 report, the ICG urged the international community to consider the Muslim IDPs' right to return to their land. It also called on the government to clarify plans for the return and resettlement of the IDPs.

"Their right of return should be clearly established, while also recognizing that some may not want to leave their current homes and should not be forced," it said.

While some of the IDPs have constructed houses and others have been living with host families, most are still in the camps, where conditions are basic, although there is access to clean water and sanitation.

Many of the IDPs were fishermen, farmers or butchers before fleeing but they now mostly work as labourers or masons.

But even with the prospect of resettlement, the decision to return home for Muslim IDPs - after 20 years in Puttalam - is not clear-cut.

At the Saltern Internal Displacement Camp in Puttalam, some IDPs said they had visited their ancestral homes in Jaffna, Mannar and the north of Vavuniya. They found their houses had been destroyed and their belongings looted.

"I was born and lived in Jaffna. I owned a beef stall there. I was very happy and healthy, but now I am sick and sad," Mohamed Yusuf told IRIN.

"Nevertheless, I want to go back to Jaffna and live. But I am not sure whether it will happen before I die," he said.

While some said they had adapted to life in Puttalam, many said they were willing to go back if the authorities provided them with basic needs such as a house.

"I have worked in Saudi Arabia for 10 years as a housemaid, and managed to build three houses in Jaffna, but all of them were destroyed," said Najeefa Mohamed Hussain.

"I want to build at least one house in Jaffna, but I am not financially able to make it a reality," she said.

[IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks) is part of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, but its services are editorially independent.]

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LETTERS & OPINIONS

Terrorism a global menace

Kanayalal Raina

It is a good sign that slowly there is deep realisation that terrorism is terrorism by whatever name one may call it. For long it has been a case of only the wearer knowing where the shoe pinches.

We in this State of Jammu and Kashmir were the first to witness the horrors of terrorism and then the country (India) have known the evil phenomenon through our tragic personal experiences.

The world especially the affluent part if it has woken up to the new realities after 9/11, 2001, in Manhattan (United States) followed by a series of similar dastardly blood-stained occurrences in parts of the Europe.

Terrorism has since then been recognised as a global threat. Admittedly, however, the earth has been scorched by it on different occasions even earlier mainly as a fall-out from the Middle-East tensions. As pious an event as the Olympic Games has not escaped from its wicked influence. Who can ever forget the Munich massacre of ambassadors of peace and brotherhood?

The recent assertion by Mr Gilles de Kerchove, European Union's counter-terrorism coordinator, is in tune with the prevalent universal perception. He has described Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) as a "very dangerous organisation with a global agenda and not a local agenda." He has followed it up with a significant observation: "It is all but a good idea to fight India with proxy through terrorist organisations." He has also noted that terrorist training camps are luring many people from Europe.

One is not sure whether he has elaborated his statement as only a brief account of his speech at a seminar on Yemen in Brussels is available. Yet, there is a clear indication of what he implies. That the LeT is based in Pakistan is hardly a secret. Till recently it has claimed to be focussing on our Jammu and Kashmir only. Hardly a week passes when its armed militants do not figure in encounters with Indian security forces on either side of the Pir Panjal.

The happenings in the rest of India, France and the US in particular have revealed that it has at the same time spread its wings. It is no more simply "Kashmir centric" but has become a cog in a wider vicious game being led by Al Qaeda and Taliban. One security expert after the other has pointed out that almost all terrorist organisations have joined hands motivated by a heady mix of religion and politics. For their part these outfits too have left no doubt that they are one in this deadly mission.

A case in point is the support that Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has received in carrying out its devastating strikes in the neighbouring country's Punjab province and "Azad" Kashmir (as the occupied territory is locally known) where the likes of the LeT are firmly rooted as the dominant players on the extremist spectrum. It is again only too well known that Pakistan moves hand in glove with these groups to create murder and mayhem in India --- a grim reality that the top EU official has subtly underlined.

Islamabad's approach is not without irony. It seems to be least bothered that its very existence is under threat by least one such monster it has produced previously. Terrorism does not spare its practitioners. It is high time that Pakistan realised this for its own sake. Is this a vain hope?

The brute, barbaric, inhuman and tragic killing of two unarmed innocent Sikhs in the hands of Taliban gives a clear message to the world community to frame and adopt a Comprehensive Convention on international terrorism to stem and check proliferating menace which is endangering the word peace and tranquili-

Kanyalal Raina

ty.

The captive Sikhs upheld the glorious tradition of the Sikh faith not to budge before the oppressors who were bent upon to convert them to Islam or pay the the `jaziya` (religious tax) Rs.3 crore ($750,000).

The population of the Sikhs in Pakistan is estimated not more than 32000 and among them a sizable number had settled in Pakistan after mass exodus from Afghanistan when Taliban took power in Kabul. Sikhs preferred to live in Pakistan after the partition of India. They were loyal citizens of Pakistan but were treated as second class citizens and repenting there decision for the long 63 years. Now, there apprehensions about their safety are proving true.

Retiring padre toying with the idea of a 'Meditation center for Christians in Toronto'

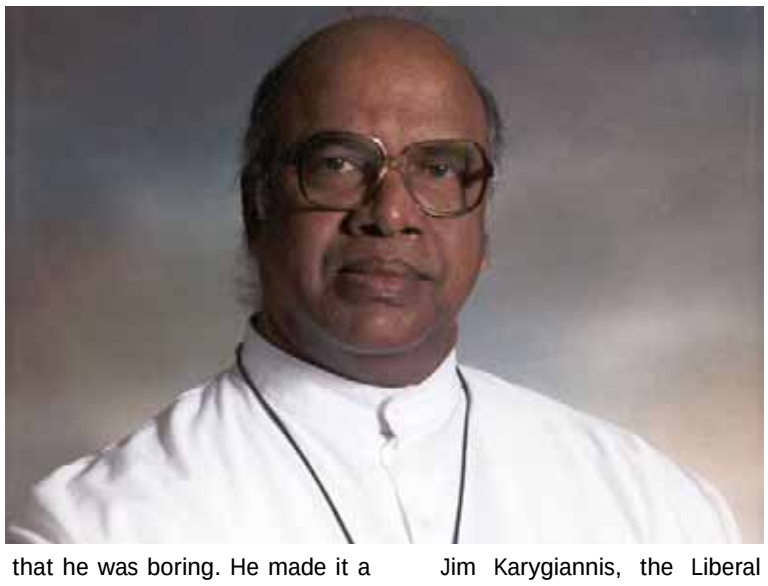
Re. I. Selvaratnam mentioned about the need for a meditation center in Toronto during the course of his address at the farewell accorded to him by the Tamil Christian Church of Canada recently at the Milliken Methodist Church, Scarborough. He had served the TCCC for the last ten tears and he is being succeeded by Rev. Samuel Winson of the Methodist Church, Singapore. Vinson was also given a welcome at the same function.

A meditation center was suggested by the late Rev. Bobby Mather who had requested Rev. Selvaratnam to work on its establishment when he retires. Unfortunately the former had passed away suddenly and it is left for the latter to work solely on the envisaged project.

Rev. Selvaratnam who took over the TCCC in 1999 had helped the church to grow and mature as a full-fledged institution. At the appreciation service Messrs. S.Sellathurai, a founder member, Junesh Chinniah, the president, Tony Balasingam, the president - elect gave their words of appreciation of the services of the retiring pastor. Pradeepan Rajaratnam, administrative secretary read a Tamil Kavithai written by Shanthy Amalan, a church member extolling the services of the pothagar. Rev. Selvaratnem who had a varied experience as a pastor in Sri Lanka was able to cater to the needs of the immigrant Tamil Christians who were keen on following the traditions they valued in Sri Lanka.

With rich voice and majestic stature, Selvaratnam was able to appeal to the multigenerational, multi-denominational congregation that is the TCCC. Enriched by his experience with the Ashram, the CSI and the Anglican Church of Srilanka, Rev. Selvaratnam had the proper background to lead the Tamil Church of Canada which has a large influx of Tamil Christians from Sri Lanka.

He had the knack of spicing his sermons with appropriate humorous anecdotes which attracted a large number of believers from all over Toronto and its suburbs especially during the festive seasons. He was an adept in making sermons conform to the biblical text he has chosen and deliver with ease and simplicity that no one ever complained



that he was boring. He made it a point to keep his sermons 'short and sweet.'

In Canada where you can't find many pastors who can speak Tamil without mixing it with English, the'pothagar' was an asset as he had the mastery of the native language with all its excellence. Mr. S. Sellathurai, a senior member said that he was instrumental in bringing Rev. Selvaratnem to Canada and that his varied talents helped the church to grow in maturity and carve out a place for itself in the Tamil community in Canada.

Jim Karygiannis, the Liberal MP for Scarborough honoured the pastor by his presence and thanked him for his services to the Tamil community for over a decade. Junesh Chinnaiah, the incumbent president expressed his deep gratitude and warmest wishes with feelings of indebtedness. Tony Balasingam, the president elect thanked the retiring pothagar for his fruits of labour in the service of the Lord. He mentioned about his TV ministry, hospital ministry, home ministry, Bible study and the Brampton service.

Ravi Thirugnanam welcomed the new pastor, Rev. Dr. Samuel Vinson and his family and introduced him to the congregation. The pastoral search committee chose him from 15 applicants and that accounts for his fitness for the vocation. With a doctorate and several years of service amongst Tamil congregations in Singapore he said he is confident that Vinson proves to be a worthy successor to Selvaratnam and lead the TCCC with tremendous zeal to win more souls to Christ. Rev. Vinson in his remarks thanked the TCCC for giving him the opportunity to serve in Toronto which he never expected he would when he visited Canada several years ago after he finished his doctoral studies at the US.

The gathering was hosted with a sumptuous lunch at the church parish- hall during which many members and friends were able to meet both pastors and exchange greetings. God has his mysterious ways and he guides his people' through all the changing scenes of life.'

jjatputharajah

How student "Mithuro" from Kollupitiya met their counterpart "Mithirar" in Kalmunai

by Capt. Elmo Jayawardena

There are three huge hundred year old ancient nuga trees growing in a sandy patch by the Wesley School in Kalmunai. The space is seraphic and is shaded by the giant tree trio standing like sentinels. It is a kind of "all purpose" ground where children gather to play. The nuga custodians symbolises a very important lesson to all of us. One has a palm tree shooting up to the clear blue sky right from its belly, maybe some bird dropped a seed and the palm grew without an objection for intruding.

The other has a well spread tamarind tree entwined branch to branch with the old Nuga companion, sharing the same space and shading the same good earth.

The third has all kinds of small and big stumps and stalks sprouting from all over, ferns and vines, strangers as they grow in complete harmony on the Nuga foster parent.

It is only us, the so called "very intelligent human beings" who flew to the moon, transplanted human hearts and strut in Saville Row civilization who find it difficult to appreciate the simplicity of congruence.

CandleAid started the project; 'Uniting Children" under the adage "Peace begins with me" by opening 28 libraries from Jaffna to Kalmunai via Trincomalee.

The soul of the effort being to link children in peace, and Methodist College, Colombo, was invited to carry the first olive branch and dove their way to Kalmunai to meet their counterparts.

On a clear February morning they drove from Colombo to the east, the "Metho Mithuro" looking for their "Wesley School Koottalikal". The Colombo girls in jade green ties were led by Nishika, an "A" level student and were accompanied by two teachers. They had two girls who spoke Tamil, great way to start friendships.

The entire project from its infancy was totally supported by the sterling leadership of the Methodist College Principal who believed in positive possibilities and worked with CandleAid people. She and her teachers and students gifted a sincere meaning to the belief "Peace begins with me."

On the eastern side, Wesley School from Kalmunai came to play host to the friends from Colombo. Here again it was the Head of the school and the staff who committed themselves wholeheartedly to set the tone for the links of friendship to begin.

That's the platform, now let me tell you the story

At a time when politics take center stage with promises galore on initiating progress and everyone cashing on the war victory, we should also ask the question. When the battle dust settles, is it peace?

Do we have equality?

Are we really two people, the ones that love the country and the ones that don't?

The answer is not simple.

Too many bullets have been fired and too many graves have been filled by the young and the innocent. The battle scars have created gigantic gashes amongst the races that will take decades to heal. Circumstantial hatreds do not evaporate easily, unless we as individuals stand up and say "Peace begins with me."

Real peace is not ushered by the end of a battle. We all need to do intensive soul searching and come up with answers that would pave the way for reconciliation. If and when Wijayanayaka gets back to his friendship with Somasundaram and visits Velvettiturai, like old times and loafs around in his friend's old Austin Cambridge that would be peace. Or a Balendran flies Mig jets for the Air Force and Gunendran is an officer cadet in the army that would be peace; as long as both Balendran and Gunendran do not come from Royal College but from Jaffna Central. Maybe a Kalamathy from Thalaimannar arrives in Colombo to study medicine sans a shred of fear; that would be a better definition of peace, the sincerely sought and the lasting kind.

The battles were fought to end a thirty year old conflict that had almost burnt this beautiful country and divided its people. The war is over, that we all know. Yes, we hope for peace, pray for peace and seek peace, but the main question is; are we doing enough to find more meaningful and lasting ways to co-exist?

It is the interaction that we lack now. The fundamental need among all Sri Lankans from all races is to strip ourselves of the fragments of disunity and pick up the pieces for real peace. And that can mainly be done by the people and not by "powers that be" policy which at a grassroots level does become at most times irrelevant and meaningless.

We hate some people because we do not know them, and we will not know them, because we hate them; this applies fair and square to both parties.

They met in the school premises, Mithuro from Methodist College and the Koottalikal from Wesley High School. The conversation was sprinkled with Akka, Malli, Nangi and Thangachchi. The smiles came easy and winsome and reached eyes that sparkled in friendship. The teachers were there too, along with the team from CandleAid, all joining in a new found soft and gentle step for peace sans the pomp and the pageantry. A day's program had been laid and it was totally geared to cement the friendships of the students of these two schools.

A fresh beginning, a new page and a new and simple concept to tell the rest of the country that it is possible to say "Peace begins with me."

The girls from Colombo brought books to supplement the CandleAid Library that was opened at Wesley School. The two teams worked together and made paper flowers and arranged them in two pots, one to be kept in Kollupitiya and the other in Kalmunai.

This was primarily to signify the memory of a journey by children across three decades of terror and turmoil. They dug the ground together and planted four mango trees, or "trees of peace" they called it. One day the mangoes will come, fruits of labour and someone might remember the friends who came from Colombo to clasp fingers and talk peace.

The students drew pictures together, depicting a theme of unity and pinned badges on each other which had a dove with an olive branch and the message in clear letters which said "Peace Begins with me." The teachers were absolutely wonderful, filling the blanks and adding words of encouragement.

Jaffna Students

There are no words to quantify such beauty among people. There can only be hope that others will follow. Thirty envelopes were given to the Kalmunai School, each carrying a name and an address of a Metho student that a Wesley girl will write to and become friends with. They then will visit Colombo in April, to take part in an art exhibition and will meet their new found friends. More events will follow, linking the students of these two schools, paving the way for uniting them as children of a land that needs the future to be blessed with harmony.

Maybe the three ancient Nuga trees watched the children in friendly chatter, wearing badges that said "peace begins with me." They would have seen the laughter and the camaraderie and the once separated strangers of different races coming together in their little attempt to change the sad and sardonic ethnic equation.

Maybe they heard too the girls when they said in their youthful clear voices "we took a small step towards a giant leap which we hope others will follow"

Many little people in many little places do many little things that can change the world. I am sure the ancient nuga trees would have been thrilled that this happened in their shadow.

Kalmunai was one library, four more were opened in the next two days, Natpittymunai, Mylampaveli, Mich Nagar and Morokoddanchenai. So much more could be done, so much more will be done. It is all a matter of believing "Peace begins with me."

Capt. Elmo Jayawardena is Founder President of CandleAid

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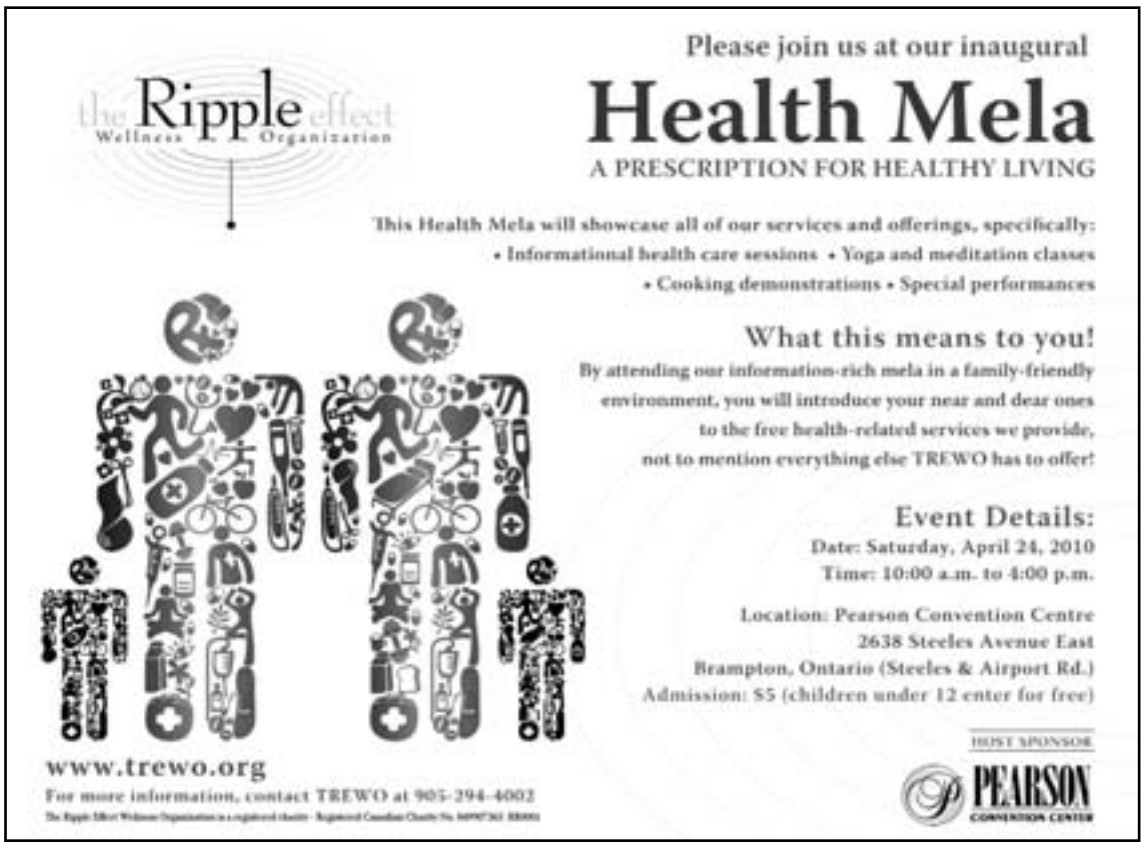

MONSOON FEATURE

JOHN BODDY HOMES PRESENTS 'EAGLE GLEN'

John Boddy Homes has been voted 'Best Builder' in Ajax/Pickering for the thirteenth year in a row for this year's Readers' Choice Awards and has now released its next phase at their 'Eagle Glen' community in Ajax. Located just minutes east of Toronto 'Eagle Glen' combines the closeness and convenience of city living with a suburban feel, and its prime location makes it a great place to call home. Classic two-storey homes are available, as well as side and back splits, semi-detached and townhomes. Homes start at 1,700 square feet and range up to a spacious 3,858 square feet, some with three car garages. John Boddy Homes offers traditional size lots with a minimum of 105 feet in depth and a great selection of extra deep lots, pie shaped lots, walk out basements and a select few backing onto 3.5 acres of mature trees. With such a broad range of house sizes and styles 'Eagle Glen' has the ideal home to suit every preference. From the unique exteriors and charming streetscapes to the elegant interiors, various John Boddy Homes include such impressive standard features as vaulted ceilings, double door entries, décor columns, mirrored sliding closet doors, ceramic kitchen backsplashes, double basin bathroom vanities with make-up counters and so much more. Their gourmet kitchens, welcoming great rooms with cozy gas fireplaces and elegant dining rooms with coffered ceilings are all spacious and comfortable, making them the perfect location to enjoy time together with family or entertaining friends. In additional, some models include such impressive extras as classic French doors, transom windows and custom octagonal skylights allowing light to travel throughout the home for a bright and spacious feel.

