

A *parfait* media publication

Monsoon Journal

VOL 10 ISSUE 9 FEBRUARY 2016

US Presidential contest generates global interest early on in the cycle than in the past

The first ballot in the US Presidential election was casted on February 1, 2016 by way of selecting the contenders for the post in the farming and mostly rural State of Iowa.

After the verdict, on the Republican side the second place finishing by billionaire Donald Trump and the tied finish by former first lady, Senator and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the Democratic Party is keeping the race still open.

The campaign especially from the Republican side has been creating worldwide interest on the outcome of the US Presidential election cycle this early on in unprecedented ways. In the Democratic party, the surge in the opinion polls and close finish by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders too continues to see much interest as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was expected to have an easy win of the candidacy.

NBC News on February 2nd said, "The Iowa caucuses and U.S. presidential race are being watched around the world with a mixture of amusement, hope and fear."

President Barack Obama was asked about the tone of the Republican campaign during an end of the year interview by National Public Radio. President Obama said, "I do think that when you combine that demographic change with all the economic stresses that people have been going through because of the

financial crisis, because of technology, because of globalization, the fact that wages and incomes have been flatlining for some time, and that particularly blue-collar men have had a lot of trouble in this new economy, where they are no longer getting the same bargain that they got when they were going to a factory and able to support their families on a single paycheck, you combine those things and it means that there is going to be potential anger, frustration, fear. Some of it justified but just misdirected. I think somebody like Mr. Trump is taking advantage of that. That's what he's exploiting during the course of his campaign".

Senator Ted Cruz a conservative lawmaker from Texas, finished with 28 percent of the vote. That is 3½ percentage points better than Trump, the national front-runner. Florida Senator Marco Rubio finished with 23 percent.

Contenders from both parties will now move onto few other early voting primary states to firm up their choice within the next several weeks.

Bernie Sanders supporter Professor Robert Reich, who was a senior cabinet secretary in President Bill Clinton's administration, had the following to say in his Facebook status update after the verdict in the State of Iowa on February 1st:

"A year ago, Hillary Clinton's support in Iowa was 68 percent while Bernie Sanders's was 7 percent. When he

officially announced his candidacy last spring, Bernie was 40 points behind Hillary. Many establishment Democrats dismissed him as a fringe candidate. They laughed at his Brooklyn accent. They mocked his "democratic socialist" beliefs. They denigrated his age, his unkempt hair. They said it was impossible he could succeed against the Clintons' powerful political organization and their network of wealthy donors.

But tonight in Iowa Bernie showed he leads a powerful political force. That force is not Bernie Sanders. It's the movement to take back our democracy and economy from the moneyed interests that now control both. That movement has just begun to show its political muscle. It will not relent."



Senator Bernie Sanders



Former First Lady Hillary Clinton



Senator Ted Cruz



Senator Marco Rubio



Billionaire Businessman Donald Trump

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Federal, provincial and territorial governments working together on first steps towards a pan-Canadian framework to address climate change

On January 29th, Canada's federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of the environment came together for the first time ever to work towards the establishment of a pan-Canadian framework to address climate change and grow our economy. Together, they made the following statement:

"Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our generation and citizens across the country are already feeling its impacts. All jurisdictions have a leadership role to play.

"Each province and territory is taking its own important steps forward on this path. We achieved the Paris Agreement in December together. With Indigenous leaders, representatives from municipalities, civil society, youth, and business, we were united in our commitment to the global fight against climate change.

"We also looked at Canada's greenhouse gas projections to 2020 and 2030. The data are clear and confirm that more needs to be done. Our governments are now moving forward collaboratively to develop a framework and specific actions, including investments in green infrastructure, to meet the commitments we made in Paris in order to close the gap.

"We are working together to face this challenge and to ensure transition to a cleaner and more resilient future for the next generation and those to come.

"We all agreed that, in the XXIst century, Canada's prosperity must be built on the principle that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. For example, clean technology is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world. It is important to reduce emissions while positioning Canada to take advantage of global opportunities to grow, diversify our economies, access markets, and create jobs.

"The diversity of our people, geography, industry, and economies is our strength. The path forward to fight climate change will build on the Declaration of the Premiers of Canada from the Quebec Summit, and existing engagement and actions of provinces and territories. It includes Indigenous knowledge, and incorporates new and innovative ideas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while growing our economy.

"Over the past two days, we have had productive discussions on important issues and areas, including economic opportunities, means of reducing emissions, including the importance of technological innovation, public engagement, carbon pricing, and adapting to the effects of climate change.

"These discussions bring us one step closer to the successful development of a pan-Canadian framework for combatting climate change."

- news.gc.ca

Ministers of International Trade and Small Business and Tourism announce new export program for Canadian companies

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of International Trade, and the Honourable Bardish Chagger, Minister of Small Business and Tourism, on January 5th announced CanExport, a new program that will provide \$50 million to help Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises take advantage of global export opportunities.

CanExport is one of the building blocks of the government's export strategy: it will help Canadian companies take advantage of opportunities abroad and increase their competitiveness, while creating jobs and growth at home. CanExport will provide Canadian small businesses with matching contributions of between \$10,000 and \$100,000 toward export development costs. The new program will benefit

hundreds of companies each year over the next five years.

CanExport was launched today at Communtech, an industry-led innovation centre that supports and fosters a community of nearly a thousand tech companies at all stages of growth and development, many of which will be able to take advantage of this new program.

To be eligible for the program, companies must employ fewer than 250 employees and have annual revenue in Canada of between \$200,000 and \$50 million. Eligible activities must promote export development and go beyond an applicant's core activities, as well as represent new or expanded initiatives.

- news.gc.ca

Women in Parliament: Increased Participation - Strengthened Democracies



High Commissioner of Canada to Sri Lanka and Maldives, Shelley Whiting at the event-pic: @twitter.com/CanHCSriLanka

The High Commissioner of Canada to Sri Lanka and Maldives, Shelley Whiting, in January 29th launched the Regional Women's Parliamentary Initiative which brings leading women parliamentarians from Afghanistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka together for a two-day series of meetings and discussions in Colombo on opportunities for enhanced women's political participation in the region.

The Colombo component of this initiative is being organised by the High Commission of Canada to Sri Lanka and Maldives with the cooperation of the Government of Sri Lanka, most specifically the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, as well as Canadian Embassies and High Commissions in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.

Speaking on the importance of women's political participation, High Commissioner Whiting stated, "we are all working to the same end, whether in Canada, or here in this region, and that is to support strengthened women's political participation at all levels of government. Canada is committed to the view that gender equality is not only a human rights issue, but is also an essential component of sustainable development, social justice, peace, and security. We've all come a long way, and we all have valuable insight to share on how to continue to improve."

Participating parliamentarians will engage in a series of meetings with key Sri Lanka parliamentarians, government officials and civil society activists promoting women's political participa-

tion. In addition, they will share their views and perspectives on challenges and opportunities to increased political participation during a seminar on 30 January (today) entitled "Because it is 2016" – inspired by a quote from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who, when asked why he prioritised gender parity in his Cabinet, responded "because it is 2015."

"The participants of this initiative come from countries in the region with rich political and cultural heritages and share the experience of being women leaders. They bring that wealth of knowledge and experience to the table. I am honoured to host them here and look forward to sharing perspectives on best practices, challenges, opportunities and next steps in our respective countries and the region with regard to increasing women's political participation – which I believe is key to strong and healthy democracies," stated High Commissioner Whiting.