For their homeowner's convenience, most John Boddy Homes include main or second floor laundry rooms, laundry chutes, kitchen breakfast bars, private water closets, interior garage access, high efficiency furnaces and basement rough-ins for future bathrooms. Also, windows are vinyl clad wood which allows for interior custom colours with a maintenance free exterior. Other features include arched entryways, custom millwork, window mullions on all front and rear facades and decorative garage doors featuring appealing window lites. Custom landscaping packages and paved driveways are also included in all homes providing the renowned curb appeal that enhances the entire 'Eagle Glen' community.

Innovative floorplan designs combined with an extensive array of standard features included with every new home have become a corporate trademark of John Boddy Homes and 'Eagle Glen'. Not only does a John Boddy home offer such striking standard features, there are also a wealth of opportunities to upgrade, making their homes as unique as each individual homeowner. The 'Eagle Glen' Sales Office features a Décor Centre that contains a wide range of upgrade items to select from in order to customize your home. Their high-tech electrical and décor consultants allow homebuyers to make upgrade selections on site, enabling them to conveniently personalize their home.

When you purchase a new home in 'Eagle Glen' there are no hidden closing costs. John Boddy Homes pays for education levies, development charges, water and hydro meter hookup fees, boulevard tree planting, landscape package and a paved driveway.

For a limited time only John Boddy Homes is offering an incentive package including $5,000 in free upgrades and one year of Rogers services for free! Included in this package are home phone with 150 long distance minutes and 2 calling features, personal TV with free rental of a standard definition box, a HD digital box, VIP package, free on demand programming, Canadian timeshifting channels as well as Rogers Hi-Speed internet service and all are installed for free.

The 'Eagle Glen' community offers many important neighbourhood amenities such as a brand new on-site public elementary school, places of worship, fully equipped parks and easy access to both Ajax and Go-Transit Services. Toronto is easily accessible from nearby Highways 401 and 407. Located just north of a host of shopping and recreation centres, 'Eagle Glen' allows residents all the amenities of the urban lifestyle while providing the beauty and tranquility of the neighbouring countryside.

Since 1955, John Boddy has been involved in the construction of thousands of new homes throughout Ontario, and has earned a reputation as an accomplished builder of fine residential communities. Of significance are the award winning 1000-acre 'Bridlewood Community' developed during the 1960's and 1970's in Scarborough, the 'Forestbrook' Community' in Pickering developed in the 1980's, 'Willowcreek' in Peterborough, and 'Eagle Ridge on the Green' in Ajax developed in the 1990's and early 2000's.

The John Boddy Homes' team of experienced management, planners, designers, supervisors, marketing and sales personnel have distinguished themselves by creating innovative and unique designs in truly outstanding communities that meet the needs and desires of today's families.

With five fully furnished model homes to view, a visit to 'Eagle Glen' is a must. Drop by the Sales Presentation Centre located on Stevensgate Drive, north of Rossland Road West, one half kilometre west of Westney Road three kilometres north of Hwy. 401. Sales office hours are Monday through Thursday 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.; Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Holidays 11:00 a.m. to 6:00p.m. Let their friendly knowledgeable staff help you determine which of the many home styles available is perfect for you and your family and get set to join the ever-growing 'Eagle Glen' family community. For more information, please call (905) 619-1777 or visit the website at www.johnboddy-homes.com.

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Beauty and Bollywood

Former Miss Sri Lanka Jacqueline Fernandez

Although her maiden acting venture "Aladdin" didn't fare well at the box office last year, former Miss Sri Lanka, Jacqueline Fernandez, definitely grabbed enough eyeballs. Now her second film releases.

In a telephonic interview with The Hindu Jacqueline speaks about what the industry has felt like thus far; the newspaper says she even cares to put to rest the rumours of the linkup between her and a certain co-star:

"Jaane Kahan Se Aayi Hai (JKSAH) is a good humoured romantic flick. It's all about people looking for love and this is the kind of movie that will be liked and appreciated by all. As far as my role is concerned, I'm going to be playing an alien from Venus," says Jacqueline.

Apart from the fact she was offered an interesting role to play, the Sri Lankan beauty found it was a joy to work with debutant director Milap Zaveri. She explains: "We're both new to the industry and the best part about working with him is that we share the same enthusiasm. He's highly energetic and creative and it is fun working with such a director."

Ask her if she's gotten used to the industry already and pat comes the reply.

"We all enter the world with certain expectations and when we receive much more than we could have ever asked for or even imagined, the feeling is simply wonderful."

She adds: "I live in the moment, taking each day as it comes. I never expected to receive such a warm welcome from people in the industry but here I am doing what I enjoy most."

What one would invariably wonder is how Jacqueline, who has a strong accent and is partly of Malaysian descent, manages to get her lines straight in Hindi. "It hasn't been very easy learning Hindi but I have an excellent tutor who teaches me everyday so my language is definitely improving, although I do have a really long way to go!" she quips.

As rumours have it, Jacqueline is supposedly dating her "Aladdin", co-star Ritesh Deshmukh who again has been cast opposite her in "JKSAH". However, the former beauty queen is quick to clear the air. "First off, just because I'm working with the same co-star again, it doesn't necessarily mean that we are seeing each other. Also, Ritesh wasn't the reason for me doing this film but yes, he's like the cherry on top of the cake!"

Jacqueline will be seen next in a special appearance in Sajid Khan's "Housefull" which is slated to release at the end of April. This movie again will be starring Ritesh Deshmukh!

Goutham thinks 'different' for Ajith

By M. Bharat Kumar

The audience will get to see a 'different' Ajith in my next film. He would sport a different look and would be admired by one and all, says ace director Goutham Menon.

Goutham will be directing Ajith for the latter's 50th film to be produced by Dayanidhi Alagiri. Pre-production work is on and the project would go to floors very soon, says the filmmaker.

Buoyed with the bumper opening for his latest work Vinnai Thaandi Varuvayaa, Goutham says, 'I had a little hesitation when I penned the script for VTV...

There was some doubt in my mind as to whether audience would accept a full-length romantic film. But after its release, I am overwhelmed by the response it has been receiving from everyone'.

Vinnai Thaandi Varuvayaa featured Silambarasan and Trisha in the lead with musical score by A R Rahman. 'Audience relate the incidents in the story with their lives. It has won rave reviews in all southern States', he adds.

Asked whether VTV is based on any real-life incident, Goutham says, 'it is the story of two persons whom I met recently. But I don't want to disclose their identity since I want them to lead a happy life'.

Queried as to whether it intentional on his part to opt for a love theme, he says, 'I keep my mind blank when I conceive a story. I will always ensure that my films are different from each other. I always crave for novel themes'.

VTV is a simple love story that one can relate to quite easily. The cast including Silambarasan, Trisha, Ganesh among others played their part well, he adds.

Heaping laurels on Rahman, he says, 'it was a great joy to work with him. Though he has won several awards and accolades, he is still down-to-earth. It is my eighth film and first with Rahman. He was articulate and amazing'.

To a question on his joining hands with Ajith, he says, 'We are coming together for the first time. It would be a different film made with state-of-the-art technology. Soon the film would go to the floors. We can see a different Ajith'.

Kamal Haasan's open talk

'I still see cinema with surprise. It is full of twists, thrills, sorrow and joy', said actor Kamal Haasan.

Speaking at a function organised to celebrate Aadhavan's 100-day run in Chennai on recently, Kamal Haasan said, 'when my movies release, I wish to catch reaction of the audience.

Their joy on watching my movie gives me immense satisfaction'.

'One thing I would like to emphasise is to put your recent success behind you. This is the most essential mantra', he added. Failures should not deter an actor, Kamal said and recalled that even thespian Sivaji Ganesan had a lean patch in his career as he had 13 consecutive failures in his career at one point of time.

Produced by Udhyanidhi Stalin, Aadhavan featured Suriya, Nayanthara, Saroja Devi, Vadivelu among others in the cast. Directed by K S Ravikumar, the movie had music by Harris Jeyaraj.

All the artists and technicians of the movie were honoured and mementos were given away.

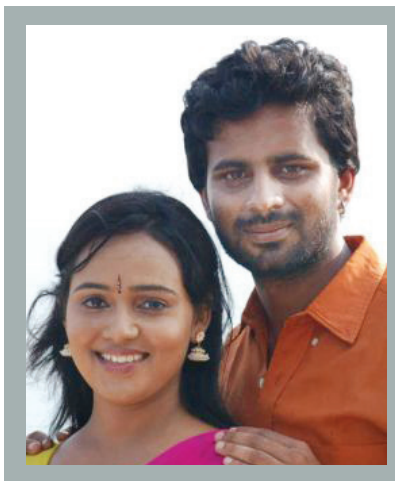
Speakers at the function hailed Udhaynidhi Stalin as a director-friendly producer. As a noble gesture the producer gave away Rs one lakh each to charitable organisations.

Actor - director Parthiban, actresses Nayanthara, Saroja Devi among others took part in the celebrations.

Cine Blitz.....

Getting Ready

After the experience of directing Dhanush in two films, Yaaradi Nee Mohini and Kutty, it must have been a breeze for Mithran K Jawahar to put Dhanush through the paces for the Tamil remake of the Telugu hit Ready. Titled Uthamaputhran, the film has the bubbly Genelia reprising her role from the original.



Real on reel

The story is based on an incident that took place in Madurai about five years ago. And, director Adithyan says hero Sathya and heroine Meenu Karthika have done great work in Aaravam. "The movie has liberal does of romance, but there are lots of twists and turns. Although the story is a village-based one, there is enough substance in it to appeal to every kind of audience," adds the director.

Thinking right

World over, at a time when music labels are floundering under the impact of piracy and free downloads, it is heartening to see a music label making grand plans for marketing its albums in a unique manner. Think Music, from the Sathyam Cinemas stable, recently celebrated its 50th album, Paiyya, by felicitating some composers and singers. James Vasanthan, Thaman S., Karthik Raja, Yuvan Shankar Raja and Dharan spoke of how the label had promoted their music. The audience was treated to live performances by singers such as Harricharan, Madhumita and Benny. And, they have firm plans in place for the future. Says Priya Krishnan, Head-Marketing: "As we go along, we will explore every single avenue to reach music to the end-users."

Busy bee

With `Pesum Poove', sung by Krish and Suchitra, in Mundhinam Paartheney becoming a hit, music director Thaman S is on a high. In fact, sources say that all the songs in the film have been well-received. "I thoroughly enjoyed doing the songs and the background score of Mundhinam Paartheney, where I used a lot of live sounds in both contemporary and traditional styles," says Thaman, currently working on three Telugu films and one as-yetuntitled film in Tamil for director Arivalagan.

Twists and turns

How does a present-day youth tackle his personal and professional problems, especially when love forms a crucial part of his journey? Director K.R. Vishwa provides the answer in his third film Kaathalagi. Hero Krishna Kumar and his love Shrushti go through the usual problems in life and love. But, they tide over them along with supportive friends Ajay, Roshan Nawaz, Amrita and Nachatra. Says Vishwa: "In the olden days, it was quite complicated when you fell in love and your career was also involved. Today's generation has the right attitude and outlook to tackle these problems headon. And, Kaathalagi is all about that." The movie has songs by A.R. Raihana (Rahman's sister) while Thaman S. has scored the background music. ***[Compiled by Nikhil Raghavan-courtesy: The Hindu]***

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India Grapples With Stagnating Food Production

By Anjana Pasricha

Bhupinder Singh grows rice and wheat on his 10-acre farm in Sohian village in India's richest farming state, Punjab. But in recent years his harvests have either been smaller or have stagnated, despite his use of more synthetic fertilizers in the soil.

Singh says he will have to add more bags of urea than he did earlier to improve his crop yield. He says the soil has become weak.

Agriculture scientists blame his predicament largely on overuse of chemical fertilizers, especially urea. In the 1960s, to raise

"THESE UNSUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY BAD GOVERNMENT POLICIES"
scientist M.S. Swaminathan

food production for a populous country, India gave its farmers high yielding varieties of seeds, and heavily subsidized fertilizers to make them affordable for farmers.

The "Green Revolution" transformed agriculture in the northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh. It helped India overcome decades of food scarcity, become the world's second largest producer of wheat and rice, build huge buffer stocks, and even export food grains.

But circumstances have changed dramatically. Farmers are now plagued with degraded soils, depleted ground water, and stagnant crop yields. This is largely because liberal use of nitrogen fertilizers such as urea has disturbed the soil chemistry, robbing it of valuable nutrients. Farmers began relying heavily

In this 1999 file photo, large quantities of wheat are shoveled in Amritsar in India's Punjab region as farmers struggle to sell surplus wheat

on urea in 1991, when subsidies on most other fertilizers were scrapped or reduced, making it the cheapest.

Now farmers are caught in a vicious cycle. They use heavier doses of urea to coax the same yields from their land, but this degrades the soil even more. It also increases the crops' thirst for water, prompting farmers to drill deeper to extract groundwater for irrigation. But as a result groundwater is running out.

Farm scientist M.S. Swaminathan, who helped usher in the "green revolution," says these unsustainable farming practices have been encouraged by bad government policies.

"This region has been doing more or less land mining and water mining. It is no more agriculture, it is mining. Water has gone down and down' said Swaminathan. "Part of it is due to wrong public policy, for example free supply of electricity to pump out more ground water, what I call ecological suicide. That is unnecessarily done for political reasons. Similarly government only subsidizes nitrogenous fertilizer with the result there is no balance in the use of fertilization," Swaminathan added.

There have been numerous calls to rollback the fertilizer subsidies, and levy electricity charges on farmers. But successive governments have been reluctant to anger farmers who form a huge voting bloc.

Now, the government has announced a new subsidy program starting in April to encourage farmers to use a better mix of nutrients. But urea may continue to be liberally sprinkled, because the subsidy on it remains intact, although its price has been raised marginally.

Environmental groups have been urging farmers to dramatically change the way they grow food, and switch to more environmentally friendly practices that will conserve the land. A study conducted by Greenpeace International and Viswa Bharati University indicated that farmers would prefer to use organic fertilizers if they were easily available and affordable.

"We asked them, these 700 farmers, if they would use organic fertilizers if they were as economical as synthetic, and 82 or 83 percent said yes they would use organic fertilizers because they know they are better for the soil if they were as economical as chemical," said Reyes Tirado, an agriculture scientist and researcher for Greenpeace. "They want to take care of their soil, soil is the most valuable resource they have."

Other problems also plague the agricultural sector. Farmers say they get too low a price for their crops, making farming unprofitable. Some fear changes in temperature and rain patterns could also diminish agricultural output.

The looming agriculture crisis poses a huge challenge for a populous country. Last year, food prices rose by nearly 19 percent, and crops such as lentils and sugar had to be imported.

There is also widespread concern that the decline in India's farm sector is not getting sufficient attention .

But Swaminathan points out that policymakers cannot afford to ignore the agriculture

"THERE IS THE GLAMOUR OF THE GROWTH RATE, INDIA SHINING. BUT THE FACT REMAINS AGRICULTURE IN INDIA IS NOT JUST A FOOD-PRODUCING MACHINE. IT IS THE BACKBONE OF THE LIVELIHOOD SECURITY SYSTEM OF 700 MILLION PEOPLE"

sector in a predominantly rural country.

"There is the glamour of the growth rate, India shining. But the fact remains agriculture in India is not just a food-producing machine. It is the backbone of the livelihood security system of 700 million people, women and children and this has to be realized," Swaminathan said.

Swaminathan, along with many others, is urging the government to usher in a second green revolution that would be ecologically sustainable, and ensure sufficient food for a country whose population is projected to reach 1.5 billion by 2040.

[VOA News]

Bangladesh to Hold Trials for 1971 War Crimes

By Steve Herman

Bangladesh, four decades after the violent struggle that led to independence from Pakistan, is planning to hold trials for those accused of committing war crimes. The plans for what could be highly sensitive war crimes trials come as Bangladesh celebrated its its 39th anniversary of declaring independence from Pakistan on Mar 26th.

Bangladesh officials say those facing trial allegedly sided with Pakistan during the 1971 war of liberation. The government says defendants will be tried for crimes against humanity, genocide, murder, rape and arson.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed, speaking to VOA's Bangla language service, says justice has been a long time coming.

Ahmed says the long-held expectations of Bangladeshis for the tribunal are about to be fulfilled. He notes that the parties in the government, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, campaigned on a platform of bringing war criminals to justice.

Ms. Hasina's father, Bangladesh's founder and independence war hero, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had intended to hold such trials before he was assassinated in a 1975 coup.

Prime Minister Hasina has long contended some of those behind the coup would have faced trial for war crimes. The subsequent government freed more than 10,000 war crime suspects.

There are concerns, however, the tribunal

"ALL EYES ARE ON BANGLADESH. THIS IS A PRETTY INCREDIBLE AND IMPORTANT STEP FOR THEM. THIS HAS BEEN A LONG-STANDING DEMAND BY COUNTLESS BANGLADESHIS. BANGLADESH SHOULD BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO PROVE THAT IT'S WILLING TO PLAY BY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS WITH THE JUDICIAL PROCESS"

could be used to extract revenge on opponents of the governing Awami League.

International Crisis Group Senior Asia Analyst Michael Shaikh, speaking from Chiang Mai, Thailand, tells VOA nearly all Bangladeshi governments have used the judiciary to get at political opponents.

"However, in this case, I think all eyes are on Bangladesh. This is a pretty incredible and important step for them. This has been a long-standing demand by countless Bangladeshis. Bangladesh should be given a chance to prove that it's willing to play by international standards with the judicial process," he said.

Tens of thousands of people in what was then East Pakistan took up arms to oppose Bangladeshi independence. Others who expressed loyalty to Pakistan were deemed as collaborators but were granted amnesty following the war.

The war - in which India, located between West and East Pakistan, provided financial aid and military support for the rebels - is believed to have left three million people dead.

Bangladesh says millions of people were displaced by the nine-month guerilla conflict and 200,000 women were raped. Rights groups have also alleged "ethnic cleansing" that targeted East Pakistan's Hindu minority.

Pakistan contends the issue of war crimes was settled in a 1974 treaty signed by it, Bangladesh and India.

Officials say the tribunal will be led by three judges, including a High Court justice.

The chairman, Justice Nizamul Huq Nasim, told the Daily Star newspaper in Dhaka the trials will be held in a way so that "the real culprits, and not a single innocent person, are punished."

The trials, which could begin as early as April, are to be conducted by a 12-member panel of government-appointed lawyers.

[VOA News]

A New Vision of Multiculturalism in Canada

By Samsul Islam

Canada's embrace of multiculturalism is the reason why I migrated here from my native Bangladesh 15 years ago. As a social and political activist I have come to realize that our lofty vision of multiculturalism has stagnated and is unraveling.

The response of our political leadership is disappointing. One group is trying to prop-up multiculturalism without a constructive plan to enhance its core values while another group is bent on tearing it apart ignoring it's current relevance.

Reviving the spirit of multiculturalism requires us to recognize that Canada is a nation of minorities without any distinct ethnic majority. The term 'visible' minority' is nevertheless deployed; some might say, to trap and hold recent immigrants in ethnic and cultural enclaves, ghettoes, if you wish. The term 'visible minority' stifles political participation. It invites immigrants to participate as citizens but only to sing, dance in colorful costumes and serve up spicy dishes.

Meanwhile, a so-called 'majority' flourishes politically and economically. Even though this majority is made up of Anglo-Saxons, Irish, French, Russians, Romanians, Italians, Greek Canadians, common ethnic features and a shared belief system unite them. Comfortably ensconced in the upper echelons of our society it is not surprising they're unwilling to alter the status quo.

A multiculturalism premised on a majority-minority bifurcation undermines the cherished ideals of our liberal democracy particularly the values of equality enshrined in our Charter. This is not what millions of us signed up for when we chose Canada.

The first step in reviving the ideals of multiculturalism is to expunge from our discourse notions of 'minority' and 'majority'. These categories are racist and they distort our collective commitment to citizenship.

Worst, by insisting on casting citizens into groups of minority and majority, newcomers find themselves trapped in a system of structural discrimination when it comes to issues of settlement, employment and social mobility. Today, we are witnessing the rise of ethnic ghettos in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver . Instead of taking the path of cultural tolerance and social inclusion our current brand of multiculturalism has us on the road of cultural intolerance and social exclusion.

Samsul Islam

Immigrants are asked to be grateful for the privilege of living in Canada while accepting that they may never achieve the social and political status of the entrenched majority.

New immigrants who get jobs face a glass ceiling in their respective professions that restricts their professional growth. There is little or no representation of immigrants in various professional areas and this has eroded the confidence of those who are considered to have been ' successful'. Complaints, however legitimate, are perceived as 'whining' by immigrants.

However, by not utilizing the talent among newcomers, Canada's political leaders are not only digging all us deeper into the economic recession but it will negatively impact 'visible minority' communities already suffering high unemployment and inappropriate employment.

Second generation Canadian university and college graduates are forced to settle for dead-end jobs with minimum wage. Migration to the US is on the rise. In the current global recession recent immigrants are agonized by the prospects their Canadian born children who are graduating from colleges and universities with top grades, will not find good jobs with decent wages at home.

To save multiculturalism much work has to be done at the local level. Our social assistance program must be reformed because the present system is in tatters and it will continue to trap generations to come in a cauldron of poverty and depression. We are already witnessing the fact that some ethnic groups are over-represented in the criminal justice system.

Our immigration system must be reformed on the basis of scientific, productive and effective criteria. We can't justify draining the talent from the developing world only to have highly educated men and women arrive in Canada to do menial jobs and live from pay cheque to pay cheque.

Canada is a great country and a land of opportunity but if the doors of opportunity remains shut for large segments of recent immigrants Canada will never experience its true potential. We need to reinvest in a vibrant notion of multiculturalism, one that is suited for the 21st century.

Index: Democracies Decline in Quality, Not Number

By Suzanne Presto

A new study finds the number of democracies in the world remained relatively stable in the past few years, but the quality of democracy appears to be deteriorating.

The Bertelsmann Foundation Transformation Index, or BTI, measures the progress made by 128 developing and transition countries as they move toward democracy and a market-oriented economy.

Sabine Donner is one of the BTI's senior project managers. She says of these 128 countries, 76 meet the requirements to be considered democracies. This is based on the robustness of their established power structure, political freedoms, system of checks and balances, civic culture and such.

But, Donner cautions, not all democracies are equal. Of the 76 democracies studied in this report, for every well-functioning democracy, there are two that fall short. She says 23 of these democracies do not display any significant deficiencies.

"The remaining 53 countries, though, are classified as so-called defective democracies. In these countries, political and civil rights and effective separation of powers are not adequately ensured, although relatively free and fair elections are held," she said.

And, she says, 16 of these nations, including Russia, Haiti and Kenya, have what she termed "significant problems" with the rule of law.

"They have a limited equality of opportunity for voices of opposition and only conditionally representative political structures," said Donner. "As a result, those are the countries that are classified as highly deficient, and let's say some of them on the brink toward autocracies,"she added.

The study says experts observed autocratic tendencies in Russia and Venezuela; the erosion of the rule of law in Nicaragua and South Africa; and the violent ousting of democratically elected governments in places such as Thailand and Mauritania.

Bertelsmann's experts say, at first glance, there is nothing to suggest that a shift toward autocracy is under way. Still, Donner says there is more going on beneath the surface.

"The proportion of highly defective democracies has grown by - has doubled actually. In other words, although the number of democracies remains stable, the quality of several political systems is showing significant erosion," said Donner.

According to the BTI, five highly defective democracies are in Latin America - Haiti, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia and Ecuador. Five are in Africa - Burkina Faso, Kenya, Angola, Lesotho and Burundi. Four are in Asia - Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Philippines, and there is also Russia.

In the Middle East, Iraq has the perhaps dubious distinction of being the region's lone highly defective democracy. Hauke Hartmann, also a senior project manager on this index, explains about Iraq, which just held its second national election since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

"Iraq is for the first time ever in the BTI considered to be a democracy - a highly unstable democracy, a very deficient democracy, but yet a democracy. The extent of stability is sufficient to label the country as such," said Hartmann.

Hartmann calls the Middle East a "zone of fragility." He says Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, as well as South Asia's Pakistan and Afghanistan, are considered fragile or even failing states.

"The situation in Afghanistan, as you all know, is particularly grim," he said. "This is of course due to the security situation as President [Hamid] Karzai can only claim to be the mayor of Kabul and is certainly not able to claim the monopoly on the use of force in most of the country's provinces," said Hartmann.

Donner says as democracy erodes, the effect can be seen on core institutions of political participation, such as media freedom.

Donner said this is the first time in the BTI's 15 years that analysts observed what she called a "drastic decline" in freedom of expression in some countries.

"There are countries in every world region where the freedom of the press, freedom of opinion has declined significantly," Donner said.

She said many African countries suffer from these setbacks, but she stressed it is actually a global trend.

The analysts noted that the assessment period lasted from early 2007 to early 2009, and it was during this time that a long period of economic growth ended. The analysts say governments tend to abandon reforms when countries' economies appear to be strong.

[voa news]

In the Southwest USA, There's a Nation Within a Nation

By Ted Landphair

The largest tribe of American Indians lives on a 6-million-hectare patch of desert and scrub brush that covers much of northern Arizona and New Mexico. They are the Navajo - often spelled Navaho - whose ancestors walked that land at least a century, perhaps many centuries, before the first Europeans arrived.

The Navajo Nation has its own elders, laws, tribal government, and police force that is vigilant at enforcing speed limits. The Navajos have their own red-rock tribal park, called Monument Valley, that's every bit as spectacular as U.S. national parks elsewhere in the Southwest.

Passing through the Navajo Nation, one sees tiny, isolated cabins and a few traditional hogans, which are log-and mud structures whose doorways face the morning sun.

Out back, you'll often see small flocks of sheep or goats being herded by riders on horseback. The goat, sheep, and horse were all introduced by the Spanish, who sent missionaries into the area as early as 1630 and armies soon thereafter.

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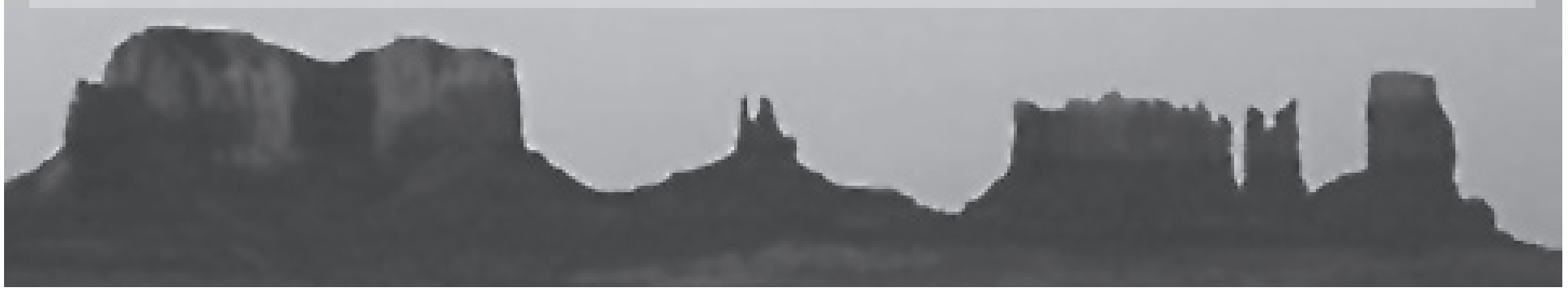
The Navajo have many heroes, including warriors who fought efforts by the U.S. Army to force them from their homes and onto a miserable reservation more than a century ago. Heroes of more recent vintage include the Navajo Code Talkers. They were tribal members who came up with an unbreakable code in their complex language that was adopted by American forces in the Pacific during World War II and used to confound the Japanese.

But the Navajo homeland is harsh country, where it's hard to find good-paying jobs and all too easy to fall sway to alcoholism and despair. As a result, many young Navajos have left to seek work in big cities throughout the Southwest. Others, though, have forged rewarding careers in tribal schools, small businesses, and a big, new, thriving hotel in Monument Valley.

[VOA News]



The Navajo tribal park called Monument Valley is a stunningly beautiful, yet also stark and forbidding, place. Pic by Carol M. Highsmith

Former Financial Analyst Teaches Math on YouTube for Free

Rachel Silverman

A 33-year-old financial analyst in California recently quit his job to devote himself to an unpaid job teaching math on the Internet, and his lessons are reaching almost 100,000 people a month. In this week's edition of Making a Difference, we introduce you to Salman Khan and his http://www.khanacademy.org/ and the difference they make for people who struggle to learn math.

Salman Khan's disembodied voice is heard every day - by tens of thousands of students around the world who are hungry for help learning math. He has posted 1,200 lessons on YouTube...lessons that appear on an electronic blackboard, and range from basic addition and advanced calculus to science and finance. And they are free.

"Introduction to Trigonometry is where I teach people about the trig functions," he explained. "This is one of the more popular videos. This has 179,000 views. And you know this is just what sine, cosine, and tangent are.

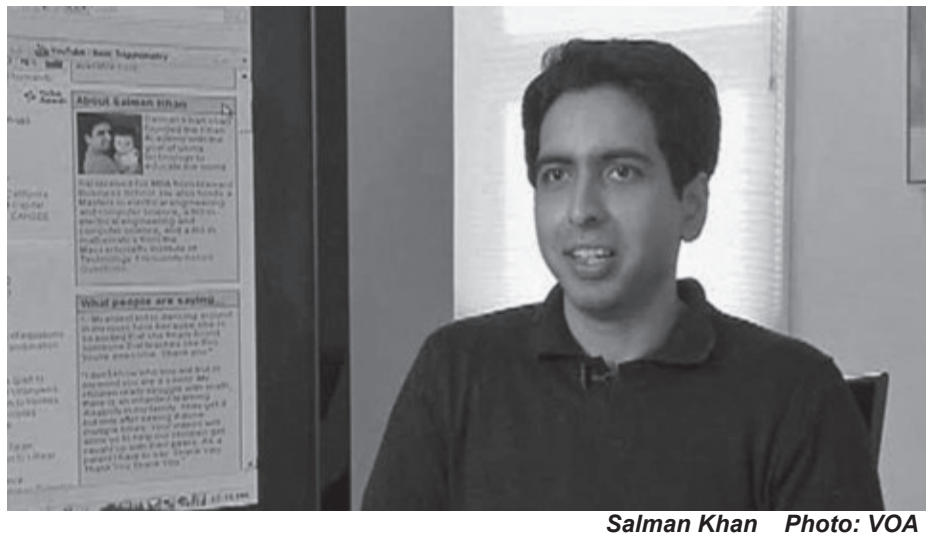
Salman Khan lives in California's Silicon Valley, with his wife, a rheumatologist in training at Stanford University, and their new baby. He got the idea for Khan Academy four years ago, when he taught a young cousin how to convert kilograms to grams. With Khan's help, the cousin got good at math, and Khan launched a new career.

Now, Khan records his lessons from a converted closet in the back of his bedroom. He never goes on camera.

"It kind of feels like my voice in their head. You're looking at it and feels like someone's over your shoulder talking in your ear, as opposed to someone at the blackboard, that's distant from you," he said.

When the all-girl Castilleja School in Palo Alto, California invited Khan to speak in person - he immediately connected to the students there.

The concept of short lessons that can be played over and over again attracted high school senior Bridget Meaney. She says she had trouble with seventh grade algebra. "I think the teachers are good, but they can't go at a pace that's perfect for everyone," she said. "But I like the concept of knowing something in class but then going back and pressing pause or rewind and actually getting a deeper understand of it."



Salman Khan Photo: VOA

Originally, Khan kept his lessons short because of YouTube restrictions. Now, he thinks short is better.

"I've gotten researchers telling me that you don't realize 10 minutes [we've done studies] is how long someone can have a high level of concentration. And anything beyond that you kind of lose it. I think that we've all had that experience sitting in college where you can be with the professor for about 10 or 15 minutes and then you kind of lose it," he said.

For Khan, teaching math, science, and finance is just the beginning. He says he's ready to expand his YouTube site to include other subjects as well.

[VOA News]

Gadhafi: Split Nigeria to End Violence

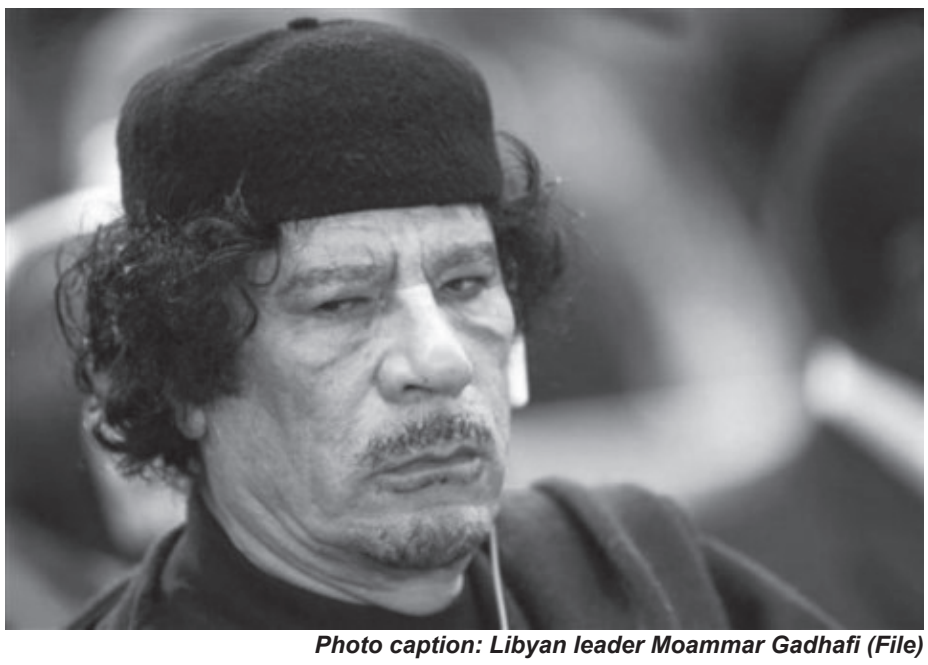


Photo caption: Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi (File)

Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi has suggested that Nigeria be divided into separate Muslim and Christian states to prevent future sectarian violence.

Libya's JANA news agency reported Tuesday that Mr. Gadhafi made the remarks at a meeting in Tripoli with African student leaders, some of them from Nigeria.

He said a partition of Nigeria would save the lives of Muslims and Christians and prevent the destruction of mosques and churches.

Nigeria has experienced periodic bouts of Muslim-Christian violence, most often in the central city of Jos. The most recent incident occurred March 7, when Muslim herders killed hundreds of people in mainly Christian villages.

The country of about 150 million is split almost evenly between the two religions.

Mr. Gadhafi recently completed a year-long term as head of the African Union and frequently portrays himslf as a leader and adviser of the continent.

He says Nigeria's situation resembles that of the Indian peninsula before 1947, at which point that region was split into predominantly Muslim Pakistan and mainly Hindu India.

The Libyan leader suggested northern Nigeria be a Muslim state with Abuja as the capital, while southern Nigeria be a Christian state with a capital of Lagos. He urged former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to lead efforts for a Christian state.

Mr. Gadhafi said any partition of land and resources should happen through agreement, not bloodshed.

[VOA News]

Connecting Families" Project Launch

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) launched its Connecting Families project on Wednesday, March, 17, 2010 at Scarborough Civic Centre in response to the thousands of families in the North-East who need help rebuilding their lives in the wake of the devastating war on the island of Sri Lanka. Up to 10,000 families or individuals either have lost the breadwinner of the household, lost a vital body organ, or are orphaned or all of the above.

Community members, leaders and journalists packed the rotunda at the Civic Centre to listen to CTC urge Tamil Canadians to open their hearts and help these families in need. The event took place from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and featured several speakers from CTC.

CTC explained that the families in Canada would directly help the families in the North-East and no funds would come to CTC. A Tamil family in Canada would 'adopt' a family in the North-East in order to help families restart their lives again.

CTC explained the number of families who need help will probably increase as more civilians are released from Internally Displacement Persons (IDPs) camps.

Members of the public asked questions about the projects and also signed up to help.

CTC also explained the information about the families came from hospitals, local social welfare associations, church-based orphanages and senior care centers on the island.

For more information, please contact 416.240.0078 or visit http://www.canadiantamilcongress.ca/connectingfamilies/.

Karygiannis says The Greater Toronto Job Fair attracted thousands of job seekers

The Honourable Jim Karygiannis, Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Agincourt, believes The Greater Toronto Job Fair, held yesterday, is an innovative way to help find 'local solutions for national problems'.

"Three thousand two hundred people, many of them my constituents, attended the Job Fair looking for work." said Mr. Karygiannis. "Many people are hurting due to the economic crisis. They lost their jobs through no fault of their own."

The event was a multi-faceted approach to looking for employment - participants networked with prospective employers, training schools and community partners to discuss employment opportunities and options; obtained resume-building advice; and, applied for currently available local jobs.

"I was pleased when the principals of GTA Jobs and Careers asked me to lend my support to this Job Fair." Mr. Karygiannis commented. "Yesterday's attendance was overwhelming and just proves the need for jobs is great. This is what the Harper Conservatives should be doing, not making empty promises and giving jobs to their friends."

Some of the exhibitors are shown here mostly when Hon. Jim Karygiannis, MP along with Thesa Theiventhiran and Bill Redwood of GTA Job Fair visited their booths.

Even With Green Light, Foreign Universities May Not Rush to Build in India

By Steve Herman

Legislation that would allow foreign universities to set up in India may not create a rush among top-flight colleges to establish campuses in the world's second most populous nation.

India's Cabinet has given its nod to allowing accredited universities from abroad to set up in the country. That might help keep some of the India's brightest at home and allow others, who cannot get seats in existing schools, to obtain a top-quality global-level education.

At present, about 160,000 Indians are studying overseas, spending an estimated $4 billion annually.

The bill is expected to be sent to the Parliament within weeks.

Some academic experts predict America's Ivy League and other elite universities will not, however, rush to India. Many schools have suffered setbacks amid the global economic downturn after establishing campuses in the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere in the Middle East in the 1990s.

During an appearance at the Asian Corporate Conference in New Delhi, U.S. Ambassador Timothy Roemer agreed that might give American colleges pause about further overseas expansion.

"Maybe instead of building campuses, maybe they're going to start by partnering with India, which India has considered very carefully in this bill, which is a good thing," he said. "Maybe instead of bricks and mortars they're going to do distance learning and use technology."