While considerable strides have been made throughout the region and in Canada in increasing and supporting women's political participation, more work remains to be done. The objective of the initiative is to foster regional dialogue amongst women parliamentarians on an issue of global and regional importance. The dialogue will also provide a platform for constructive, positive discussions among participants with a view to identifying local and regional synergies and networks and identifying areas for future collaborations.

- (courtesy-via ft.lk)

from the publisher's desk

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2016 United Nations World Radio Day:

Keeping the Radio Alive as a Tool of Humanitarianism and Political Activism



With the onset of the Internet, we have been bestowed with astounding, fast-paced ways to get informed about the detailed world around us. Indeed, from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other online platforms alike, they have emerged as some of the most ideal mediums to realize our freedom to express, and socially interact with one another. However, it is always enlightening to take a step back and appreciate the ways we stayed 'in the loop' about things. This has been historically accomplished with the modern radio, which still retains profound relevance even if we live in the global age of the Internet.

On February 13, 2016, we have the great opportunity to reflect on the notable impacts of the radio with World Radio Day.

Started by the United Nations Economic, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2011, World Radio Day is a worldwide celebration of the radio as a medium for communication and information for society. February 13 was declared the date by the UNESCO Director-General following talks in establishing it, because it was this day in 1946 that the United Nations radio was created. A goal of this day of observance aims to improve international cooperation between broadcasters; it also encourages major radio networks to promote access to information, gender equality, and freedom of expression. Not only have radios been relatively low-cost communication tools to disseminate information to various audiences, they also have contributed to the information needs of remote and vulnerable communities in the world. Accordingly, the 2016 theme for this upcoming World Radio Day is "Radio in Times of Emergency and Disaster."

Educationally, this focuses on how radios act as the timeliest of methods to communicate information during times of emergency and disaster. Specifically, it promotes the notions that radios save lives and provides a social impact to individuals and ensures their right to information is well protected. In one manner, radios save lives by efficiently alerting communities to prepare for disasters, thereby minimizing the like-



likelihood of injury and/or death. As a social impact, passive listeners transform into active citizens through the radio, especially in time of emergency. Next, in term of staying significant in 2016 and beyond, it has been noted that technology has changed the character of radios, along with other sources of media.

They have been incorporated within broadband, tablet, and mobile devices as a result of the emergent Internet. Ideally, members of the Tamil community in Canada can relate this to their efforts to preserve Tamil heritage here in the Canadian multicultural mosaic. Major Tamil and other specialty radio broadcasts are now made available through the Internet, rather than through a normal radio only.

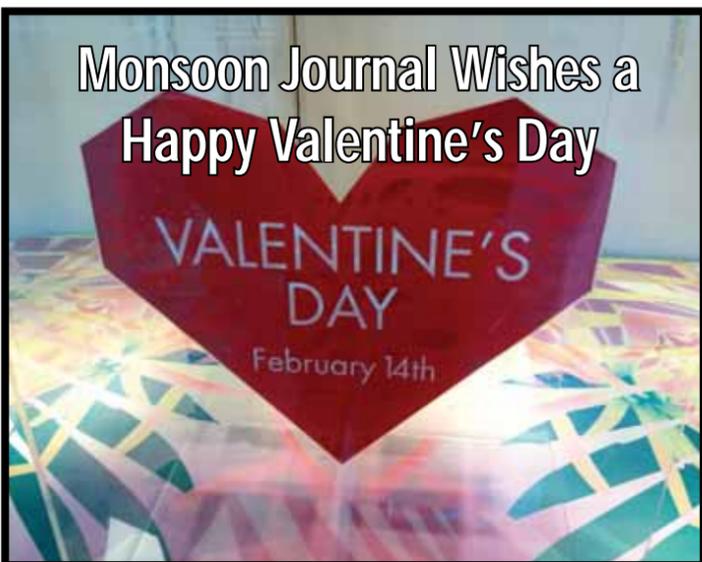
Furthermore, CBC Radio can be readily accessed through these new platforms as part of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's mandate to spread news, arts, and culture to the wider Canadian public. To our neighbour to the South, the United States, one could discover this with their broadcasters, such as National Public Radio (NPR); among others, the United Kingdom-based British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) also communicates through these newfound mediums in reaching its global audiences.

Optimistically, we are witnessing new ways to keep the radio alive as a medium, with World Radio Day as a forum to sustain the radio for years to come.

Contributed by: **Harrish Thirukumaran**
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“One word frees us of all the weight and pain of life: That word is love.” - Sophocles (c. 496 bc - 406), Greek Dramatist

Printing the Winds of Change around us All lands home, all men kin.

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City of Toronto Celebrates Black History Month

In 1979, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada to make the proclamation.

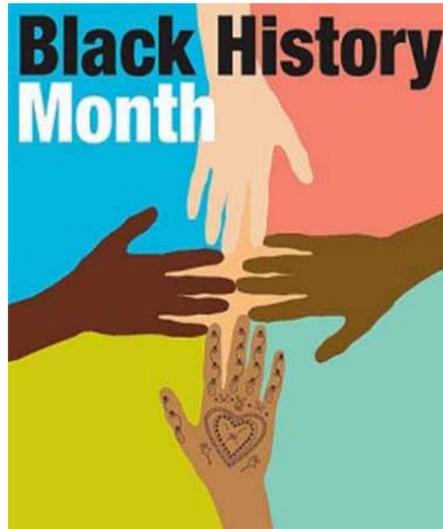
"Black History Month is a time to explore and celebrate the legacy of black Canadians. Throughout the history of Toronto, African-Canadians have contributed so much to building Toronto. Canadians of all backgrounds should know the incredible history of our black citizens in every aspect of our city – medicine, art, education, business, public service, politics."

City divisions and agencies have scheduled programming throughout the month of February, both at public centres as well as online, in addition to the many private events that will take place across Toronto.

Mayor John Tory has already announced his Black History Creative Writing Contest. In 500 words or less, in any written format, young people ages 11-17 are invited to share a story about black Torontonians, past or present, who have contributed to Toronto's diverse heritage and identity. More information about the contest is available at www1.toronto.ca.

The Toronto Reference Library will host a special Black History Month Kickoff Gala on January 29 hosted by CTV's Marci Ien, as well as an appearance by 2015 Booker Prize winner and celebrated Jamaican author Marlon James on February 18. Other highlights of this year's library programming are the National Film Board Mini-Film Festival, The eh List Author Series, and a panel discussion entitled, Before the 6ix. More details and events are available at torontopubliclibrary.ca/blackhistory.

A number of community centres throughout the city, as part of Parks, Forestry and Recreation programming, will host events for adults and children. The Nelson Mandela Tribute takes place at McGregor Park Community Centre, North Kipling Youth Present: Know Your Roots - A Celebration of Black History is back for another year, and Lawrence Heights will host a Black History Celebration. There are also movie nights, a Poetry/



Spoken Word Reading and One Love (a Black History Month workshop for kids) planned.

City of Toronto Museums and Heritage Services will present Mackenzie House Celebrates Black History Month. Every weekend in February, plus Family Day Monday, members of the public are invited to learn more about Black Victorians of Toronto, featuring those who published newspapers during that era. Visitors can take a piece of this important history home when they print a souvenir copy of Mary Ann Shadd Cary's newspaper, The Provincial Freeman, in the re-created 1850's printshop. The souvenir is included with regular admission.

The Toronto Archives invite members of the public to visit their online exhibits entitled Black History Month in Toronto and Donald Moore: Caribbean Connection: One Man's Crusade.

A listing of City-related exhibitions, educational displays and community-based programming is available at www1.toronto.ca.