Media reports here say another aspect of the proposed legislation that could severely limit the number of foreign colleges in India is fees and other mandated costs totaling more than $70 million for each foreign school wanting to have a physical presence in the country.

Some critics contend the educational sector where India most critically needs international cooperation is at the primary and secondary level.

To that end, the World Bank has announced it is providing a $1 billion soft loan to India for education. The money, specifically, is to be used to increase the number of children enrolling in and graduating from elementary school. About one-third of the loan is to be used to improve the quality of engineering education.

Under a 2002 constitutional amendment, every Indian child has a fundamental right to education. The reality is that millions of children in the country do not go to school. And many classrooms are that in name only. Some have no teachers or lack even the most basic supplies.

World Bank officials say the billion-dollar loan will help by focusing on teacher training, as well as providing free textbooks and other learning materials.

India's economy is booming and its infrastructure is being rapidly upgraded but the country suffers from a severe skills shortage, especially with infrastructure development and information technology.

The World Bank money devoted to technical education is meant to support 200 engineering institutions and improve research and development at those schools.

[VOA News]

photo courtesy: flickr.com

Chinese Graduates Grow Restless in Beijing's Low-Cost 'Ant Colony'

By Peter Simpson

On the outskirts of China's capital Beijing is a bustling ghetto dubbed the ant colony - a vast community of young professionals forced to live in tough conditions because of a tight job market and rocketing property prices.

Hugging a heater for warmth, 23-year-old Fu Ming surveys the small cell-like room she calls home. She admits it is not quite the life she envisaged after graduating from university as a computer programmer.

She is one of around 50,000 living in Beijing's so-called ant colony - a community of young, educated professionals forced to live in cramped but cheap conditions on the fringes of a suburb called Tangjialing.

Fu Ming, from Inner Mongolia, moved to Beijing in search of a career two years ago. But success has been hard to find. She makes the long commute to a low-paid job - the average wage for a university graduate is around $320 a month - from the shanty town because rents in the city are too expensive.

She says she gets up at 5.30 a.m. and gets to the office via the bus and subway, and she gets home around 9 p.m. Fu says she can not afford to move nearer to work, and that she would like to buy a house.

Fu's room only has one window, which looks onto the dark narrow corridor. The rooms have no running water or air conditioning, but they do have heat and a hot plate for cooking. Laundry is strong along the walls.

Passers-by peer in, adding to the prison atmosphere. But she says she is lucky because she can afford the 300 rmb rent. As many as four tenants are crammed into some rooms.

There is Internet access for those who can afford it, but a television is a luxury Fu cannot afford. She writes a blog about her life in the ghetto and

e-mails friends and family detailing her disappointment and "empty feelings".

Tangjialing has become an example of the paradox of China's fast-paced economy.

After expanding universities in the 1980's, China now has more than six million graduates a year, but there are not enough well-paid jobs to go round.

Considered over qualified in their hometowns, the graduates flock to the big cities like Beijing and Shanghai - only to discover they must share bunk beds and rent Spartan rooms to survive. Their dreams of the urban middle-class lifestyle are put on hold.

Just over two years ago, Tangjialing ago was a rural village of 3.000. But the farmers cashed in on the need for affordable housing and hastily built two and three story dormitories, often illegally. Few of the complexes have fire escapes and other safety measures.

But Fu's home and those of her peers are under threat.

Concerned about the bad image of young university graduates living in slums and the resentment it could foster, the authorities plan to demolish Tiangjialing. They say the area needs to be rebuilt and promise low cost, modern housing for the ant tribe.

The issue has been deemed politically sensitive, however, and officials are reluctant to talk. But many of the "ants" are growing restless. They agree the place is a slum. But as migrant workers, they do not posses the important Beijing hukou registration papers that entitle them to subsidized housing.

Every Chinese is entitled to social security - but only in their home cities, towns and villages.

Computer engineer Zhou Hung is from Hunan and he says life is hard in Beijing without a hukou. Many fellow workers are priced out of the city. He says that he arrived last March with a group of about 30, but now only five or six of them are still here. The rest all left. He says work is hard to find and their expenses are rather high yet the wages are low.

He says if they demolish his home, he will return to his hometown, even though he has no prospects there.

He says he feels hopeless but he thinks the wrecking ball will anger the locals. He says he does not think the government can enforce demolition on the landlords. The landlords will protest because they earn a living.

But it is not all doom and gloom.

There is a good community spirit up and down the corridors. Many residents extend their university life by sharing a room with classmates.

House hunters and university friends Li Yu, Wang Xin and Wnag Yuan, from Shanxi province, are optimistic.

Wang says the buildings are OK and the security is good. If the price is reasonable she will try to live here for a long time. Her work is quite nearby.

Back in her room, Fu Ming says she will try to stay another year to see if her prospects improve. She props a piece of cardboard to block out stares from passersby and says she will make some pretty curtains when she gets the time.

[VOA News]

Burma's New Election Law Called 'A Sham'

By Susan Yackee

A prominent human rights group says Burma's newly issued election laws are designed to exclude the main opposition party from participation and ensure a victory for the ruling military junta.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) says the new election regulations issued earlier this month are designed to deny participation by opposition groups.

"It's quite predictable," says HRW's Elaine Pearson of the apparent intent of new election laws. Pearson, the Deputy Director of HRW's Asia Division in New York, says the Burmese government's legal maneuver "continues this kind of sham political process," she adds.

The laws bar prisoners from being members of political parties. HRW says the law effectively bans more than 2,100 political activists currently imprisoned on politically motivated charges -- including Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy.

The laws require political parties to expel members who are imprisoned or face loss of its registration credentials, a move that would remove offending parties from participation in the elections.

Various governments and organizations have denounced Burma's new election laws, but Pearson says what is really needed is for Burma's allies to speak out.

"The message should be coming from those that have traditionally protected Burma," says Pearson. She calls for a response from China, India and the ASEAN organization.

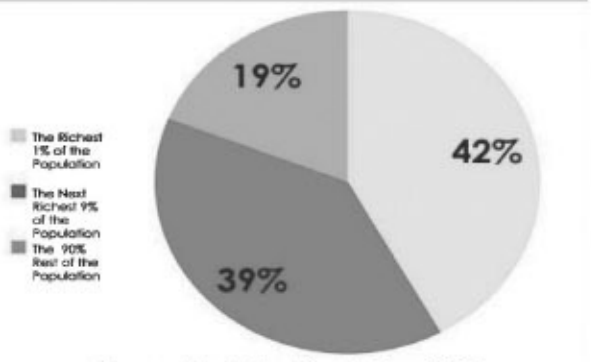
Pearson says Burma's leaders should release all political prisoners and that an "inclusive" political process is necessary for the elections to be recognized as credible by the rest of the world.

Photo caption: Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other activists are excluded from participation under new laws governing elections slated for later this year. *[VOA News]*

India, China Climb on Forbes' Super Rich List

India and China may still be considered developing countries, but that has not stopped them from producing some of the world's richest people.

The annual list of richest people published by the U.S. magazine Forbes says China has 54 billionaires, more than any country outside the United States.



Source: U. of CA at Santa Cruz (2007 Data)

And although India has fewer billionaires than China, they are richer. Indian industrialists Mukesh Ambani and Lakshmi Mittal are among the world's top five richest people.

Forbes named Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim the world's richest person. The telecommunications mogul boasts a fortune worth $53.5 billion. Microsoft founder, American Bill Gates, is in second place with an estimated $53 billion.

Both India and China doubled the number of billionaires they had a year ago, driven in large part by rebounding stock markets.

Russia's super rich also showed signs of recovery from the global economic slump. The number of billionaires in the country nearly doubled to 62.

[VOA News]

WORDS OF PEACE

About Knowing

When it comes to experiencing peace in life, people need a practical experience, not just definitions, says Maharaji, who travels the world to speak about the potential within everyone for fulfillment.

"Man has gone to the moon," he says, "but hasn't brought peace on the face of this earth. The formula people use is: 'If we want to have peace, let's have a war.' There are a million explanations out there about why this is correct, but there's no one saying there's something wrong with it."

Peace, Maharaji says, is never going to be achieved through politics. He talks about a different understanding of what real peace is.

"Peace begins with each one of us," he says. "Each one of us has to experience peace in our lives—not in words, not in concepts, not in ideas, but in reality. We need to experience peace every single day. The peace I'm talking about is the peace that people can experience even if they are caught in the middle of a war."

Explaining what peace is, he says, is akin to talking about water to a thirsty person.

"Imagine a man lost in the desert," he says. "He's thirsty. He's weak. It has come to a point where he cannot walk. He can only crawl.

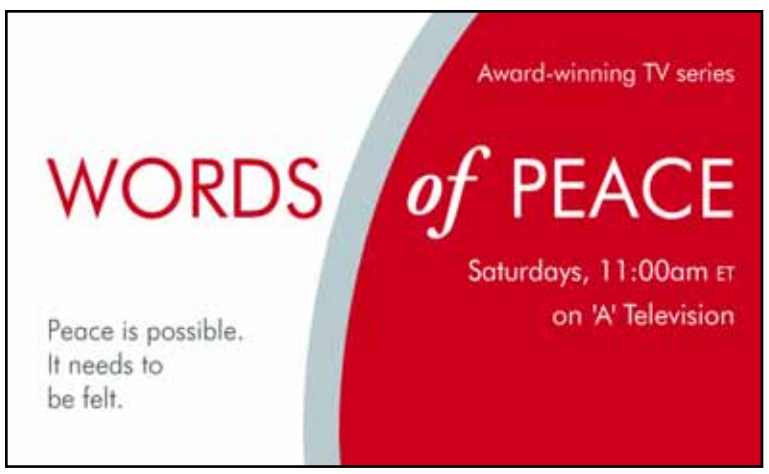
"All of a sudden, this man sees three people standing in front of him. He asks the first person for water, and that person says, 'Let me tell you about your last lifetime.'

"Does the thirsty man want a conversation? He doesn't have enough strength even for that.

"He looks to the second person and asks for water. That person says, 'Let me tell you what'll happen to you after you die.'

"Basically, that's what the thirsty man is trying to avoid. He may feel he wants to hit that guy on the head. He's dying of thirst. That's why he's asking for water.

"Now there's just the third person left. He asks for water, and that third person says, 'Sure, here it is.'"



Who in this story, Maharaji asks, saves the day?

"Suppose the first one said he was going to tell that man about the swimming pool he had in his home during his previous lifetime—how much it could hold, and how it was always filled with gallons and gallons of water. He doesn't want to be told about water in that situation. What he wants is to drink water.

"Suppose the second one says he was going to tell that man how much water he will have after he dies. Was that what the man needed? No, he needed water.

"In fact, if the thirsty man had first asked for water from the person who gave it to him, would he even have gone on to the second person and the third? What would have been the point?

"What are you searching for?" Maharaji asks. "What are you looking for in your life? We look for explanations when it's not about explanations. Thirsty people don't need to explain why they need water, do they? Do we need to explain to a thirsty person that he needs water? Why not? It's obvious.

"How can we possibly be content with explanations, when reality is what we need? Yet so many people in this world are content with explanations."

Fulfillment, Maharaji says, is to know peace. It's not a matter of belief.

"I am about knowing," he says, "not about believing. The world is about believing. I tell believers to know. That's what I do. There are many people who hear me, but don't believe me. There are people in total disbelief.

"This is where knowing comes in. I'm talking about knowing your self—to know this life. What is being said is that what we're looking for is inside of us. End of discussion. It's not hypothetical. If anyone is interested in knowing, then there is a way to know. That's how simple it is."

To learn more about Maharaji, visit:

www.wopg.org

www.tprf.org

Watch 'Words of Peace' on Sturdays at 11.00 a.m on A-Channell

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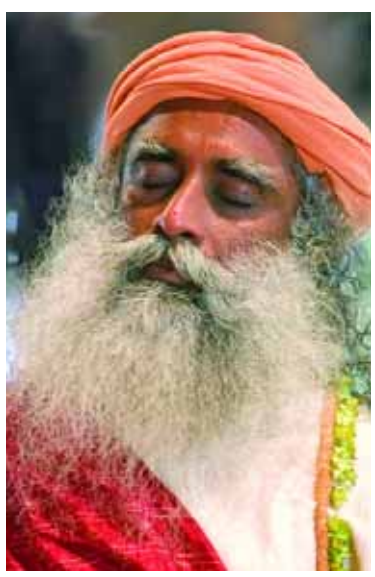
Life Afresh With Children

Your child should do something that you did not even dare to think of in your life.

The first thing to do when bringing up a child is not to touch your children, not to influence their minds with your distorted minds. That is the first step you need to take. Yes, the child can get exposed to many other rotten minds, the possibility is very much there, because they are everywhere in the world. You cannot isolate him totally from that.

Now you are asking: "What should I do? What should my child's education be? How should I bring him up? How should I guide him?" You just encourage him to be intelligent, to be aware. Every being has been given the necessary intelligence to fulfill his life. An ant is born, you study it and see. It has all the intelligence to live an ant's life fully. It may not be able to do what you are doing, but as an ant, the necessary intelligence for being an ant is there for it. The same goes for every creature. You too have the necessary intelligence to live your life to the fullest.



Sadhguru Vasudev is a realized master, yogi and mystic, who has founded Isha Foundation, an international public service organization that strives for ultimate human well-being. For world-wide program information, visit www.ishafoundation.org Toronto local contact 1-866-424-ISHA (4742) or email Toronto@ishafoundation.org

Now, the problem is that you want your child to be intelligent your way, not his. Your idea of intelligence is that your child should become a doctor. Maybe he would have made a wonderful carpenter, but you want him to become a doctor. Not because doctors are needed in the world, not because you care so much to relieve the suffering that you want your child to dedicate himself as a doctor, but simply because you have a stupid idea in your head that in the social structure, a doctor or an engineer means some kind of prestige or some nonsense for you: "My child is a doctor!" You want to live your life through your children. This is a sure way to destroy children. This is a definite way to destroy children.

Your child need not do what you did in life. Your child should do something that you did not even dare to think of in your life. You did not have the courage to even nurture a thought like that - your child should do that - only then this world will progress and something will happen, isn't it?

Every child does have the necessary intelligence to live his life fully. You just create an atmosphere for him to grow into his intelligence, rather than imposing your nonsense upon him. When it comes to influencing him, the teachers will have a role, his friends, other sections of the society will have some influence on him. You can't help it; you cannot build a sanatorium for your child, but still, as a parent, you can play a very important role in allowing the child's intelligence to bloom.

First of all, if you have come to the idea that when a child is born, it is time to teach, then you will ruin the child. When a child comes into your life, it is a time to learn, because you have missed much in your life and so much of you has become distorted. Now, a child is just looking at life. You sit with him and look at life afresh. The only thing that you can do to your child is to give him love and support; his intelligence will grow. That is all. Create a loving atmosphere for him where intelligence will naturally flower.

People understand that to bring up a child lovingly means to get him everything that he asks for. If you look at your child with intelligence, do you see that getting him everything that he asks for is sheer stupidity? To this, you have given the name "love". So how should you bring up a child? In whichever situation he is put, he should be able to live joyously, isn't it? That is the way he should be brought up.

If you want to bring up your child well, the first thing is that you should be happy. Right now, you, by yourself, do not know how to be happy. Everyday in your house, there is a demonstration of tension, anger, fear, anxiety and jealousy. Only these things are being demonstrated to your child. What will happen to him? He will learn only this. If you really have the intention of bringing up your child well, you must first change your way of being. If you are incapable of transforming yourself, where is the question of you bringing up your child?

MONSOON FEATURE

Canadian Loonie on the Flight to Reach Parity with the US Greenback

by Arun Senathirajah
ACIB, MBA (Banking Mgmt)

Canadian dollar nick named 'Loonie' last reached parity with the U.S. dollar (called greenback) in September 2007 on the back of rising commodity prices. On March 18, 2010 the US dollar/Canadian dollar cross was consolidating around the $1.01 mark. The currency's road to 20-month highs has been helped by firm commodity prices, such as important Canadian export oil, and a growing sense that the Bank of Canada might raise interest rates sooner rather than later as economic data such as jobs numbers and trade data continue to top forecasts. Rallying for an eleventh straight session on Friday, March 12, 2010 the Canadian dollar is homing in on parity with the greenback, a level it has not seen since July 2008. Scotia Capital currency strategist SachaTihanyi has said 'The focus is now on a USD/CAD move towards parity, which we think will be achieved in the near-term.'

Economic Growth

The Canadian dollar rebounded following late January's broad based USD buying surge, and was the second best performing major currency through the month of February. With the recently released Q4 Canadian GDP data and a more hawkish sounding Bank of Canada, USDCAD to sustainably trade to parity by the end of Q2 has strengthened. Canada's recovery appears to be rather broad-based and supported by solid gains in domestic demand and a dynamic recovery taking place in the export sector as US economic growth begins to buoy demand for Canadian products. Continuing strong economic data will ultimately serve to boost the Canadian dollar against the USD as fundamentals are more favourable in Canada than in the US. This increases the likelihood that markets price more aggressive Canadian monetary policy tightening into USDCAD than Federal Reserve tightening. Though we maintain our view that the Bank of Canada and Federal Reserve remain on hold until the third quarter of this year, markets may move up their expectations for the Bank of Canada on strong Canadian economic data. The longer term attractiveness of Canadian assets is also proving CAD supportive as relative fiscal stability removes the fiscal risk premium that the market would otherwise require to be priced into the currency. To this effect, foreign investors purchased a record C$109.4bn in Canadian securities in 2009, with a focus on fixed income. Bond yields should trend higher against the backdrop of improving growth and rising inflation prospects, though Canadian yields should remain below those in the United States owing to a stronger Canadian dollar, less inflation potential, and comparatively smaller current account and fiscal deficits. A level of comfort with the improving economy may also be at play amongst policymakers, suggesting that the Canadian dollar's move higher has been justified by economic fundamentals -- which they can put up with -- rather than speculation. Yields on overnight index swaps, which trade based on expectations for the Bank of Canada's key policy rate, edged higher after data showed the economy added more jobs than expected and the unemployment rate fell. Economic data proves supportive of the dollar appreciation. The crude oil, one of Canada's notably known commodity export, advanced on Wednesday March 17, 2010, and for another day, more than 1 percent, allowing attractiveness for assets in the Toronto Stock Exchange to advance even further, which helped the loonie to hit the highest rate versus its US dollar part since July 2008, in a rally which, according to analysts,

will set the Canadian dollar to reach parity with the greenback in the following months.

Finance Minister's Worry on Volatility

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty is always worried about volatility in the currency. Last summer when Flaherty raised the possibility that "some steps" could be taken to slow the rise of the Canadian dollar that seemed to be partially spurred by speculative buyers so the Canadian exporters are mostly be affected by the trend in the currency. Manufacturers say that a strong Canadian dollar makes it harder to sell their goods. But this time the Minister is somewhat agreeing to the Canadian dollar parity closing to the greenback. Also noted that a stronger currency did have advantages, in that it helped Canadian manufacturers acquire foreign technology and thereby become more competitive. The government and the Finance Minister should now accept the emerging current level of the dollar which is driven by fundamentals and with other supportive economic data. Recent firmer than expected Canadian employment data also has shown a favourable trend.

Manufacturers should Hedge the Currency Risk

In any country where its currency embracing an appreciation the exporters definitely face some exchange rate negative pressures, but this is unavoidable. It is well known that manufacturers are the most pressured by fluctuations in the currency. A new study by the Conference Board of Canada found this is not necessarily the case. Instead, the sector may potentially be more exposed because these firms typically do not have as solid a currency hedging strategy. Canadian businesses should prepare to live with the "new normal" of a strong dollar. . They should be prepared to use some currency products in the market such as forward agreements, currency options, currency futures in OTC or exchange currency traded products. When the dollar shot through parity in the summer of 2007, it was a marked adjustment for export-sensitive industries whose products cost more abroad as the currency rose. That was more of a shock then, compared to now, as manufacturers have had time to adjust in terms of pricing and costs, economists said. In fact, the manufacturing numbers released by Statistics Canada earlier this week, which again showed sales rising, indicate that industry is managing to cope, in part because the higher currency makes imports cheaper, allowing companies to buy new machinery and equipment to become more productive.