Toronto is Canada's largest city, the fourth largest in North America, and home to a diverse population of about 2.8 million people. It is a global centre for business, finance, arts and culture and is consistently ranked one of the world's most livable cities. For information on non-emergency City services and programs, Toronto residents, businesses and visitors can visit toronto.ca, call 311, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or follow on Twitter: @TorontoComms.

Message from the Governor General of Canada on the Occasion of the Centennial of Women's Suffrage

By His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, The Governor General of Canada

OTTAWA—On January 28, 1916, women won the right to vote in the Province of Manitoba. It started a domino effect across the country, as one province and then the next introduced women's suffrage. Two years later, the bill giving women the right to vote was passed by the Parliament of Canada.

It has been a century since that landmark decision was made in Win-

nipeg. Yet even with the leaps and bounds in our social progress, there are still shortfalls to equality. As parents of five daughters, Sharon and I know well the barriers that women can face today. And now, we also have granddaughters for whom we want to build a better and more inclusive world.

During this centennial year of women's suffrage, we must persevere, as a nation, in our efforts to ensure that every Canadian has the same rights as the next.

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Neethan Shan wins TDSB byelection



Neethan Shan

Neethan Shan is the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) newest trustee, elected by a landslide on Monday, January 25th in Scarborough-Rouge River.

There were 20 in total on the ballot for the Ward 21 (Scarborough-Rouge River) byelection and Neethan Shan took 54 per cent of the 7,826 votes cast.

Neethan Shan's credentials include:
- B.Sc.(Hons.), B.Ed and M.Ed de-

grees from the University of Toronto
- Local resident with over 20 years of community development and educational work in Malvern and Scarborough Rouge River as a youth worker, teacher, professor, manager of youth programs and media producer

Recipient of the Toronto Community Foundation Vital People Award and the Race Relations Award from Urban Alliance for Race Relations



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Education key to preventing new genocides

says UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at UN special event honouring Holocaust victims

27 January 2016 – As the global community gathered to commemorate the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi extermination camp 71 years ago, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stressed that the most effective way to stand up for human rights, fight xenophobia and prevent new genocides is by educating new generations about the horrors of the Holocaust.

“Today, with a rising tide of anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry and other forms of discrimination, we must do even more to defend these rights for people everywhere,” Mr. Ban told hundreds of people at UN Headquarters in New York, attending a memorial ceremony.

Noting that “violent extremism, sectarian tensions and hate-filled ideologies are on the march,” the UN chief underlined that civilians are in the crosshairs, and that international humanitarian law is being “flouted on a global scale.”

“The international community is failing to hold perpetrators to account,” he warned. “Today, we see actions of Da’esh [also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL] that may amount to grave crimes against minority groups such as the Yazidis. And the conflict in Syria has generated the worst humanitarian crisis of our time,” he said.

Meanwhile, recalling that the Holocaust was a “colossal crime,” Mr. Ban said those who deny it only perpetuate falsehoods and make a mockery of the pain.

“I was profoundly disappointed to learn of another so-called ‘Holocaust cartoon contest’ being planned this year in Iran,” he lamented. “At this time of sectarian tensions, mutual respect must be foremost in our minds. Spreading hatred and toying with historical facts only leads down the dead-end of discord and danger,” he stressed.

In his remarks, the President of the UN General Assembly said evidence suggests that lessons from the past have not been put into practice, noting that the world still sees hate speech and actions by governments which incite hatred of others.

“All of us, therefore, at the United Nations and beyond, have a responsibility to take greater steps to promote tolerance, human rights and human dignity,” insisted Mogens Lykketoft, noting that this includes “The Responsibility to Protect” or R2P – a doctrine which recognizes the vulnerability of populations in many regions of the world, and calls on the international community to intervene to protect



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses event marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. UN Photo/Mark Garten

them.

Mr. Lykketoft also called on all present to listen carefully to the stories and music of those speaking and performing at today’s event, hosted by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Cristina Gallach.

The ceremony featured a video tribute to Sir Nicholas Winton, who at age 29, rescued 669 children from the Holocaust on the Czech Kindertransport. He passed away at the age of 106 last July. Speaking to the audience, his daughter, Barbara Winton, explained that her father had kept a scrapbook of all those he had managed to save, with the names and addresses of the families who had took them in.

In the early 1980s, he decided to find an organization that would be interested in housing the scrapbook. Several years later, he was called by a BBC television show called “That’s Life.” Producers told him they wanted to do an item on the book and invited him to come watch in the audience.

The clip shown to the General Assembly today showed Sir Winton at the taping; the anchor informs him that he is sitting next to one of the children he has saved, at which point they hug in an emotional embrace. The journalist then asks everyone in the room who was saved during the war by Mr. Winton to stand up. The whole audience then proceeds to rise.

Taking the floor as keynote speaker of the event, Beate Klarsfeld, who dedicated her life to bringing Nazi criminals to justice, said history is unpredictable. “Only the United Nations, provided it is powerful and effective, can master the unpredictability of his-



Participants at the Holocaust memorial ceremony on the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. UN Photo/Manuel Elias/Loey Felipe

tory and safeguard the dignity of every human being,” she stated.

Meanwhile, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations said this day of commemoration is an occasion to reflect on the past and to consider the message of the Holocaust to the present.

“I planned to come here to speak to you today about the importance of memory,” Danny Danon told the audience. “I wanted to discuss the critical lessons we’ve learned from history – that we must never bury our head in



the sand in the face of extremism and antisemitism. The main message of the speech I had prepared was that in order to remember, we must listen to the stories from the survivors themselves.”

Personal testimonies were delivered by Holocaust survivors Marta Wise and Haim Roet, and by Mr. Zoni Weisz, a Sinto survivor. The event also included a performance by the United States Military Academy at West Point Jewish Chapel Choir.

– UN.org

World Bank Study Sees Global Economy Growing

World Bank experts predict global economic activity will grow a bit faster this year because of more rapid growth in advanced economies, a study published on January 6, 2016 said.

While developed nations are expanding, global growth is constrained by problems in major emerging markets, the study said.

The study said that overall, the global economy would probably expand at a 2.9 percent annual pace this year, up about half a percentage point from 2015.

The authors said weakness in most major emerging markets was a concern, because those nations have been “powerful contributors to global growth for the past decade.”

“More than 40 percent of the world’s poor live in developing nations where growth slowed in 2015,” World Bank President Jim Yong Kim said.

Growth in emerging nations was hurt last year as prices fell for their commodity exports, including oil.

These developing economies are forecast to expand by 4.8 percent this year, which is a little faster than in 2015. Growth is expected to slow further in China, while Russia and Bra-

zil are expected to remain in recession for the year.

Previously, strong growth in emerging nations attracted lots of investment that helped them expand businesses and infrastructure. However, slowing growth and rising risk are now encouraging investors to move their money to the perceived safety of advanced nations.

The outflow of capital from emerging markets is also encouraged by rising interest rates in the United States, which investors expect will improve their profits.

– VOA News





World Health Organization announces a Public Health Emergency of International Concern

1 February 2016 –World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that the recent cluster of neurological disorders and neonatal malformations reported in the Americas region constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. This comes after the International Health Regulation Emergency Committee agreed that a causal link between this cluster and Zika virus disease is strongly suspected. It constitutes an “extraordinary event” and a public health threat to other parts of the world.

WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan summarizes the outcome of the Emergency Committee on Zika:

I convened an Emergency Committee, under the International Health Regulations, to gather advice on the severity of the health threat associated with the continuing spread of Zika virus disease in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Committee met today by teleconference.

In assessing the level of threat, the 18 experts and advisers looked in particular at the strong association, in

time and place, between infection with the Zika virus and a rise in detected cases of congenital malformations and neurological complications.

The experts agreed that a causal relationship between Zika infection during pregnancy and microcephaly is strongly suspected, though not yet scientifically proven. All agreed on the urgent need to coordinate international efforts to investigate and understand this relationship better.

The experts also considered patterns of recent spread and the broad geographical distribution of mosquito species that can transmit the virus.

The lack of vaccines and rapid and reliable diagnostic tests, and the absence of population immunity in newly affected countries were cited as further causes for concern.

After a review of the evidence, the Committee advised that the recent cluster of microcephaly cases and other neurological disorders reported in Brazil, following a similar cluster in French Polynesia in 2014, constitutes an “extraordinary event” and a pub-



Dr Margaret Chan

lic health threat to other parts of the world.

In their view, a coordinated international response is needed to minimize the threat in affected countries and reduce the risk of further international spread.

Members of the Committee agreed that the situation meets the conditions for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

I have accepted this advice.

I am now declaring that the recent cluster of microcephaly cases and other neurological disorders reported in Brazil, following a similar cluster in French Polynesia in 2014, constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

A coordinated international response is needed to improve surveillance, the detection of infections, congenital malformations, and neurological complications, to intensify the control of mosquito populations, and to expedite the development of diagnostic tests and vaccines to protect people at risk, especially during pregnancy.

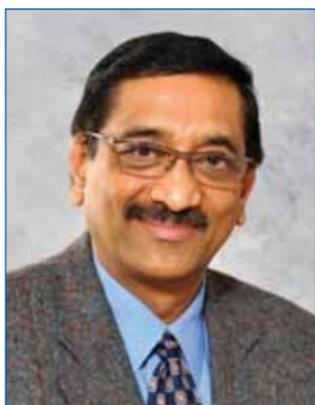
The Committee found no public health justification for restrictions on travel or trade to prevent the spread of Zika virus.

At present, the most important protective measures are the control of mosquito populations and the prevention of mosquito bites in at-risk individuals, especially pregnant women.

(via: who.int/dg/en/)

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Warmer Indian Ocean could be 'ecological desert', scientists warn

NEGOMBO, Sri Lanka (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Ansem Silva has fished for four decades from this popular harbor on Sri Lanka's west coast, but for five years now filling his boat has become increasingly difficult.

"We seem to be spending more and more time out at sea looking for catch. Where there were fish for decades, now there is very little. It is strange, but all of us have been noticing that," said the 54-year-old fisherman, who operates his own trawler on multi-day trips reaching 100 to 150 kilometres (60 to 90 miles) off the coast.

Overfishing is responsible for some of the lowered catch, but another problem may also be contributing: lack of food for the fish themselves, driven by global warming.

"Rapid warming in the Indian Ocean is playing an important role in reducing phytoplankton up to 20 percent," said

tionally home to large shoals of fish, such as near the Kenyan and Somali coasts.

"Recent satellite data show that the decline is up to 30 percent in the western Indian Ocean during the last 16 years, which is one of the most biological productive regions in the tropics and host to some of the most economically viable tuna species," said Marcello Vichi, another of the study's coauthors, from the University of Cape Town.

The western Indian Ocean is responsible for 20 percent of the global tuna catch, the research said. While tuna overfishing was a contributing factor to lower stocks of the fish, declines in food sources – such as phytoplankton – were also a significant problem, it said.

Koll predicted fish stocks could decline significantly further in the face of continued overfishing and ocean warming.

"All of the state-of-the-art climate models unanimously project that the In-



Roxy Mathew Koll, a scientist at the Centre for Climate Change Research at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune.

Over six decades, rising water temperatures appear to have been reducing the amount of phytoplankton – microscopic plants at the base of the ocean food chain – available as food for fish, according to research released in December by Koll and other scientists from the United States, South Africa and France.

That "may cascade through the food chain, potentially turning this biologically productive region into an ecological desert," Koll said. Such a change would curb food security not only in Indian Ocean rim countries but also global fish markets that buy from the region, he said.

As waters in parts of the Indian Ocean have warmed by 1.2 degrees Celsius over the last century, the mixing of surface water and nutrient-rich deeper waters have slowed, the scientists said. That has prevented nutrients from reaching the plankton, which are mostly active in surface waters.

"The vertical mixing (of water) is a critical process for introducing nutrients into the upper zones where sufficient light is available for photosynthesis," said Raghu Murtugudde, a scientist from the University of Maryland.

The researcher said that recent data showed phytoplankton levels falling dramatically in some regions that are tradi-

dian Ocean will continue to warm under increasing greenhouse gases. This will result in a further decline of the phytoplankton in the Indian Ocean, exaggerating the stress on the marine ecosystem and the fish, which are already affected by overfishing," he said.

The impact will be felt in countries around the Indian Ocean, including India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. But importers such as the United States, Europe and Japan also could feel the impact, the scientists said.

Fishermen in Sri Lanka say they already see the number of fishing boats in some of the country's ports declining as a result of the changes.

"It is very difficult to operate a new boat ... so few people now want to get into fishing at a large scale," said Mohamed Riyazudeen, who works as a boat captain from Valechchennei, an important fishing port on Sri Lanka's east coast.

He called the research on ocean warming very bad news.

"What are we to do? We don't know any other trade and if there is no fish, what are we to catch?" he asked.

(Reporting by Amantha Perera; editing by Laurie Goering-Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, climate change, women's rights, trafficking and corruption. Visit www.trust.org/climate)

Twenty countries in the Americas reporting cases of Zika virus – UN health agency

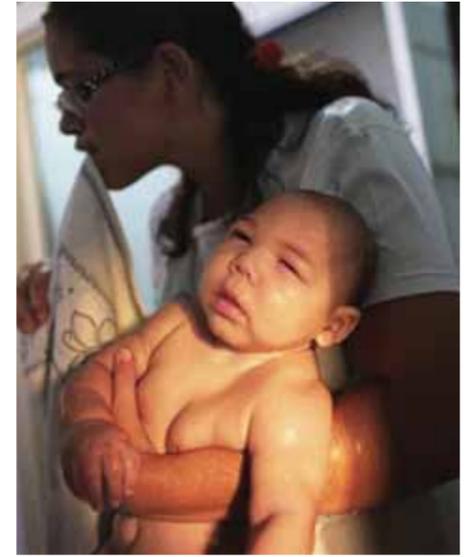
Twenty countries in the Americas and about 10 in Africa, Asia and the Pacific have reported cases of the mosquito-borne Zika virus infection according to information delivered on January 22nd by the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

"Most are reporting sporadic cases but we have larger outbreaks in Brazil, in Colombia, in El Salvador, in Panama and in Cape Verde," WHO Spokesperson Christian Lindmeier told reporters in Geneva.

"Microcephaly cases which have occurred now recently in Brazil stand at 3,893 reported suspected cases, with 49 deaths in 20 states of Brazil, and we have that one case reported out of Hawaii, an earlier traveller to Brazil," he added, noting that the link between Zika and microcephaly is still being investigated.

According to WHO, teams are working with Brazil and other countries, including French Polynesia, where a larger outbreak of Zika virus hit in 2013 and 2014, attacking the nervous system of several patients.

Zika comes from the same mosquito that transmits dengue, yellow fever,



and chikungunya. WHO is highlighting that the best prevention measures include long sleeves and trousers, insect repellents and sleeping under mosquito nets. Countries are reportedly also doing their best to eliminate the breeding grounds for mosquitos.

At this point, no specific travel advisory has been issued by WHO, but national centres could issue travel advice to their own nationals, based on the evidence they have.