Bank of Canada' Reluctance in Accepting the Parity Trend

The Bank of Canada has also scaled back its views of the impact of a stronger currency. Last year it said a stronger Canadian dollar could more than fully offset favorable economic developments, but its latest statement earlier this month noted the persistent strength of the currency continues to act as a significant drag on the economy. But the conditions are now ripe for the Canadian dollar to again test parity with the greenback as more evidence emerges of an entrenched economic recovery and policymakers, including the Bank of Canada, seem more comfortable with the currency's latest rise. "I think as long as the Canadian dollar appreciates on a more stable basis, I think it's probably something the Bank of Canada is willing to put up with.' said Scotia Capital SachaTihanyi. High and rising house and car prices, a healthier-than-anticipated economy and unsustainable borrowing by consumers suggest the central bank should take some steps to cool things down, economists say.

Interest and Inflation Rates

The expectation that interest rate may go up sooner in Canada would pave way to strong flow of capital from the U.S. towards north to continue. The fact that interest rate hikes expectations for the short term were frustrated in the U.S. is really helping its Canadian neighbor to become more attractive. It is indeed possible to see both the greenback and the loonie trading in equality anytime soon. CIBC World Markets said this week it now expects the Canadian dollar to soar above par with the U.S. dollar by September, a reflection of its view that the Bank of Canada will raise interest rates a full six months ahead of the U.S. Federal Reserve. Inflation is widely expected to have cooled off in February to a modest level given the slack in the economy, yet strategists and currency traders expect the Bank of Canada, in inflation-fighting mode, will begin raising interest rates this summer. And it will start long before the U.S. Federal Reserve Board begins its own rate-hiking regimen. The speculation over rising interest rates in Canada is behind much of the recent surge in the Canadian dollar as it approaches parity with the U.S. dollar, but one consequence of a rising loonie is that it also serves to reduce inflation pressures and make imports such as food and other goods cheaper. The core consumer price index, which excludes the eight most volatile items, is forecast to have declined to 1.7 per cent in February, compared with 2 per cent in January. That remains well below the Bank of Canada's target rate of 2 per cent. "Theory and reality are diverging from each other," said Eric Lascelles, chief economics and rates strategist with TD Securities Inc. Based on the textbooks there would seem to be no need for the central bank to begin raising rates with inflation rates at such modest levels. "But inflation shouldn't be moderate at this point in the cycle," he said. "It should be quite soft." Economists generally expect inflation will remain tepid. The rise in the loonie indicates that traders in the currency markets are anticipating the central bank will begin lifting rates in July from their emergency low levels, he said. John Clinkard, chief economist for Canada with Deutsche Bank AG expects the Bank of Canada will raise its target overnight rate by 50 basis points in July to three-quarters of one per cent. (A basis point is 1/100th of a percentage point.) "I don't think cooling inflation will change the bank's strategy at this point because there are so many indications early in the first quarter that growth is strong," Mr. Clinkard said.

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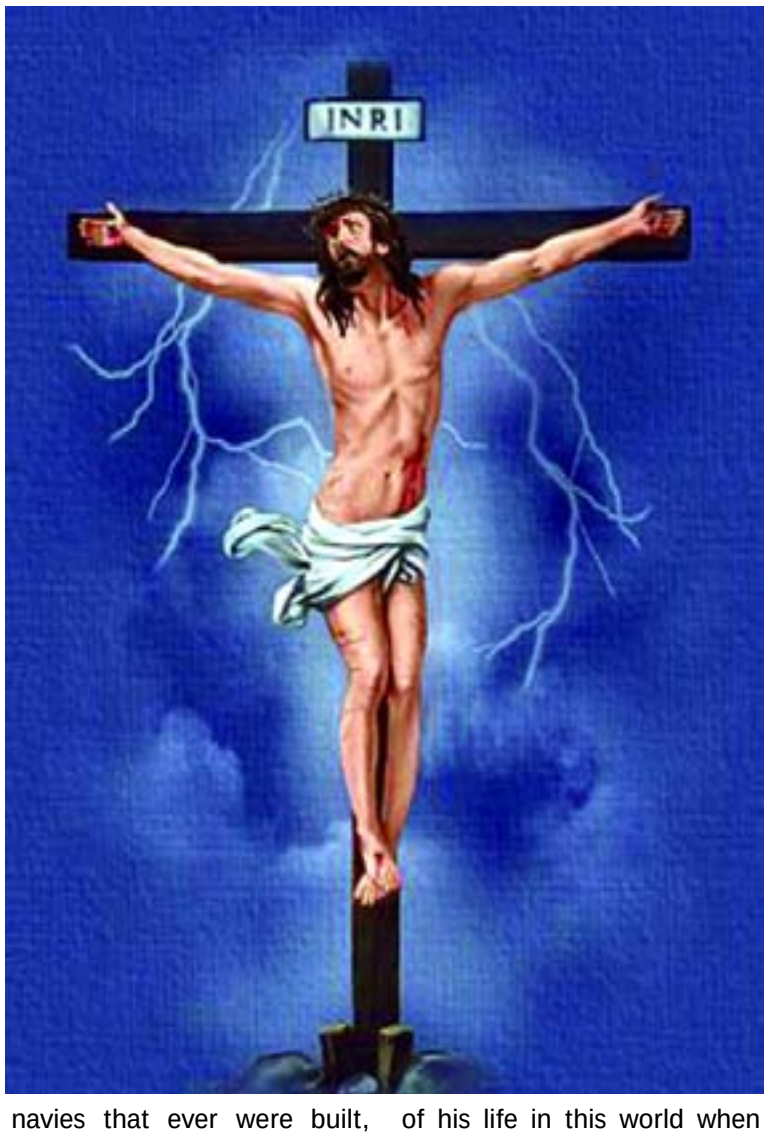
Good Friday

Raymond Rajabalan

Good Friday, also called Holy Friday, is the Friday preceding Easter Sunday It commemorates the Crucifixation of Jesus Christ and his death at Calvary.

As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet.

- Historian Kenneth Scott Latourette



Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the Child of a peasant woman. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college.

He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His Divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a Cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying—and that was His coat. When He was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Such was His human life—Yet, He rose from the dead.

Twenty wide centuries have come and gone since the occurrence of a historical event on the Palestinian region of Middle East and today He is the Centerpiece of the human race and the Leader of the column of progress. Of all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life.

The crucification of Jesus created a vast impact in the history of mankind and resulted in a variety of social changes. The birth of the only son of God almighty brought in a ray of hope to the humanity stained by sins.

What was considered as an ordinary event at that time later turned out to be of great historical significance .The fact that the time of birth of Jesus was the basis for world history to be divided into Before Christ (B.C) and after Christ (A.D) emphasizes the tremendous significance of this epoch.

Jesus, the only begotten son of God who had the power of being able to be born in a palace with all the comforts and glory, chose to be born in a manger, depicting the greatness of humility. After 33 years of his life in this world when he sacrificed by himself on the cross on Mount Calvary on a Friday, he once again humbled himself.

His selfless sacrifice, offering his life to redeem the sinful mankind was the starting point of salvation for the humanity.

If there was one whose birth as well as death and his life between the two ends of human life cycle was of great historical significance, it was only the life of Jesus Christ and no one else.

There are 52 Fridays in each calendar year. Yet, why only Good Friday has gained significance world wide?

1. It was the day when the Almighty Jesus , hung on the cross and gave his life for the salvation of the mankind

2. It was on that day, the sinless son of God, volunteered to carry the weight of our sins, bled profusely underwent untold agony and breathed his last on the cross.

3. Good Friday was the day on which God showed to the world the depth of His Love for the mankind.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a star was the guiding factor to the three wise men and helped them reach the place where infant Jesus was lying in the manger. Similarly cross, the identifying symbol of every Christian has become a permanent fixture in the history mankind as a symbol of salvation and redemption. It must be remembered that the death of Jesus, his supreme sacrifice for the entire world was not just for Christians alone but each and every one.

How the Cross did became a symbol of Redemption?

With the crucification of Christ, the cross which was considered to be a symbol of disgrace and humiliation has come to be accepted as a symbol of redemption.

In those days , only the worst criminals were crucified under the Roman rule .Those who were offended by the teachings of Christ, those Jewish leaders whose hypocrisy was exposed constantly schemed to lay false charges on Him and some how or other get him crucified. When their self interests were affected those opposed to the teachings enticed Judas Iscariot one of the disciples of Jesus, paying him 30 pieces of silver to help Jesus arrested

Judas betrayed Jesus 2000 years ago but it is painful to note that incidences of betrayal continue to this very day. From time to time a few great men dare to be the guiding light for the oppressed people but their noble intentions continue to be blocked by traitors who want to safeguard their interests at any cost. There have been numerous such instances throughout the history but it is the general rule at the end the truth will prevail.

The enemies of Jesus Christ scored a temporary victory by crucifying Him to death. However, what they considered to be their victory finally proved to be a huge victory for Jesus over death. The death of Christ on a Friday turned out to be day of victory over sins and that is why, we can consider it to be a Good Friday since it has brought so much good to the mankind.

On the third day when Jesus rose to life, Jesus, the King of Kings He had victory over death. Jesus rose to life, to the disappointing of the jubilant high priests, to the joy of the sorrowing poor, to the delight of the frightened disciples.

He rose to life, to be with us .He rose to us counsel us, lead us out of difficult situations, fulfill our needs and to wipe our tears. Of course one may have to undergo unbearable pain and great sacrifice before we can see a light at the end of the tunnel. The death of Jesus very clearly proves this to us.

Many of our Saviour's most profound teachings are counterintuitive. "Love your enemies" is an example. The solutions that our minds are prone to develop are often different from those the Lord would have us pursue. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah55:8).

When we encounter roadblocks in our efforts it is usual to lose hope but if we accept the fact that the thought and plans of God are different from ours, it will give us strength to bear the present agonies with the hope of a bright future

The struggle for Justice and freedom from oppression cannot be stopped by crosses, torture and horrific killings. This has been proved over and over again throughout the history. All the sacrifices of any suffering people in every part of this world have always ended as a great uprising resulting in great freedom. This is the lesson that the death of Jesus teaches us.

FATHER, FORGIVE

By Devadas Chelvam

"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." These immortal words of Christ on the cross, praying for those who tortured and killed Him, embody the central message of Lord Jesus to mankind. His compassion and forgiveness foreshadow the glory of Easter.

The Jewish religious leaders claimed to be devoted to God. Yet they felt threatened by Jesus who was always truthful, manifested selfless love for all, and mixed freely with so called sinners and heretics, without being too concerned about religious rituals and rules.

Those who plotted against Lord Jesus and killed Him were not uncommon criminals. They were ordinary people, not unlike the other leaders of society and their soldiers, belonging to any age.

Why did the Jewish leaders plan to eliminate Jesus? It was a battle between ideology and reality. A war was waged between fear under the cover of pride, egoism, deception, and fanaticism on one side, and humility and truthfulness on the other.

The Jewish leadership did not know God directly through personal experience, and had a distorted idea of God. They conceived God as angry, jealous, and ready to inflict cruel punishment for the least infringement of rules. The religious leaders instructed the followers to be fearful, and hate those who did not subscribe to their ideology.

Jesus experienced God directly and constantly. He perceived His Heavenly Father's unconditional love for all beings, and taught the people to be fearless, love God and to care for everyone with compassion, without discriminating against anyone.

Humility, meekness, and peace threaten the ego. The ego thrives on conflict, attack and defense. Jesus on the contrary, represented peace, unconditional love and total forgiveness. Hence He seemed to be a threat to the collective egoism of the Jews and the Romans.

Christ understood that His people were acting out of ignorance, compulsive fear and weakness. The prayer of forgiveness that he uttered on the cross was an expression of His compassion and unconditional love. Thus He was setting us an example so that we too may not be too identified with a physical body, practice forgiveness, and attain His eternal glory.

That God cares for each and every human being with an eternal, infinite love is the heart of Christ's teaching. God's love is unchanging, hence unconditional and tenderer than a mother's love for her little child.

Peter asked Lord Jesus whether it was enough to forgive his enemy seven times, thinking that he was rather patient and kind. The Lord replied that he must forgive not seven times, but seventy times seven, meaning that it must be endless or as often as needed, copying God's forgiveness of man.

To say that I can forgive someone, but cannot forget the hurt inflicted, is a mere pretension of forgiveness. True forgiveness implies wiping away the hurt in my heart and feeling peaceful. Therefore to forgive is to forget the past or release the repressed pain from the past. Only then are we free to love and enjoy the present fully.

Daily practice of forgiveness is a wonderful habit to cultivate. We can start with the forgiveness of ourselves. Think of specific acts from the past about which you feel guilty and ashamed. Imagine that God or Lord Jesus is speaking through you words of forgiveness and tender love towards yourself. Visualize the light of God's unconditional love cleaning out the pain and shame, and making you feel pure and innocent like a little child.

Then think of others with whom you are angry even slightly. Recall the particular acts that hurt and made you resentful. Those who made you angry may be family members, friends, strangers, politicians, media personnel, common criminals, famous tyrants and organizations that are inept or corrupt. One may even resent the weather or the traffic.

Allow yourself to feel the pain and anger, then cover the person, incident or phenomenon with God's loving light. Address words of forgiveness and compassionate love to the people concerned again and again until you feel the peace that washes over you. It is necessary to feel the pain and anger before it is released. Full forgiveness must be given to our parents first. They were conditioned by their past experiences, and did the best they could under the circumstances. Hold them compassionately in your heart, and be grateful for your precious human birth, and the care you received from the parents, in spite of the mistakes they might have made.

As there are many hidden layers of guilt, anger and sorrow lodged within the heart, repeat these exercise regularly for liberating yourself and others from the consciousness of guilt. As you continue to do so, you will feel more free and peaceful.

Only an egoistic mind can be hurt, whereas a loving mind may feel the physical pain, but is not hurt thereby. When Peace Pilgrim was beaten by the teen-ager whom she had offered to accompany on a hike, her constant state of peace and joy did not alter. Instead, she felt even more love and compassion for the disturbed boy. Her patience and love transformed the youth to become a sane and non-violent person thereafter.

There is always a choice between ego and love, conflict and peace, worldliness and God. The ego, conflict and worldliness naturally lead to more misery and certain bondage. On the other hand, happiness and freedom are on the side of love, peace and God.

We cannot feel God's love unless and until we are willing to forgive ourselves and others completely, and allow ourselves to feel the deep peace in the depths of our being. The ego is bound to put up an intense struggle against any effort to be truly peaceful. It prefers conflict and misery.

People outside us or external circumstances are not our primary enemy. They merely reflect our mind. An egoistic mind that is too narrow and separates itself from others is our true enemy. It cultivates inner turmoil. Even such a mind wants happiness, but pursues misery.

An open mind and heart constantly expands, enjoying union with everyone and everything. It does not have to pursue happiness, since it realizes its natural state as love, peace and joy, being created in the image of God.

Fear, anger and criticism are not at all helpful. They are more often harmful to others, and add to our misery. Fear nothing or no one. We are here not to change others, but to change ourselves. Our primary purpose in life is to love everyone unconditionally. When we are full of love, we do help others to be transformed. "The pure love of one person can offset the hatred of thousands," said Mahatma Gandhi.

As we continue to practice the forgiveness exercises regularly, we will find ourselves to be more peaceful and happy day by day. In the words of Paramahansa Yogananda: "Every day happier than yesterday; that is the standard of spiritual life; and if you find that you are not growing happier and happier, you are going backwards."

Canadian Loonie...

Contd. from Pg 38

However, one of the risks of a rise in interest rates is an even stronger Canadian dollar which makes it tougher for exporters. "The [strong loonie] had been a concern of the bank, but my sense is it is not as important as it has been," Mr. Clinkard said. "Reality has caught up to expectations."

Live with the 'Loonie's Reality

Commodity-linked currencies, such as the Canadian and Australian dollars, are expected to continue to benefit from the strengthening in global economic activity that is being led by the developing nations. Some economists believe the dollar will hover at or close to parity for the foreseeable future, what David Watt, senior currency strategist at RBC Dominion Securities, said could be the "new normal."

Cheaper imports also act as a brake on inflation and spur domestic spending. Industry Minister Tony Clement told reporters. "The new normal is that you don't just rely on a low Canadian dollar as your productivity edge and I think most businesses have gotten that point now." Lower taxes brought in by his government and efforts to reduce companies' dependence on exporting to the United States with helping them adapt, the minister added.

While not all observers see parity as sustainable, some economists don't believe the currency is heading down more than a few cents any time soon. Scotia Capital, for one, forecasts that the dollar will hit parity by June – the end of the second quarter this year – climbing to about $1.02 by the end of the third quarter, about $1.03 by the end of the year and about $1.05 by the end of 2011, assuming the U.S. economy rebounds robustly in the next two years and commodity prices remain firm.

RBC's Mr. Watt said he doesn't see the currency reaching its previous high, and it may dip below parity for stretches because as the Fed starts to raise rates it will give a "short-term" boost to the greenback. Still, Canada's dollar will be among the best performers among all major currencies through the end of this year and could "linger around parity through 2011 and probably after that." There is no doubt where the loonie is headed, said Scotia Capital currency strategist Sacha Tihanyi, but just when that happens "depends on whether we get that speculative push."

Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney is widely expected to use an April 20 interest rate decision to give some hints about a tightening campaign that could start in July or earlier, and he releases his latest projections for the economy two days later. "Canada is emerging as a potential safe haven because the market's much deeper and more liquid than some investors anticipated, and we rode through this pretty terrible global economic downturn and the financial turmoil in relatively good shape," RBC's Mr. Watt said. "Looking at the economic backdrop in Canada, and looking at the situation in the United States, we just have to get used to the Canadian dollar lingering at levels that were considered almost unimaginable at the start of this decade." It is also a fact that the Canadian dollar will never replace the USD as a global standard. Our economy and financial markets are nowhere near large or liquid enough, nor is our presence in international trade. Canada did not experience the housing collapse that the US did, nor did we experience such extreme strains in our financial system. Canadian dollar strength reflects the fact that the market feels that Canada's economy has a better medium term outlook than the US economy.

"Will Post-April 08 bring Lankans closer?"

LETTERS & OPINIONS

By Arvind Luxman

The January 26 Presidential Elections are long over and, like its predecessor in 2005 that also returned the same candidate Mahinda Rajapakse, was steeped in doubt and controversy. The weak UNP and the weaker still Ranil Wickramasinghe were unable to capitalize on this alleged fraud and so the opposition - that includes the usually mercurial JVP and Mangala Samaweera - have abandoned what the international community would have viewed as a valid objection.

Sri Lanka (Ceylon before 1972) that boasted of illustrious Leaders of the Opposition like SWRD, Dr. N.M. Perera, Dudley Senanayake, JR Jayawardena, A. Amirthaligam - to name a few that earned the respect of producing admirable alternate Governments now finds her brand of parliamentary democracy under question.

The choice before Lankan Tamils within the Island and the influential diaspora is how will Tamils vote this time. The world was surprised the larger number of voters in the Tamil and Muslim communities – the two large communities after the Sinhalese population-wise - overwhelmingly voted in favour of Gen. Sarath Fonseka. Only a few months back he was despised by the Tamils as one whose avowed aim was to politically and numerically render the Tamil community into gradual extinction. In his own pronouncements before he changed into military uniform, Fonseka pleased many Sinhala hearts insisting the island belongs only to the Sinhalese.