- UN.org

Monsoon Journal Wishes a Happy Chinese New Year Year of the Monkey

February 8, 2016

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U.S. Civil Rights Activists Blast Michigan City Water Crisis

U.S. civil rights activists descended on the Midwestern city of Flint, Michigan, on January 17, 2016 describing its drinking water contamination crisis as “a disaster, not just an emergency.”

Longtime rights leader, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, led a delegation of activists, addressing a crowd of concerned and angered citizens packed into a local church. Speaking later to reporters, Jackson described the city, where residents have been exposed to contaminated drinking and bathing water for nearly two years, as “a crime scene.”

Health experts report finding dangerously high levels of lead in the city's children, and state officials have begun importing bottled water to protect locals from further contamination.

Jackson's presence in Flint, a largely African American city where 40 percent of the population lives in poverty, came one day after President Barack Obama declared a local state of emergency, clearing the way for streamlining federal aid.

His visit also came a day after firebrand filmmaker Michael Moore, who was raised in Flint, spoke at City Hall, declaring the situation is “not just a water crisis. It's a racial crisis. It's a poverty crisis....That's what created this,” he said.

In an editorial, the Detroit Free

Press called on Michigan Governor Rick Snyder to release staff emails that critics say may show a pattern of willful neglect by state officials allegedly attempting to minimize the contamination and its effects.

Separately, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP, decried the crisis, which began in 2014 when the cash-strapped city sought to save money by drawing water from a local river rather than nearby Detroit's water system.

It was later found that officials did not properly treat the corrosive Flint River water to prevent metal leaching from old pipes. Additionally, Flint residents were not told about their tainted drinking water supply for a year and a half, and have now begun demanding to know what and when state officials became aware of the contamination.

Flint has since returned to using water from Detroit, but engineers now say its water distribution system may need replacement, costing as much at \$1.5 billion.

Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, director of pediatric residency at Hurley Children's Hospital, is credited with bringing the problem to the public's attention after state agencies initially dismissed her concerns. Lead-contaminated water “has such damning, life-



long and generational consequences,” Hanna-Attisha says.

The World Health Organization says excess lead exposure can damage a human's nervous and reproductive systems and the kidneys, and can cause high blood pressure and anemia. It also describes lead as “especially harmful to the developing brains of fetuses, young children and to pregnant women.” Additionally, the WHO warns of risks from “irreversible learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and mental retardation. At very high levels, lead can cause convulsions, coma and death.”

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder declared a state of emergency earlier in January, enabling Flint residents to go to fire stations for a daily case of water per household. But many blame Snyder for the current crisis, saying he

failed to act until what The New York Times describes as “an outpouring of rage from Flint residents, city leaders, journalists and independent researchers forced him to wake up and focus on the calamity.”

Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette recently announced that he will investigate the crisis to determine whether any state laws were broken.

The NAACP, in a statement described Schuette's announcement as a “positive and much needed step in the right direction.” It went on to say that “it is not extraordinary or unrealistic to expect the water our children drink and bathe in ...to be free of chemicals. To expose a city of nearly 100,000 residents, many of them children, to toxic lead is, if not criminal, at the very least inhumane.”

— VOA News

Deepa Balachandran, B.A. (Hons.), B. Ed., J.D.

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*Please note: The material on this advertisement is not intended as legal advice. If you are the alleged victim/complainant (not the person charged), I cannot offer advice. Please contact your local Victims Services office for assistance.





Giving Every Student an Opportunity to Learn Through Computer Science For All

WASHINGTON, DC - In his weekly address to the American people on January 30th, 2016, President Barack Obama discussed his plan to give all students across the country the chance to learn computer science (CS) in school. The President noted that our economy is rapidly shifting, and that educators and business leaders are increasingly recognizing that CS is a "new basic" skill necessary for economic opportunity.

The President referenced his Computer Science for All Initiative, which provides \$4 billion in funding for states and \$100 million directly for districts in his upcoming budget; and invests more than \$135 million beginning this year by the National Science Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service to support and train CS teachers. The President called on even more Governors, Mayors, education leaders, CEOs, philanthropists, creative media and technology professionals, and others to get involved in the efforts.

Full Text speech by President Barack Obama:

Weekly Address, The White House, January 30, 2016

Hi everybody. As I said in my State of the Union address, we live in a time of extraordinary change – change that's affecting the way we live and the way we work. New technology replaces any job where work can be automated. Workers need more skills to get ahead. These changes aren't new, and they're only going to accelerate. So the question we have to ask ourselves is, "How

can we make sure everyone has a fair shot at success in this new economy?"

The answer to that question starts with education. That's why my Administration has encouraged states to raise standards. We've cut the digital divide in our classrooms in half. We've worked with Congress to pass a bipartisan bill to set the expectation that every student should graduate from high school ready for college and a good job. And thanks to the hard work of students, teachers, and parents across the country, our high school graduation rate is at an all-time high.

Now we have to make sure all our kids are equipped for the jobs of the future – which means not just being able to work with computers, but developing the analytical and coding skills to power our innovation economy. Today's auto mechanics aren't just sliding under cars to change the oil; they're working on machines that run on as many as 100 million lines of code. That's 100 times more than the Space Shuttle. Nurses are analyzing data and managing electronic health records. Machinists are writing computer programs. And workers of all kinds need to be able to figure out how to break a big problem into smaller pieces and identify the right steps to solve it.

In the new economy, computer science isn't an optional skill – it's a basic skill, right along with the three "Rs." Nine out of ten parents want it taught at their children's schools. Yet right now, only about a quarter of our K through 12 schools offer computer science. Twenty-two states don't even al-



low it to count toward a diploma.

So I've got a plan to help make sure all our kids get an opportunity to learn computer science, especially girls and minorities. It's called Computer Science For All. And it means just what it says – giving every student in America an early start at learning the skills they'll need to get ahead in the new economy.

First, I'm asking Congress to provide funding over the next three years so that our elementary, middle, and high schools can provide opportunities to learn computer science for all students.

Second, starting this year, we're leveraging existing resources at the National Science Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service to train more great teachers for these courses.

And third, I'll be pulling together governors, mayors, business leaders, and tech entrepreneurs to join the

growing bipartisan movement around this cause. Americans of all kinds – from the Spanish teacher in Queens who added programming to her classes to the young woman in New Orleans who worked with her Police Chief to learn code and share more data with the community – are getting involved to help young people learn these skills. And just today, states like Delaware and Hawaii, companies like Google and Salesforce, and organizations like Code.org have made commitments to help more of our kids learn these skills. That's what this is all about – each of us doing our part to make sure all our young people can compete in a high-tech, global economy. They're the ones who will make sure America keeps growing, keeps innovating, and keeps leading the world in the years ahead. And they're the reason I've never been more confident about our future.

Thanks everybody, and have a great weekend.

Infosys Founder urges strong collaboration between the US and Indian academia

N R Narayana Murthy, Indian IT industrialist and the co-founder of Infosys, a multinational corporation providing business consulting, technology, engineering, and outsourcing services said India needs to 'discover and invent locally' to help the Centre's ambitious "Make in India" scheme become successful. Murthy said "for Modi government's flagship programme to succeed, the country has to invent and discover locally".

Addressing the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) Conclave on the theme 'Vision 2020' on January 29th, he said that a strong collaboration between the US and Indian academia is needed which will also lay a strong foundation for India's solid growth in the long term.

Describing the partnership as "an

important area", Murthy said the "unusual" partnership in higher education and research would benefit India enormously in medium to long term and the US academia in medium term.

"I am confident that it will create a stronger bond of friendship between India and the US for a long period in the future and it will make India a strong nation," he said. The conclave was inaugurated by Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, and the agenda was to evolve a vision for taking Indo-US Trade to \$500 billion by 2020.

Murthy said this strategy of India will make it a leader in high-tech products and services in the world and enhance the prosperity of our people through increased exports and domestic use of such products.

Recalling similar view expressed

by Nobel laureate David J Gross during the 103rd Indian Science Congress at Mysuru in early January, he advocated for Indian Universities working with US universities.

"The exchange of faculty and students between our universities and universities in the US will have to be increased at least hundred-fold. We will have to issue ten year multiple entry visas every year to hundreds and thousands of academicians from the US," he said.

Suggesting similar such measures to enhance ties between universities in both countries, Murthy said, "The leaders of the two countries will have to work out a landmark agreement to send ten thousand students - at least thousand students in ten areas every year to do their PHD in important ar-

eas in the US for the next fifty years."

Murthy further said that "we have to work out an agreement with the US that these students whom we send from India will not be given employment in the US once they finish their PhDs and they will have to come back to India and serve here at least ten years".

Murthy said, "The US will also benefit from this arrangement since there will be a large number of Indian students working on problems that will add value to US academicians." Stating that India has to start collaborating with the US in unusual areas to build a new bond of friendship, Murthy also stressed on the importance of developing discipline, hard work, high aspiration and honesty among young generation. (PTI News)



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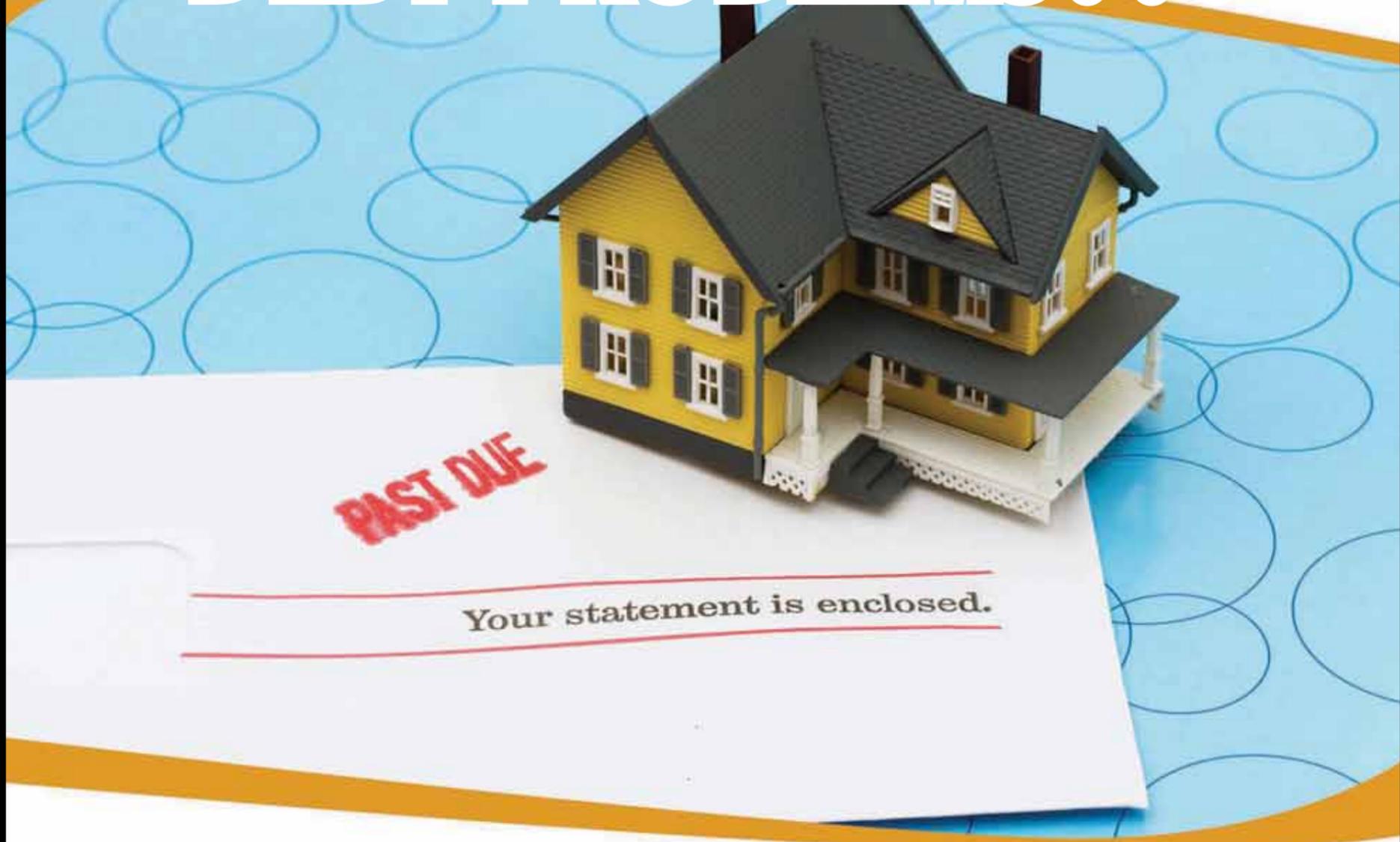
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New NS Dental clinic opened in Ajax

By Siva Sivapragasam

NS Dental, a modern state of the art dental clinic providing a whole range of services for the entire family was opened in Ajax recently.

Located in a busy and strategic intersection of Taunton Road and Harwood Avenue, NS Dental provides a wide range of dental services to the whole family with the latest dental technology by dental professionals with extensive experience.

Among the services provided are: dental implants, dental restoration, root canal procedure, teeth cleaning and whitening or even a dental emergency.

The clinic is owned and operated by Dr. Nalini Sutharsan, a well qualified dentist with several years of experience. She is ably assisted by other associates and a talented team of staff members who provide patients services with a smile. The clinic is open seven days of the week and therefore offers dental services to patients when they are not at work. A large number of well-wishers including Mark Holland, M.P. for Ajax and Gary Anandasangaree M.P. for Scarborough Rouge Park were present at the opening.

Patients visiting NS Dental can be assured that their dental needs are provided with the highest quality of dental care in a comfortable, caring and relaxed environment.

(Seen here are some pictures taken at the grand opening of the clinic).



TDSB celebrates Thai Pongal and Tamil Heritage month

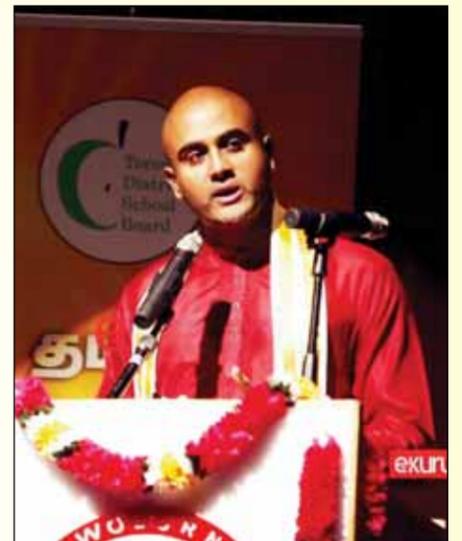
The Toronto District School Board hosted the inaugural Thai Pongal and Tamil Heritage month celebrations recently at the Woburn Collegiate Institute, Scarborough.

The celebrations showcased the dramatic, musical, dance and artistic talents of TDSB students of Tamil heritage.

This year's theme was based on Thiruvalluvar's Kural "Learn with care, and let your conduct reflect your learning". In keeping with this theme, contests were held for students from K-12 in poetry, original artwork, essay and awards were presented to the winners.