He added Tamils and others might just as well `behave – or else`` Unsurprisingly, his tone and attitude changed once he became a Presidential candidate. Millions of Sinhalese were surprised when the fire-breathing General was found bowed-head in prayer at the venerated Nallur Kandasamy Temple in the historical land of the Tamils in traditional dhoti, pottu and kumkum as devout Hindus do.

Whatever his inner intentions may have been, millions in the island – more so the overwhelmingly Tamils inhabiting the North East Province - welcomed the gesture in the belief the mindset of the hardline Sinhalese is going through a sea-change. This includes many of those seen as anti-Tamil and obstinately unyielding on the National Question - the radical JVP, the racially-charged JHU party dominated by politically active monks.

The choice before the main grouping of the Tamil political formation - Tamil National Alliance - lead by senior politician R. Sampanthan - is unenviable. Although the Rajapakse Brothers are reported to have made the TNA many assurances to join their Alliance, the TNA eventually decided to lend their support last January to Gen. Fonseka pointing Mr, Rajapakse had many years while he was in power to bring relief and justice to Tamils. Sampanthan speaking for the TNA said Rajapakses failed to honour these after he assumed the powerful position of Executive President.

The choice before the Tamils in the Jan 26 elections was unenviable. They had to chose between the man giving the orders to the almost entirely Sinhala army in his role as C-in-C to bring the Tamils to their knees or to the man physically carrying it out enthusiastically on the ground in his role of the all-powerful Army Commander. In that personification Fonseka cared tuppence to established International Protocols on modern warfare or Human Rights either to Tamil combatants or nearly a million civilian Tamils in the NEP.

The NEP political leadership is under pressure both from the voters and the diaspora for a change in the existing political representation in Parliament. The fresh faces one sees and the removal of some old in the current lists of candidates of the main Tamil parties points out this view has received attention. In spite of the meeting in Geneva a few months ago of the Tamil-speaking parties aimed at speaking in one single voice this did not happen - neither was one seriously expected among the quarrelling interests. This lacking will weaken them in that necessary bargaining power in a Sinhala-dominated Parliament of 225 where the combined NEP Tamil seats will be around 25 only.

That section of the Tamil diaspora with its own sympathies to the LTTE seems to be gaining ground now with their Project of the Trans National Government of Tamil Eelam getting a boost in the very premises of the British. The well-attended Global Tamil Forum meeting recently in the premises of the British Parliament has incensed GoSL and the Sinhala supremacists. The presence and the encouraging addresses of key players in the Labour government and the Conservative Govt-in-Waiting should awaken the Rajapakse regime to the reality the world at large – and particularly Western countries whose aid and commercial imperatives are vital to Sri Lanka's economic survival bear support to the Tamil clamour for justice.

They share the widely held view the Rajapakse regime has done little to address the problem albeit sufficient time and resources in hand. It is true the influential Tamil diaspora can do little to alter the voting pattern in Sri Lanka because almost all of them are nationals of other countries. But to ignore them will be at the peril of the Rajapakses. Their voice is articulated through legislatures and the politically powerful in the USA, Canada, Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Norway, Australia, South Africa, and Malaysia - to list the countries where the Tamil diaspora is concentrated. It is now a global reality in those countries where their own nationals are subject to prolonged discrimination, the international community has a recognized role to play.

The Diaspora is proceeding with its Agenda that also includes provisions for Diaspora Tamils to vote in Sri Lanka. They model this on the Israeli example where Israelis anywhere in the world can vote in the Knesset Elections. Many of these Israelis flown into the Elections to vote in the elections are dual Citizens – a provision the Tamil diaspora is examining. Many in Sri Lanka will be surprised to learn the Rajapakse government is also in consultation with several representative entities of the Tamil diaspora. The talks, inter alia, is said also to include dual-citizenship.

Meanwhile, the opposition to the TNA in the North will come from Douglas Devananda`s EPDP, PLOTE and from the TNA breakaways like young Gajendran Ponnambalam now leading Tamil National People's Front. The newly formed TNPF is likely to eat into TNA votes with its call for a Confederation, the 2-Nation formulae and the claim to the right to secede - in case Colombo continues to procrastinate. The Karuna-Pillaiyan schism in the Batticaloa District will cause concern both to the TNA and the government.

Karuna`s decline from once-admired fearless Tamil field commander to his much advertised debauchery and deplorable wayward conduct will not find favour with voters in the EP who respect conventional family integrity from the man of the house. Kidnappings in ubiquitous white vans where many have been fond dead; coercion, intimidation in daily life in the NEP and the Colombo District by favoured Tamil politicians within the government are very much in the minds of Tamil voters.

The more of the analytical voters among the Tamils are con-

India's Foreign Secretary Ms Nirupama Rao – "The visit of India's Foreign Secretary Ms Nirupama Rao recently is being claimed as a victory for President Rajapakse"

scious - with dwindling resources and a skeptical IMF- WB and the Donor community, the Rajapakse government is unlikely to carry out the grandiose promises to "develop Tamil lands" in the NEP to the required levels and speed. They would rather use the inadequate resource availability to develop the Sinhala South – their main vote base for their own political survival. Predictably, there can be a few hand-outs here and there in the Tamil areas more for cosmetic purposes.

These are unlikely to gain those features to make the besieged Tamils to rejoin the Sri Lankan family – meaningful devolution to run their own affairs, rapid infra-structural development of the NEP. These ideally to include water resources, the repair and building up of main roads, bridges, restoration of HSZ lands/farms, industrialization employment generation, building new/redoing hospitals, schools, places of worship destroyed by the war, modernization and development of the agricultural and fishing industries - being the chief among the more urgent. Admittedly, there has been some improvement in road transport, provision of electricity and in some other areas.

Signs of the return to normal life, denied to Tamils under LTTE rule, has engaged Tamil favour as the people yearn a life of peace and quiet. The arrival of millions of Sinhalese from the South has brought in infra-structure strains in a part of the country that is still to get back on its feet. Complaints of questionable behaviour by the less cultured among the Sinhala visitors desecrating Hindu temples, hooting at Tamil girls riding in bicycles and other lack of civility certainly engages Tamil disfavour and needs to be looked at by the authorities. NEP Tamils are conscious of Sinhala sensitivities of the day and do not expect everything to happen at once.

But the fact the Rajapakse government under-performed since 2005 when the LTTE was considerably weakened since May 2009 when they were entirely removed from the scene – are vital areas in which the government had space to re-establish its confidence with the Tamils in the NEP. They fell short here. Yet, the Rajapakse brothers are shrewd tacticians and spare little effort to win the Tamil side. This week S.C. Chandrasan, who camped in Madras/Chennai for nearly 3 decades, returned to the Island and surprisingly asks the Tamils to work out a formulae to live with the Sinhalese. This call by the son-in- law of Thanthai Chelva will not be lost on the Tamils.

The Tamils in the Plantation areas are a different cup of tea. Thondaman's fortunes, in a way, are in the ascendancy with his main rival Chandrasekeran gone. He has re-established his confidence with the Rajapakse regime in the Presidential Election – where he chose well to hitch his CWC with the Rajapakse wagon. If he can produce over 8 CWC MPs on April 08 Thondaman is assured of a plum Ministry - that he enjoyed in 2001/2002. It is unlikely the break-away of veteran CWC TU man M.S. Sellasamy, Yogarajan or Satchithananthan will in any way substantially weaken him. In the same vein, the going in the Central Province and Nuwara Eliya District in particular is not going to be easy. Men like Sathasivam, Rajaratnam, Vadivel Suresh, Digambaram, Puthrasigamoney, Mano Ganesan will trouble him in the April elections. But the CWC resources and network, his own considerable electoral skills may retain for him the dominant position as leader of the people of recent Indian origin - the undisputed mantle of the legendary Saunyamoorthy Thondaman.

Tamils in the Colombo and Gampaha Districts may, this time, decide to go with the Rajapakse government since the UNP is woefully divided, unsure of itself in its own leadership. By the manner the UNP is going about it appears to have conceded the elections to the Rajapakses already with serial-loser Ranil Wickremasinghe fated to remain in the opposition.

Contd. in Page 48...

Art works with Traumatized Children

Art as a therapy/counselling has become very popular and is gradually gaining a formal recognition in all over the world with Counsellors, therapists and psychologists. Mental health therapists are beginning to employ drawings done by children to understand their subconscious mind at work. Children are by nature expressive people and viewing drawings as mystifying is probably more helpful to children in the long run, since at least one is looking at children's work with an open mind. Children's drawings interpreting, it is important to remember that patterns of drawing, horizontal line scribbles; diagonal zigzag scribbles are the key. Around 18 months to 2½ years of age, children mostly feel the world through body movements, and they can share these feelings with others through play, drawings and other simple creative works.

There are often more comfortable describing their drawings. This gives them a sense of accomplishment and success in the artwork that they have taken pride to complete. According to psychologist observation and interpretation of graphic symbols observed in children's drawings can tell many things that the children themselves may not want to tell us directly. Exceptionally big ears without earrings may suggest verbal abuse, big hands suggest aggressiveness or physical abuse, mouth with a long slit suggests an anxious, uncomfortable child, empty eyes without pupils

2004 Southeast Asia tsunami (PTSD children)

School Teachers training program 2005 (student counselling)

suggest that the child has difficulty relating to the reality around, absence of a mouth may be a sign of a child's inability to communicate, jagged teeth often indicate a tendency towards aggressive behavior and often coupled with other serrated graphic symbols such as, spiked fingers, feet and hair and absence of arms or arms are tucked behind the body suggests a sense of helpless or powerlessness.

Some children have worries and bad memories from catastrophic disasters that gradually disappear over time with emotional support of caregivers and communities. Other may experience more long-term problems, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Emotional reactions, physical complaints or symptoms with no medical basis, fear, depression, withdrawal and anger, can occur immediately or appear weeks and months after the traumatic disaster (2004 dec TSUNAMI). But some children who have experienced previous traumas or who already have a mental health disorder may be more susceptible than others to problems following traumatic events and who witnessed or directly experienced the disaster are believed to be more at risk than others who are less directly affected. In all cases, children who have experienced a catastrophic disaster, such as the recent Haiti earth quick and TSUNAMI 2004 need support from others to avoid long-term emotional problems.

The recent tsunami disaster 2004 December in Southeast Asia, art expression has proven to be a very important part of the recovery process for children who have survived. Drawing offers a way for children to express their feelings, thoughts, and memories about tsunami disaster. Art can help traumatized children to make sense of their experiences, communicate grief and loss, and become active participants in their own process of healing, beginning the process of seeing themselves as "survivors" rather than as "victims" with guidance and support.

The following guidelines may also be helpful to you use of creative expression with your child. Encourage him/her to express whatever they would like to express in their art. Sometimes they also like to express themselves in other ways by songs, stories, play, drama, or writing. It is important for children to be given choices, because culture influences self-expression, some children may feel more comfortable with one way of expressing over another. Age, ability, personality, interest, and skill influence their creations.

As a parent/caregiver you need to provide a safe and structured environment for creative expression to take place. Be empathetic, listen, encourage storytelling about art produced, and accept whatever is communicated about art created. Engaging in a dialogue by simply asking a child to describe the elements in a picture can be helpful and supportive and refrain from trying to interpret art and simply accept and encourage participation and self-expression. Provide opportunities for experimentation with simple art materials, learning new art skills, and making decisions about what to draw, paint, or make during an art session and use art activities to promote self-reliance and problem solving in children.

Preferring to use art activities to soothe and reduce stress very scientifically because they may use art expression in a variety of ways after experiencing a traumatic event. Sometimes they will repeat images of the event in their drawings, paintings, or play activities; others may resist memories of the actual event.

If your child expressed trauma stories, remain calm, listen, and respond without judgment or interpretation because it is particularly important for you to normalize any feelings expressed by letting children know that what they are experiencing is being experienced by many other children.

dr. Fonseka clinician
fricanada@gmail.com

"KALAIKAL 2010; VICTORY ALL AROUND, & WARRIORS TAKE HOME THE GOLD TO WATERLOO"

Toronto, ON - March 31, 2010; First time contenders from University of Waterloo; Waterloo Warriors take the gold home at KALAIKAL 2010 held at the Queen Elizabeth Theater on the CNE Grounds. KCA launched itself as a not for profit arts organization determined to take Tamil Arts mainstream in December of 2004, and now almost 5 years later has established itself as full fledge arts organization successfully executing KALAIKAL 2009, and 2010; a dance competition and KCA Productions which is a platform for vocal artists. Through the years KCA has been gaining support from vast majority of the youth, media outlets, community professionals and organizations in driving towards the primary goal; building a greater channel for the arts.

Proceeds generated from KCA events are reinvested back into the arts fulfilling the mission of Unity, Identity and Charity; bridging the gap between the arts and community. Currently KCA is building other arts projects that require resources additional to proceeds from events such as the dance competition. Supporters are encouraged to invest and donate to these worthy causes being carried out by KCA.

KALAIKAL 2010 included 450 plus dancers, and vocal artists who participated in the event with a full house of enthusiast. Amongst the highly energetic audience were chief guests George Smitherman, Menaka Thakkar, and Neethan Shan.

Soulful pop singer Roveena opened up the awards ceremony with the song "Believe" by Suzie McNeil, as coordinators and KCA Board of Directors assembled on stage to announce the winners of KALAIKAL 2010. The night was filled to the brim with positive energy arraying from all ages as the community embraced the significance of UNITY and sustaining Tamil Culture through the Arts. On that note 2010 teams; MAC FLOW MARAUDERS, OSHAWA TITANS, RYERSON ROYALTY, UTM STALLIONS, UTSC ASSASSINS, UTSG PHOENIX, and YORK HUSKIES who placed second all walked away as prideful contenders who are making a difference not just in the academic field but also in the community.

The event's success is owed to the teams, participants, volunteers, sponsors, media sponsors, attendees, community members, participating TSA's and the KCA Team who coordinate year long to execute the event. KALAIKAL 2011 has been officially launched; please contact Director of Performing Arts for more information on the event guidelines for 2011.

KCA is definitely looking forward to the summer making sure to reach the international audience as People's Choice for Best Fashion was swept up Casipillai by Miss Subee from United Kingdom, Best Photographer; Drew Haran, Best Vocal English; "Want You On Me" by Andre Thillai, Produced by John Lalithas, Best VocalTamil; "Aathadi Vadi by Praba, Nirjaanny, Mozhinayaa, Nishan", Best DJ; RLE, Best Dance Team; Waterloo Warriors. More awards are still to be presented so look out for the next big KCA event.

[FOR MORE INFO POST EVENT VISIT www.KALAIKAL.com]

MEDIA QUERIES: Shyanthy Thevarajah Director Public Relations, Kalaikal Creative Arts

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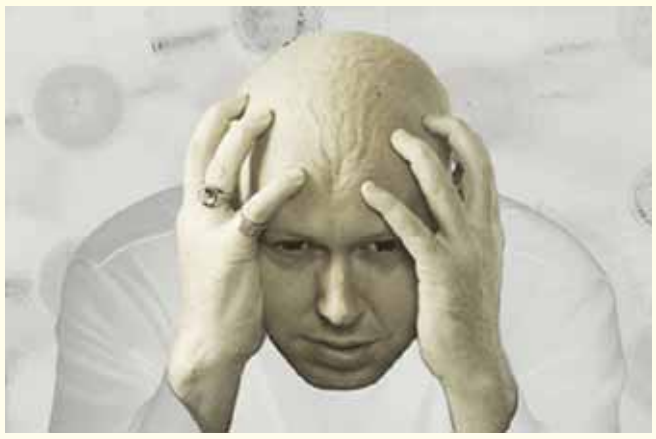

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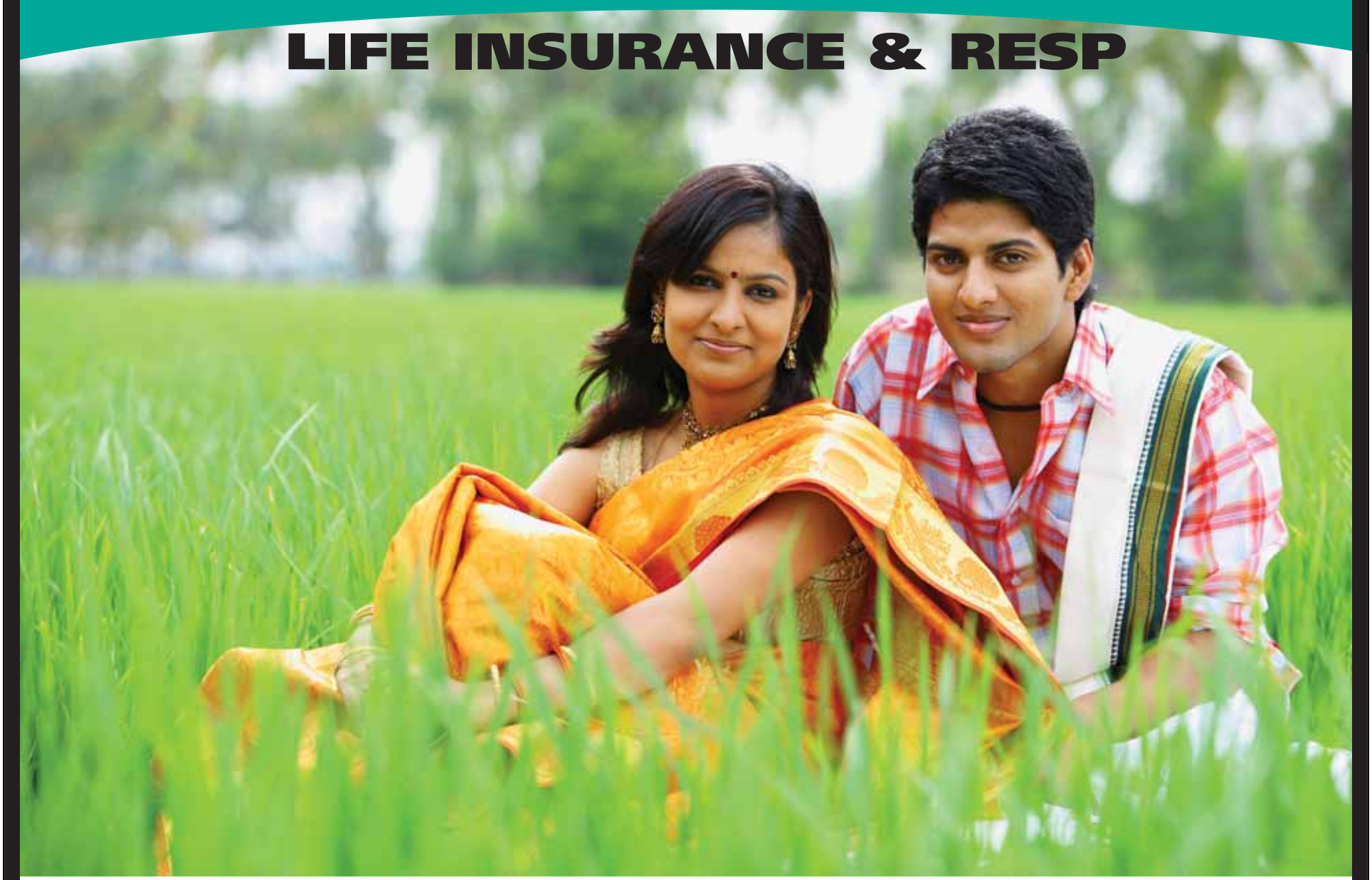

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LETTERS & OPINIONS

NUTRITION MONTH Op-Ed

By Honourable Margarett R. Best, Minister of Health Promotion

Sodium content in food

Salt: A four letter word

Salt: How much is too much?