The credit goes to Toronto District School Board Trustee for Scarborough Southwest Ward 18, Parthi Kandavel for his hard work in organizing this event in a grand scale.

(Seen here are some pictures taken at the event)



New Office of RE/MAX Ace Realty Inc. Brokerage opened in Scarborough

RE/MAX Ace Realty Inc. Brokerage had the opening of their new office in Scarborough at 1286, Kennedy Road, Unit 3, Toronto recently.

A number of guests including dignitaries, business associates, friends and well-wishers graced the occasion.

This franchise Brokerage is independently owned, operated and managed by Rathees Paramalingam who is the Broker of Record and the Manager, Sri Nadarajasundaram.

Seen here are some pictures taken at the opening.



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Rouge Valley launches new neurology clinic for kids

Paediatric neurologist offers help for children with epilepsy, seizures, concussion

Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) has a new clinic to help paediatric patients with neurological conditions. Families in Scarborough and west Durham Region with children who have brain-related injuries or disorders can now access specialized services close to home.

The neurology clinic is offered as part of the Galaxy 12 Child and Teen Clinics at Rouge Valley Centenary (RVC) hospital campus in Scarborough.

"We are pleased to continue building on the robust services offered in our Galaxy 12 clinic and provide this highly-sought specialization within our community," says Dr. Naresh Mohan, RVHS Chief of Staff.

The clinic sees children (newborn to age 18) with conditions such as epilepsy and seizures; stroke; headaches; concussion; movement disorders; neurogenetic diseases; congenital defect of the brain and spinal cord; and cerebral palsy. It runs the first and third Tuesday of the month.

New physician leading specialty clinic and service

Rouge Valley's paediatric neurology clinic has been made possible by the addition of Dr. Dragos Nita to the department of paediatrics at RVC this past fall. A paediatric neurologist, Dr. Nita has expertise in epilepsy, brain

injuries, and assessment of the brain using electroencephalography (EEG). He believes that it is important to support young neurology patients from throughout the community to help them achieve their maximum potential.

"I have always been and remain fascinated by the complexity of the human brain," says Dr. Nita. "Working with children adds an extra dimension — we not only care for the brains and minds of our patients now, but we care for what they may become in the future."

Dr. Nita is both a medical doctor and a researcher. He aims to make the most up-to-date research discoveries available in patient care, while trying to find answers to the questions and challenges patients and families of children with brain injuries currently have.

"I always aimed to be a clinician and scientist who can simultaneously help patients, identify the gaps in patient care, be able to answer the relevant clinical questions through innovative research, and then be able to translate back the new acquired knowledge into clinical practice," he explains.

Dr. Nita completed his neurology residency at the University of Toronto and also completed his clinical and research fellowship in epilepsy at the

Hospital for Sick Children. He left his native Romania in 2001 to earn his PhD in neuroscience with a specific focus on brain injuries from Laval University in Quebec City. He decided to come to Canada because it is "not only at the front of medical research and clinical medicine, but it has successfully developed the clinician-scientist model," he says.

He is pleased to bring his expertise and enthusiasm to the Rouge Valley paediatric team that he says, "already proved high professionalism and compassionate care." Dr. Nita is fluent in English, French and Romanian.

Making an appointment

Dr. Nita is now accepting new patients. Family physicians and paediatricians may visit www.rougevalley.ca/paediatric-neurology-clinic to download a referral form, which can be faxed to 416-281-7313. For more information, please phone 416-281-7476.

Quick facts about the paediatric clinics at Rouge Valley

- At Rouge Valley Health System, caring for young patients is one of the key services offered to the communities of Scarborough and west Durham. Families can access specialized care that is closer to home through their many outpatient clinics for infants,

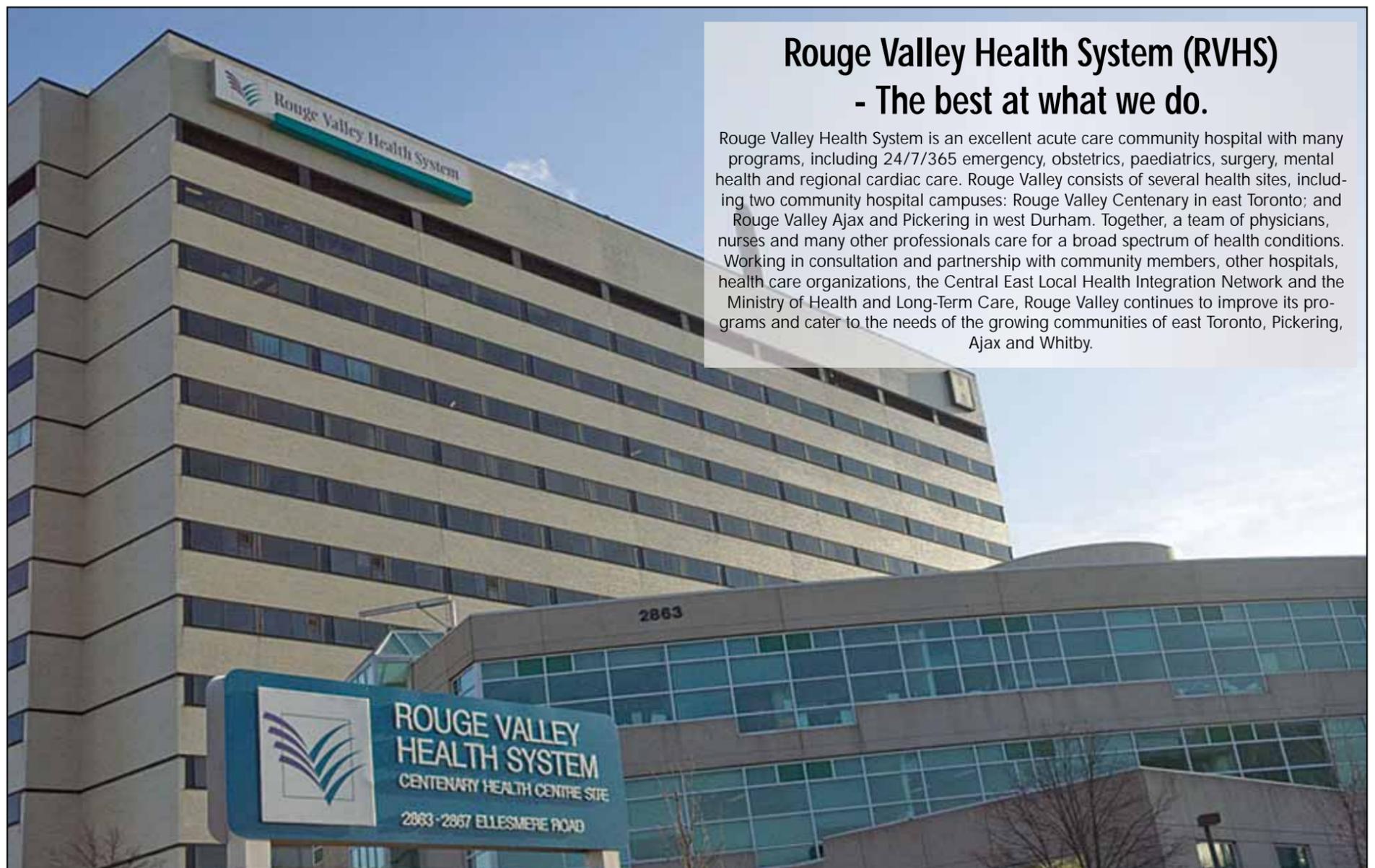
children, and adolescents.