As we acknowledge March as the 29th annual nutrition month in Canada, it seems fitting that Kraft Foods Inc. recently announced plans to cut the salt (sodium) by an average of 10 per cent in more than 1,000 products sold in North America. This is expected to eliminate approximately 10 million POUNDS of salt from our collective bodies, over a two year period, which is a commendable first step.

Experts say the average healthy adult should have no more than 2300 milligrams of sodium per day, and that we actually need much less. The experts have also linked high salt intake with an increase in high blood pressure, hypertension, heart and kidney diseases. Salt intake should also be of particular concern for people who are at risk for diabetes, including people of Aboriginal, Hispanic, Asian, South Asian or African Caribbean descent as well as low income groups.

Do you know what 2300 milligrams of salt looks like? Is it one or two teaspoons? Is it six? Do you know how much salt is in your favourite snack or even how much salt you consume each day?

If you do not know the answers, you are not alone. Making healthy decisions can be very confusing. Here in Ontario, to help you make more informed choices on what you are eating and drinking, you can ask your questions for free through EatRight Ontario.

EatRight Ontario's telephone service and website offers Ontario residents access to Registered Dietitians for advice and recommendations that can help you make healthier food choices. You can get help with meal planning and ways to cut the salt without losing the taste.

Whether you want to find out what you can do today to manage your salt intake or simply get nutritional advice, there is someone to talk to.

The EatRight Ontario call centre has the capacity to answer questions in more than 110 languages. Call today toll-free, 1-877-510-5102 (confirm phone number). Hours are Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 9am to 5pm and Tuesday and Thursday, 9am-9pm.

Online advice is also available at www.ontario.ca/eatright

Too Premature to Relax UNHCR Protection Guidelines for Tamil Refugees: Tamil Canadians

Tamil Canadians are strongly urging the UNHCR to exercise caution, thoroughly examine the ground situation and engage in active consultation with the Tamil community throughout the island of Sri Lanka in its current review of protection guidelines for the country. The UNHCR noted on March 12th, 2010 - that it's reviewing and possibly revising its protection guidelines for asylum seekers from the island.

This review could have a widespread effect on Tamil refugees worldwide.

"At this time, it would be premature to relax the guidelines for a repressive country that continues to violate human rights, disregard the rule of law and attack dissidents, opposition supporters, human rights defenders and journalists," said David Poopalapillai, National Spokesperson for the Canadian Tamil Congress.

"The UNHCR needs to conduct a thorough assessment and engage in consultations with Tamils across the island before potentially making a decision that could result in the torture or death of tens of thousands of refugees."

The move to review the protection guidelines comes in the wake of a presidential election, when bomb blasts were used to intimidate Tamil voters in the north and when opposition members were attacked, let go from their jobs or arrested.

"A review, such as this, should take into account the climate in the country where the chief opposition candidate has been imprisoned and his supporters intimidated and harassed," said Poopalapillai. "If this can happen to the Sinhalese, a community that has a formidable political voice, what could happen to Tamils who do not have any type of protection or power?"

The U.S. State Department 2009 Human Rights Report stated that the overwhelming majority of victims, outside the conflict zone, of human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings and disappearances, were young male Tamils, while Tamils were estimated to be only 16 percent of the overall population. The report was released this week.

"Credible reports cited unlawful killings by paramilitaries and others believed to be working with the awareness and assistance of the government, assassinations by unknown perpetrators, politically motivated killings, and disappearances," the report noted. "The government was credibly accused of arbitrary arrests and detentions, poor prison conditions, denial of fair public trial, government corruption and lack of transparency, infringement of freedom of movement, harassment of journalists and lawyers critical of the government, and discrimination against minorities."

The report noted human rights observers alleged that pro-government paramilitary groups and security forces participated in armed attacks against civilians and practiced torture, kidnapping, hostage-taking, and extortion with impunity. Furthermore, the report details that both local and Indian origin Tamils maintained that they suffered longstanding systematic discrimination in university education, government employment, and in other matters controlled by the government.

In addition, the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon announced his plan to appoint a panel of experts to advise him on accountability and human rights issues on the island of Sri Lanka.

It's a plan that has been vigorously opposed by Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa.

"On one hand, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon is looking to appoint a panel into war and human rights abuses—a plan that Sri Lanka is opposed to," said Poopalapillai. "On the other hand, there could be potentially an endorsement given, in the form of revised guidelines, from another branch of the UN.

The CTC has written to the UNHCR outlining its concerns.

"Will Post-April 08 bring Lankans closer?"

Contd. from Page 41

The incarcerated Sarath Fonseka is likely to be returned from the Colombo District more in the form of a protest vote by anti-government voters rather than any particular love for the controversial army man. His own Coalition is in shatters where the State used its mighty media and propaganda juggernaut to its advantage. The divided JVP under Somawansa Amarasinghe-Tilvin Silva probably will not come close to their Parliamentary harvest of 2004.

The break-away JVP faction under the inspiration of the charismatic Wimal Weerawansa too is under attack. Weerawansa`s shift from his home-base Kalutara to the Colombo District will be questioned although he is very likely to win.

The concern of the Buddhist voters country-wide about the un-buddhistic conduct of the JHU in the political snake-pit is shown in most of the militant monks removed from JHUs own list of candidates. With their opposition divided, weakened or rendered to confusion the Rajapakse brothers are aiming on a 2/3rd majority.

The visit of India's Foreign Secretary Ms Nirupama Rao recently is being claimed as a victory for President Rajapakse who had accepted an invitation to visit Delhi late April.

The Govt has agreed to allow India to open a Consular Office in Jaffna. The Sinhala extreme is unlikely to agree to go with this and may, in due time, show their opposition. There is already a whispering campaign this is a victory for the Tamil political groupings and a further stepping stone to an Eelam that they suspect is on way sooner than later.

As one saw in the Post-May 2009 period and the Presidential Elections Sri Lanka can come out with the unpredictable again. April 08 can sill spring surprises although as at date it looks like the Rajapakses - who have no compunction in misusing the State's considerable resources - may see the continuation of their good fortune in a country where the political high and mighty believe deeply in Astrology. Who will see fortune smiling on them and who will see "stars" will be determined on April 08.

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"Greater the authority, greater then was the accountability"

by S. Skandakumar

Hon Minister,past and present Principals of our revered institution, our eminent guests of honour, the Principal of Ladies College and Warden of St Thomas' College, distinguished fellow Royalists and their equally distinguished spouses,

I consider it a great privilege indeed to have been invited this evening, to propose a toast to two outstanding schools rich in shared values, and for whom we Royalists have the greatest respect and admiration .

Warden Sir, I know that you must be aware of the fierceness of the rivalry that exists between our two institutions, on the playing fields and on cricket grounds in particular. You will have your first experience of it in the coming week. That rivalry, has over the years, given rise to some of the strongest bonds of friendship between Royalists and Thomians; an excellent reflection on the quality of our mutual education.

As for Ladies College, Madam Nirmali, it will be sufficient if I said that successive generations of Royalists have had nothing but love for your wonderful girls. And you too are in that category today.

It would not be inappropriate on an occasion of this nature, for one to reflect briefly on one's own school career and I would like to share with you, three incidents for their diverse nature.

The first concerns a Teacher, who too was quick to use the cane, no matter how trivial the mischief may have been. He had a curious way of doing it, in that he would get the student to kiss the wall with his nose while raising both arms to the maximum. His theory was obvious; more taut the body, greater the sting!

Once his deed was done he would turn calmly to the black board and write the following line. "A life without pain, is like being on a road that's going nowhere."

The second was a much loved senior Teacher, who with the passage of time, found it increasingly difficult to stay awake in the first twenty minutes or so in the period immediately following the lunch interval. So on arrival for a class in applied mathematics, he would instruct us to turn to a page of his choice in Humphreys text book on Dynamics, and attend to the sums on it. He would then take off his spotlessly white coat, place it on the back of his chair and rest his weary head between his arms on top of his desk, to surface 20 minutes later.

On one particular day, he woke up ahead of time and decided to walk round the class. At the back end he found one of the students to whom math was a never ending mystery, deeply engrossed in a magazine depicting ladies of easy virtue, in their natural splendor. In confiscating the magazine he said to the boy, "Young man, you are rotten, even before you are ripe:" The incident went no further. That was Royal.

The third applied to a form master who was a passionate admirer of that great American President Abraham Lincoln. So intense was his admiration that he was even nicknamed Lincoln!! Two things that he quoted remained etched in my mind for the hope and confidence they inspired in me. They were from Lincoln's letter to his son's teacher, when he decided to send the boy to school. 'Teach him" he wrote, 'that for every scoundrel, there is a hero..... Teach him also that for every corrupt politician there will be a statesman.'

Fortunately, in the ensuing years, we were also taught the fine art of a waiting game called eternal patience!!

Looking at the erosion of values in the world around us, I have in recent times, asked myself questions which would have crossed your minds as well.

Why did Wall Street, which supposedly had some of the finest brains emerging from the best Universities and Management colleges of the world, collapse as it did?

Why is it that governments in many parts of the world have the painful task of combating, their own citizens, to resolve internal conflicts? And, why is the United Nations looking as if it is heading for a re-classification as the Divided Nations?

I have tried to look for the answers in the time tested values that our three schools have upheld from inception.

On my first day at school I was made to realize that I was a Ceylonese, as an equal citizen of a beautiful and happy nation called Ceylon. While still knee high to our Teachers, we were taught to distinguish between Right and Wrong.

Here I would like to quote an eminent Queens Counsel who hailed from an equally reputed school in the hills , who said 'In the field of justice and fairplay, right is right, and wrong is wrong. The two can never meet. To compromise the two takes an elastic conscience. Such men should be shunned for they are the bane of society.' Thereafter we were encouraged to emulate the strong, but reminded to protect the marginalized and the weak.

The next was an important lesson on Leadership directed at Class Monitors, School Prefects, Captains of Games, Heads of the Cadet Corps and Literary Associations, Interact Clubs etc. who were made to realize that every right implied a responsibility.

We learnt leadership required exemplary conduct and its success was synonymous with a golden word... Accountability. Greater the authority, greater then was the accountability.

Earlier this week, I made a nostalgic visit to our assembly hall, and let the memories of the solemn Friday morning assemblies roll by. My eyes swept the portraits of all our distinguished scholars. You too, Warden Sir, and Madam Principal, have preserved similar halls of fame in your respective schools.

Those outstanding men and women are remembered even today, for two reasons; their intellect and their integrity and, through them we learnt another important lesson for life, the priceless value of honesty. Finally, we were taught to be gracious in defeat and humble in victory.

It is not a mere coincidence then, that our first lesson was one of equality and the last on humility. In our temporary stay on earth we have paid our respects to those who have moved on before us, and heard the familiar line at the funeral services, 'Death humbles us all because in death we are all equal ''.

I have therefore asked myself the question, Why then don't we use our God given intelligence, and prepare ourselves better for that eventuality, by practicing equality and humilty in Life, rather than wait for death to impose it upon us?

Yes Ladies and gentlemen, The illiterate of the future will not be those who cannot read or write; they will be the educated who simply will not learn.

On the opposite side of humility stands man's ego. While some degree of it is not only desirable, but even essential, an ego out of control could be as dangerous as the weapons of mass destruction that only the egos of George Bush and Tony Blair were able locate in Iraq.

It was the same ego out of control that led Tiger Woods to believe that his right to improve on his handicap over 18 holes extended beyond the boundaries of a golf course! So, if only our time tested values can find universal application, to be discharged with common sense and one's conscience, humanity may well see a heaven on earth !

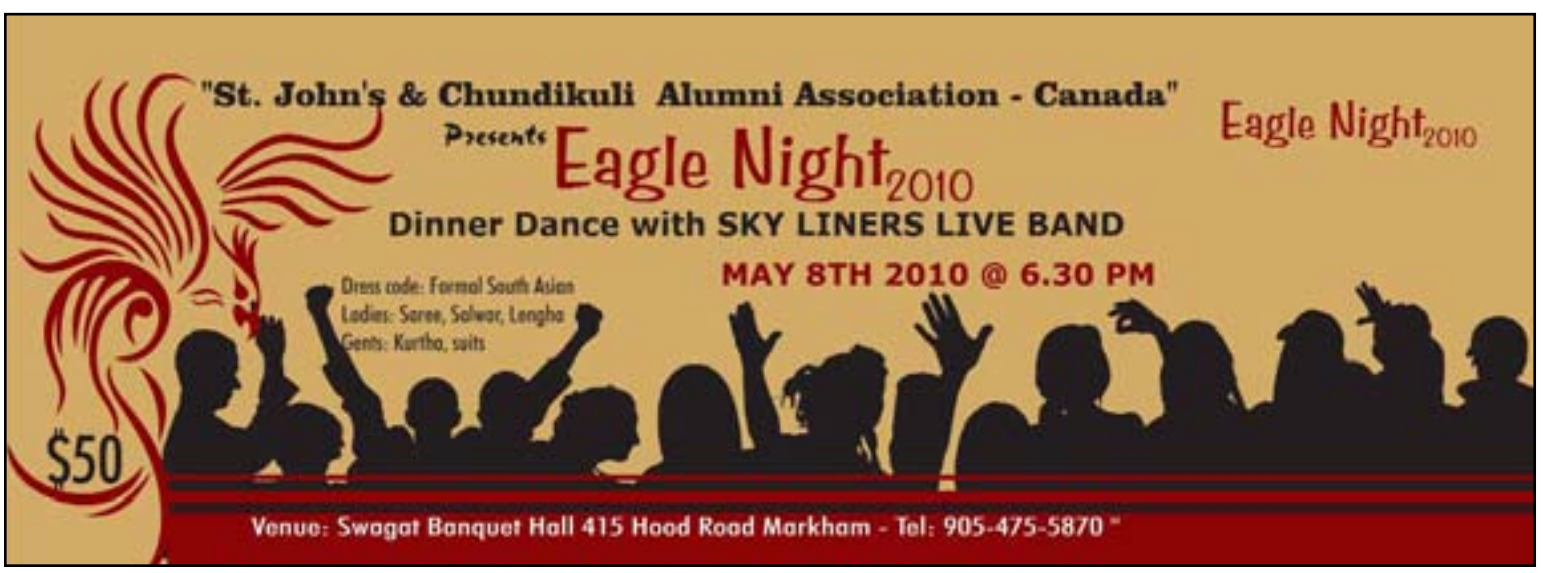
Ladies and Gentlemen, May I ask you please to rise and drink a toast to two outstanding institutions with whom we have shared precious values and traditions.

May they all be upheld inflexibly in the future as well, so that St Thomas' College Mt Lavinia, and Ladies College Colombo can continue to produce for our country, as they have in the past, the men and women who can make the difference.

TO ST THOMAS' AND LADIES COLLEGE.....

Thank You "

(ROYAL COLLEGE 175th ANNIVERSARY DINNER.-TOAST TO THE SISTER COLLEGES - St.Thomas' College ,Ladies College, Colombo, Sri Lanka - Proposed by S. Skandakumar ,6th March 2010,Cinnamon Grand Oak Room)



Durham Tamil Association takes Seniors on a Day Tour

"Aging is not lost Youth. But a new stage of Opportunity and Strength" - Betty Friedan

The Durham Tamil Association which represents the Tamil community in this region was motivated by the desire of it's members to provide some activity of interest to the Tamil Seniors of the Durham region. The result was a day trip organized by the Association to visit a few places of religious interest on the 27th of March.

The seniors who numbered around twenty-five were picked up in a Limo Bus in the morning from the Westney and Mcgill Plaza and first driven to the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir located near Finch & HWY 427. Mr. Harikrishna of the Mandir provided a guided tour for the Seniors and Pandit Sandeep Pandya performed Abhishekam for the Seniors and provided them with prasadam and gave them a portrait card of Bhagwan Swamynarayan and the Temple. The seniors also attended the Arthi and the special pooja in the Temple. After completing their tour of the Temple, the seniors were entertained to a sumptuous lunch at Sayona Foods which is located near the Temple.

The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent at the Richmond Hill Pillayar Temple. The seniors performed Archanas and obtained prasadham from the Priest at the Temple. They also enjoyed singing Thevarams at the temple. The day trip came to an end by about 5.00 p.m. when they returned and they were picked up by their family members.

The seniors expressed their satisfaction for the enjoyable day and also expressed an opinion of having more trips of this nature. They thanked the Durham Tamil Association and the officials who made the trip enjoyable. The free trip was funded by the Durham Tamil Association.

Seen here are some pictures taken during the Trip.

inside view of the LIMO BUS with DTA's seniors

seniors of DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION in front of RICHMOND HILL PILLAYAR TEMPLE

seniors of DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION in front of SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR

New Banquet & Conference Services at LeParc by Jude Francis

A party was held recently to celebrate the New Banquet & Conference services at LeParc located at Leslie & Hway 7 by Jude Francis. Jude Francis is well known in this industry and to celebrate, he invited all his staff from Casey's located at Jarvis and J & J's Kitchen at Brooklin along with number of his friends, relatives, clients and well wishers. The party was held in grand scale with lots of entertainment. The guests enjoyed the evening with drinks and excellent food.

Here is full text of the speech at the event by Landlord Barb Mata from J & J's Kitchen located at Brooklin.

Thank you Jude for including me in this very special event. I feel like part of the family. I was pleased to have been asked to say a few words, let's hope Jude's feelings are the same when I am finished.

J and J's at Brooklin, although as I understand it we are in search for a new name. What a challenge this project has been for Jude. When the restaurant first opened we all knew that Jude had the experience and the drive to make this business a success, what I am not sure that he factored in was what a unique town that Brooklin was. That even though its numbers have grown dramatically it still remains a small town at heart. I think the first valuable lesson which he learned was that the business was in Brooklin, and that under no circumstance was he ever to refer to the address as Whitby.

Jude was armed with the expertise of running Casey's and the banquet hall, but what he soon discovered was that small town Ontario was an entirely different challenge. Yes, Brooklin, although it is continually growing, retains all the intricacies of small town Ontario, but with Jude's strong nature he has risen to the challenge to achieve success.

I am sure that never in Jude's wildest dreams did he ever think that he would have life country and bluegrass music in his establishment three times a week, but once again Jude and the staff realized the needs of the area and welcomed these organizations.

I would like to stress that Jude is a fair and honest individual, a man of integrity who is willing to listen not only to the good things that are occurring, but who welcomes, listens and acts upon the criticism which is so freely given. I am sure that the one question which he must be so tired of hearing is "Have you got the Patio furniture yet?"

The staff have embraced this small town challenge, although some of the are small town individuals, I am sure that often the other staff are overwhelmed with the interest expressed in their private life's, but let me assure you that this is a compliment as it indicates the acceptance by the town people. I would like to think that Khander who returned to the restaurant was drawn back by the people who the staff so readily service and that he missed us all. I have watched endlessly as the patience of the staff must be tried as the customers through their caring natures offer advice to every situation, but once again, consider this total acceptance by the people of Brooklin. Jude holds the insight and the ability to see the potential that this growing community has to offer and I am convinced that it will become one of the hubs in the wheels of this once small village.

Thank you Jude for choosing to share your expertise with our community and we do look forward to this continuing educational experience on all of our behalves. If the locals think you are on the wrong track, believe me they will let you know.

Thank you for the honour of your company this evening. On behalf of everyone here from the restaurant and from Brooklin I know that we acknowledge the honest, hardworking, intelligent and sensitive business man which you are, welcome to our community. Let us put our hands together for Jude.

'Montreal Gazette' Niqab cartoon fuels debate

A cartoon in 'Montreal Gazette' newspaper depicting a woman in niqab, with the slit near her eyes represented by prison bars and a lock, has triggered a debate on the rights of Muslim women under Constitution of Canada.

India's PTI news agency writing on the matter said:

The editorial cartoon, which appeared in 'Montreal Gazette' recently, is based on the incident where a Muslim woman from Quebec was asked to leave a French language school after she refused to remove her niqab.

The cartoonist Terry Mosher said his intention was to argue against the woman's stance.

"In the Gazette, there is actually an editorial in support of the woman, and yet my cartoon is against it," he said. "So that is part of the discussion and I think that's a very healthy thing."

Nama Atef Amed, a pharmacist of Egyptian-origin, has twice been asked to leave provincially-administered French language classes after she refused to remove her niqab, that covers her head and face and leaves only the eyes exposed.

"For the teacher it was more difficult to hear her, and it was more difficult for all the people to understand what she has to say," Paul-Emile Bourque, the director of the school, said.

Amed filed a complaint with the Quebec's human rights commission after she was thrown out of the first class at the CEGEP de Saint-Laurent in Montreal.

Montreal Premier Jean Charest defended school's decision, saying that people who expect to receive public services must show their faces.

Today, the province's Immigration Ministry said Amed had subsequently enrolled in another French class at a publicly-funded centre in Montreal. There she was initially permitted to wear the niqab, until the province stepped in.

"As we did last time, we told her that we have pedagogical objectives to meet in our French immersion courses, that they have to be taken with her face exposed," Luc Fortin, a spokesman for the province's immigration minister, said. "She refused to take off her niqab and she left the course."

Salim Momin, a noted lawyer, said that it was in breach of rights and freedoms. Canadian Constitution, that provides religious freedom to all communities, must be respected by the government, he said.

President of the Muslim Council of Montreal, Salam Elmenyawi said that he was not shocked. "But it is a distasteful way of showing the cartoon and of showing the lock the woman is locking herself," he said.

Tarek Fatah, founder of Muslim Canadian Congress, defended the cartoon, saying "It's quite appropriate."

In October, the congress had sought a ban on wearing of masks, niqabs and burkas in all "public dealings."

"Not only is the wearing of a face mask a security hazard and has led to a number of bank heists in Canada and overseas, the burka or niqab are political symbols of Saudi-inspired Islamic extremism," the congress said in a statement.

Spring into Montreal exercise

Though Montreal's winters have a reputation of being unreasonably cold, over the past couple years they've been getting increasingly mild. This, however, has not stopped Montrealers from embracing the annual spring tradition of spending every last second they can outside. For this reason, there are an incredible amount of outdoor exercise opportunities to explore...

One of Montreal's strongest selling points is accessibility- I'm able to get to pretty much anywhere worth going in the city by metro, bus, bike or foot. If "by foot" is your preferred means of exercising, then a walk up Mount-Royal is perfect. If you start at the statue of Athena and follow the path up, around and back down the mountain, it's about 5 km (about 3 miles for you Americans) round-trip. And if you happen to get one of the best views of the city while doing so, all the better.

Right across from the mountain is Park Jeanne-Mance, which many Montreal residents use for the entirely less strenuous activity of BBQ'ing and people watching. The more frisky among you can also find space for some soccer or Frisbee, not to mention a game of tennis on one of their courts. But, if tennis is what you're really after, get yourself to Stade Uniprix in Jarry Park. The home of the Rogers Cup tournament, they've got 10 outdoor (and 12 indoor) courts open to the public. If you're looking for a way to get there, biking is the way to go. Montreal is one of the most bike-friendly cities in the world and the super cool Bixi service makes it easy for visitors to join in on the action. Another great way to experience the city by bike is by signing up for the ever-popular Tour de L'Ile and its night-time cousin, Tour la Nuit.

There are, of course, a ton of other exercise options that we'll get into further on this blog, but why not try one of these out right away. After all, we Montrealers are already out there working on our tennis game, getting into biking shape and improving our walking – ok, you can't really get better at walking, but you get my drift...

[tourisme-montreal.org]

"Vinnai Thaandi Varuvaya" Director Gautham Vasudev Menon met Toronto Fans

Mr. Gautham and Platinum Promotions met all media personals at a night of celebration at New Jasmine Banquet hall located at 90 Nolan court in Markham (Woodbine and John). He talked about his Movie and his future projects.

After the press meeting Gautham attended the Coliseum Scarborough to meet and greet with fans and watched the movie Vinnai thaandi Varuvaya, Starring Simbu and Trisha and music by Academy award winner A.R Rahman. The movie was with English subtitles screened by Platinum Promotions.

Gautham meet Kalaikal Creations Art organizers

Gowtham with Krishnalingam, Vice President of CTBC Radio

Gowtham with Kumar, Owner of Mark Florist

Gowtham with Thevan,Managing Partner of New Jasmine Banquet where the event is held

Recession and your Family Budget

BUSINESS - 2

By Prof. Saran Ghai

In our last month article we asked you the following 4 questions:

1. How did you manage your family budget during this course of recession?

2. What efforts did you make to overcome the situation?

What was the percentage of your success?

3. What would you suggest the readers to do?

I am very glad to tell you that in response to my questions, I got 26 calls. This clearly explains that you liked the subject matter of the current series of articles and it also gives an indication that somewhere you too are connected with the current period of financial crisis. Before I discuss the subject matter further, first let me thank all those who came forward to join this open discussion.

Out of the total 26 calls, about 18 were hesitating to say anything about their own experiences but were seemed to be more interested in knowing to what others have said. Such calls were not of much use so I would not consider those for further discussion. Next 7 calls were more suggestive in nature as they were eager to tell me what else I should incorporate in the subject but did not answer the questions. They also actually did not answer the questions. The call which actually alarmed me was the last one which came just before I started writing this article.

The caller was confident of his words and act. He pointed out that the biggest reason to get scared of recession is losing one's job. He informed that the first thing what he did to fight with the recession was quitting his job. He had his own reasons to explain for his this strange act. He said that as he had quit the job by himself, he does not have reason left for him to fear losing his job. You may ask that what it is! I would like to suggest you to not to laugh at his act. Further he added that in the course of recession when a number of big business giants are going out of business, he started a small business as he is of the opinion that recession is the best time to start a new business. And he proved it. He said that he did a right thing at right time as his newly started business is getting to its roots and next week he is going to New York to open a branch over there.

What I learnt from him is that mere crying does not help. Be courageous. Fight the situation, accept the challenge, work hard and be victorious. Do not give up. Find the way outs which are good for you. That is the time when you can start writing your own success story.

As in a dark room everything looks ghostlike and more we think about that image, bigger that ghost image becomes. In the same manner more we glorify recession, more it scare us. The first and foremost thing we should do is not to give undue importance to recession. Home, market, job or business, do not make recession your excuse tool.

You can understand it in this way too. Suppose you have a business. Someone comes to you and asks you for any job available with you. Your straight forward act should be to give him the job if he is the right person and if you need him. If you do not have job available, simply tell him that you do not have any job available. Do not bring in recession as a tool of excuses saying – Oh, you know, I would have hired you, but, this is recession period. Entire market is disrupted because of recession. Every business is under the shadow of recession. We have lots to collect from the market but recession has spoiled everything. Come back when recession is over and I will certainly give you a job.

Do you understand what actually you did? You spread pepper on his wound. You started singing songs of recession and the fellow who came to you with a hope, you made him almost cry. Not only that, other way round you made him partially responsible for recession and gave him a task to end up recession if he needs a job. And above all, you also gave him a foolproof excuse that he could not get the job because of recession. Now he will feel himself easy as you gave him an idea to say a few bad words against recession and go to sleep.

So, to sum up the whole matter, please do not help in spreading up the havoc of recession. Stop it and let the market be normal. That is all I have to say on this subject.

Now in the next article, let us start to discuss on a different but very important subject matter. This new subject matter is related to the scams of Credit and Debit Cards. As you know that a thief is a thief and he will keep stealing. If he is caught, will be punished. If not, will enjoy other's money. That story will continue forever. But, who actually suffers? You. It is very important to safeguard credit and debit cards and let the credit/debit card scammers do not harm our accounts.

How they do scams and how we can protect from cheatings will be our next topic. If you have any personal experience or you know anything about how the scammers do scams, please share your information with us so that we can tell this to our fellow readers and save their valuable money from scammers.

The information you will provide will be used only for the cause of fighting the credit/debit card scams. Your name and personal information will not be disclosed. If you think you should join the campaign, e-mail your experience/idea at businesschambers@gmail.com or call us at (905) 794-4488.

-Prof. Saran Ghai , President – Universal Business Chambers

If you are an Insurance/Real Estate/Mortgage Agent or a Financial Adviser, contact us. We would like to share your experience with the newcomers to Canada and to those who want to switch their profession. For any further information or membership enquiries of UBC, please e-mail: universal@universalbusinesschambers.com or call (416) 816-5559.

Newcomers endure the colour of poverty

By Liz Monteiro,
Record staff

WATERLOO — Highly skilled immigrants in Canada are living in poverty because they can't access jobs in their fields and they face racism that is embedded in Canadian institutions, a Toronto community activist told a group of people gathered in Waterloo to talk about how better to integrate immigrant populations.

"Racism is not just in individuals ... it's embedded in our structural institutions,'' said Uzma Shakir.

"We need to change the source of the problem. For God's sake be radical,'' Shakir told more than 200 people gathered at the Luther Village Sunshine Centre for a community forum Wednesday.

The forum focused on how best to create a local immigration partnership council made up of settlement agencies in conjunction with school boards, hospitals and local government to better serve recent immigrant populations. Some of the areas the council hopes to act on include increasing civic engagement, employment and improving settlement services.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada asked communities to look at forming an immigrant council to bring various groups together. The Region of Waterloo received $175,000 in a federal grant for the initial steps in the project and is working with the Centre for Community Based Research and the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network.

Shakir, the past president of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, said language is fundamental in terms of preserving culture and protecting it, and if organizations are not equipped with the diversity of languages, "the problem is not the people but the organization.''

"We carry the bag of multiculturalism but we won't carry the price of multiculturalism,'' she said.

There is a significant shift in the demographic of immigrants coming to Canada and Canadians need to be ready, she said. Most are people of colour coming from places Canada has never seen before, such as Africa, Asia and Latin America.

"These immigrants are highly qualified, more than ever before in the history of immigration,'' she said.

But newcomers, who settle mostly in urban areas, are disproportionately living in poverty, said Shakir who calls this the colour of poverty.

In Waterloo Region, 22.3 per cent of residents are immigrants or refugees and by 2031, it's expected the population of newcomers will increase to 30 per cent.

According to Statistics Canada, the region is one of the top seven Canadian communities that newcomers choose to call home.

Shakir said civic engagement of immigrant populations will come when they feel ownership and a sense of pride in their country.

"The challenge is how can we change Canadian norms and become in tune with the globalized world we live in,'' she said. "We have no problem buying clothes made in Bangladesh but we have a problem when they come here.

"If you are a person of colour, you are seen differently,'' said Shakir, who knows many skilled visible minority immigrants who are working as taxi cab drivers and pizza deliverers in "precarious" temporary employment.

Ghazala Fauzia, who attended the forum, said she hopes by talking about barriers facing newcomers that some of them can be better understood by other Canadians and why living in Canada can be a struggle for recent immigrants.

Fauzia came to Canada in 2006 with her husband and four children. Her husband, who was an engineer in Pakistan, is now working as an engineer here, but Fauzia, who had a master's degree from her homeland, felt she had to enrol at Wilfrid Laurier University's social work grad school to work in the social services sector in the region.

"From the first day I arrived here, I didn't feel I had an equal status coming as an immigrant,'' Fauzia said. "I feel like I'm a lower-class citizen.

"I feel there is no place for me because I don't have a Canadian philosophy or have Canadian norms,'' she said.

Fauzia said her family chose Canada because they were told that it valued multiculturalism, "but I don't see it.''

Fauzia said immigrants must change, too, but "we don't want to change ourselves completely. I want to keep my identity.''

Julia Langham, regional manager at Libro Financial Group, said employers must recognize they have an opportunity to address the needs of a changing demographic and be leaders.

"We have to get this. It's an economic imperative,'' she said. "We need to be proactive and have conversations and dialogue so we know the face of our changing community.

"We can bury our heads in the sand but the stats say it will change,'' Langham said. "If we do nothing, we will still have a changed workforce and as employers we will be scrambling.''

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'We need to educate ourselves to the signs that lead to harm and violence'

By Liz Monteiro,
Record staff

KITCHENER – `Hate is dangerous, prejudice is destructive and it's these actions that lead to the genocide of a people, Barbara Pressman told more than 300 students gathered at Kitchener City Hall Friday.

"Imagine when one group wants to kill one group because of their colour, religion, or sexual orientation,'' said Pressman, longtime president of the Waterloo Region Holocaust Education Committee.

"That's what genocide is . . . when one group wants to kill another group that is different from theirs,'' she said.

Pressman reminded students gathered to commemorate the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at the city rotunda that as a society we must remember the past so we can ensure it's not repeated.

But history has shown that murder of a people continues, she said, naming other groups that have faced genocide of their people. They include the death of one million Armenians in 1914, six million Jews during the Second World War, the Cambodian people in the 1970s, Muslims in Bosnia and the mass killings of Rwanda's Tutsis and Hutu moderates in 1994.

The day-long event is sponsored by Cross Cultures and the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo/Community Information Centre of Waterloo Region.

Sarah Thanhlun, 17, of Eastwood C.I., accompanied by guitarist Aboi Bawi, performs at the UN International Day.

Pressman stressed that as individuals we should not rejoice in the suffering of a human being even if they were the oppressors.

"I have never heard a (Holocaust) survivor talk about hatred of their captives because this would be a natural feeling,'' she said.

Pressmen told the story of listening to a Holocaust survivor tell her story in which she lost her entire family in a concentration camp at the hands of the Nazis.

When she was asked if she hated the Germans, she said: "To hate the Germans, I would have to hate the children.

''Who can hate a child,'' Pressman recounted.

Pressman said that the murder of a group starts with an idea – that the other is not as good, that they are evil, or that they are vermin.

"We need to educate ourselves to the signs that lead to harm and violence,'' she said.

Pressman told the students to embrace diversity and that difference is a gift, not something to be feared or hated.

"Diversity gives a richness of life,'' she said.

Simone Morrison, a Grade 12 student at Waterloo Oxford District Secondary School, said the idea of forgiveness stands out for her especially when she hears the stories of Holocaust survivors who don't hate their oppressors.

"When we listen to their stories we get angry. How can someone have so much hatred and do this to someone else,'' said the 18-year-old student.

Morrison said it's important to remember forgiveness and she recalls the anecdote related to hate that her mother often reminds her of.

"My mom says carrying hate is like carrying a heavy garbage bag of hate on your back,'' she said.

You need to get rid of it for yourself, for your peace of mind, Morrison said.

Aziza Mohamed, who came to Canada from Ethiopia in 2008, said she's glad students are encouraged to attend the race relations event.

"It's important to talk about peace,'' said the 15-year-old Eastwood Collegiate Institute student.

Sara Abshir, who came to Kitchener from Kenya last August, attends Forest Heights Collegiate Institute, a diverse school where she feels welcome.

But Abshir said talking about racism must continue. "This event shows there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed.''

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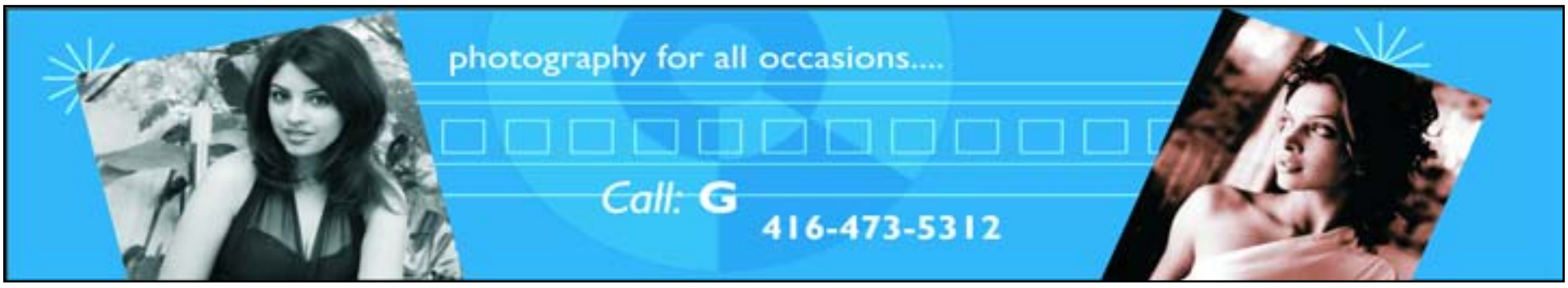
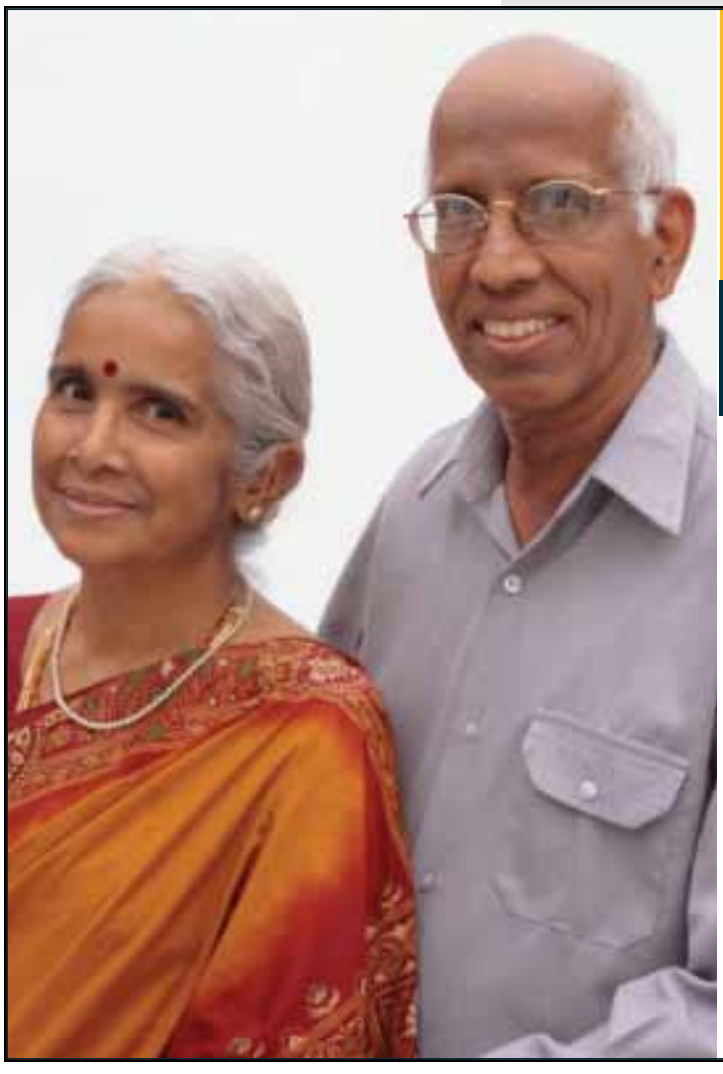
Celebrating 20 years

Hopper Hut Restaurant
880 Ellesmere Road, Unit 215 & 217
Scarborough
Kennedy & Ellesmere

Tel: 416-299-4311





More options. More choice. More control.
The choice is yours.

Permanent life insurance is available for anyone who is 85 years old or younger.

Are you looking for simple answers to your questions about life insurance? When it comes to insurance, it's nice to know you have clear options. You can tailor your policy to your needs, and the needs of your family. Call me and I'll show you why permanent life insurance may be the right choice to protect your family.

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Sun Life Financial

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