- Clinics offered include: diabetes, hematology, mental health, neurology, rheumatology, nephrology, neonatal follow up, adolescent medicine, respiratory syncytial virus prophylaxis, constipation, gastroenterology with endoscopy, scoliosis and general paediatrics. These outpatient services complement the paediatric inpatient units and day surgery, and special care facilities for premature babies, at both sites.

- Rouge Valley also partners with other health providers. The sickle cell satellite clinic and the paediatric oncology satellite clinic are both delivered in partnership with the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. The Healthy Outcome Paediatric Program for Scarborough (HOPPS) for overweight or obese children is offered in partnership with The Scarborough Hospital and other community health groups.

- Rouge Valley is also home to the Shoniker Clinic, a child and adolescent mental health clinic that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of significant mental health issues.

- For more information about Rouge Valley's paediatric care programs and clinics, please visit www.rougevalley.ca/paediatrics.



Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) - The best at what we do.

Rouge Valley Health System is an excellent acute care community hospital with many programs, including 24/7/365 emergency, obstetrics, paediatrics, surgery, mental health and regional cardiac care. Rouge Valley consists of several health sites, including two community hospital campuses: Rouge Valley Centenary in east Toronto; and Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering in west Durham. Together, a team of physicians, nurses and many other professionals care for a broad spectrum of health conditions. Working in consultation and partnership with community members, other hospitals, health care organizations, the Central East Local Health Integration Network and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Rouge Valley continues to improve its programs and cater to the needs of the growing communities of east Toronto, Pickering, Ajax and Whitby.

LET'S MOVE FORWARD TOGETHER

The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) welcomes the report of the Scarborough-West Durham Expert Panel released on December 18, 2015. Putting the needs of patients and communities first, the report addresses three key objectives that will advance the health services for the Scarborough community:

- Begin planning for the siting and construction of a new comprehensive acute care hospital in Scarborough;
- Make immediate to short-term capital investments to ensure that existing facilities continue to support quality patient care until new hospital facilities are built in Scarborough; and,
- Create an integrated hospital system under one corporation and one Board of Directors to oversee the three

Scarborough hospital sites and the development of a single master plan.

TSH supports these recommendations, including the recommendation to create one integrated hospital system in Scarborough. A hospital system that is completely in step with its community's unique needs will lead to a stronger voice for Scarborough. Ultimately, it will lead to better integrated care for patients.

If fully implemented, the changes will advance health services and result in better and more equitable access to care for the Scarborough community.

TSH has developed a brochure that summarizes the key recommendations and highlights of this report. The brochure is available on our website at www.tsh.to.



Last baby of 2015 at TSH represents many 'firsts' for her family



Baby Claire, the last baby born at The Scarborough Hospital, with proud parents Chantal and Andrew Beresford.

She may hold the honour of being the last baby born at The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) in 2015, but for her family, little Claire Beresford represents a number of important 'firsts'.

Born at 11:37 p.m. on December 31, 2015 at TSH's Birchmount campus, Claire is the first girl for parents Chantal and Andrew, who already have two boys; ages seven and five.

She's also the first of the Beresford's children to be born in Canada. The couple, who met in college in Michigan, just recently returned to Canada after spending 12 years living in Michigan and two years in California. Chantal grew up in Ajax and Andrew in the Birchmount Road and Finch Avenue East area of Scarborough, near the Birchmount campus.

So, when Chantal and Andrew decided to settle in Scarborough, having their baby at TSH was a natural choice.

"This hospital has been a part of my family," explains Andrew. "My sister was born here and I came

here for help with my asthma."

Baby Claire was due to be born on New Year's Eve and Chantal was prepared to have a vaginal birth, after delivering both of her sons by Caesarean section. However, despite complications, which led to an emergency C-section, Claire arrived safe and sound, weighing in at a healthy 8 pounds, 2 ounces.

Chantal is also doing well and admits she received "good care" at TSH. "I felt the staff really listened," she says.

When asked if she wishes Claire had been born 23 minutes later as a New Year's baby, Chantal says she's happy with her little girl's birthday. "My sister also had a baby this year and now both cousins will be able to start kindergarten in the same year," explains Chantal.

Still, Claire's arrival was definitely the best way to ring in 2016 for this new family of five, and her birthday is sure to make future New Year's celebrations even more special!

TSH LAUNCHES NEW MONTHLY PRE-NATAL BREASTFEEDING CLASSES

Effective January 27, 2016, The Scarborough Hospital's (TSH) Maternal Newborn and Child Care (MNCC) program will be holding new monthly pre-natal breastfeeding classes.

The classes will be held every fourth Wednesday of the month from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. in TSH's Global Community Resource Centre at the General campus. They are free and registration is not required.

Hosted by TSH Lactation Consultants, expectant mothers will learn about:

- Skin-to-skin contact with the baby;
- Getting ready for the first feed and how often to feed;
- Latching the baby on the breast;
- Positioning during breastfeeding;
- Hand expression and supplementation; and,
- Diet and foods to avoid during breastfeeding.

"These classes add to the Breastfeeding Clinics already in place at both our General and Birchmount campuses," said Barb Scott, Patient Care Director of the MNCC program at TSH.

Toronto Public Health Registered Nurses work together with TSH Lactation Consultants in the Breastfeeding Clinics. The Clinics are also available to both expectant and new mothers, and no appointments or referrals are necessary.

In addition, Lactation Consultants are available to inpatients of the Family Maternity Centres, Neonatal Intensive Care Units, and the Paediatric units at both campuses.

For more information on the new breastfeeding classes or the hospital's Breastfeeding Clinics, visit www.tsh.to, or call 416-438-2911, extension 3222.



THE SCARBOROUGH HOSPITAL IS TAKING A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE



Hospital reminiscing on 90 years of service, running contest for two \$100 gift cards to Scarborough Town Centre

Do you remember when the corner of Lawrence Avenue and McCowan Road were nothing but dirt roads surrounded by farmland back in 1952? Or when the first sod was turned in an open field near Birchmount Road and Finch Avenue in 1982?

From the building of Scarborough General Hospital in 1956 and The Salvation Army Scarborough Grace Hospital in 1985, to the merger and creation of The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) in 1999, and beyond, the hospital is collecting memories from community members, patients and their families, donors, staff, physicians, retirees, volunteers, and students.

TSH is giving away two \$100 gift

cards to Scarborough Town Centre to celebrate its 90 years of service in Scarborough, and to thank the Scarborough community for their ongoing support. Anyone with a great memory of the hospital is invited to enter and share at www.tshhistory.ca until May 12, 2016.

Full contest rules are available on the website.



Local in Spirit. Global in Care.

REDEFINING PALLIATIVE CARE AT PROVIDENCE

Palliative Care at Providence Healthcare in Toronto's east end focuses on the physical, emotional, spiritual and practical needs of people experiencing the end stage symptoms of a terminal illness. Through the years we have adopted innovative new programming, but our physical environment – a traditional hospital setting – did not support our new approaches. Improvements are now being made possible through the generosity of our donors through our Foundation's Hope Starts Here capital campaign.

Demolition began in late 2014 on the new patient care unit and we completed the rough-ins for HVAC, electrical, plumbing, etc. We have also completed the interior finishes, fixtures and equipment installation. Up next, we are remodeling the family/caregiver spaces. Patients will move to the new space this summer (2016).

Providence staff have advocated on behalf of their patients and families, bringing forth ideas to revolutionize the way we deliver palliative care for this very vulnerable population.

The new space will include:

- ▶ New, outdoor terrace and garden
- ▶ Private reception and admitting area
- ▶ Dedicated concierge and gift shop
- ▶ Quiet, multi-faith space for reflection and prayer
- ▶ Overnight suites for families with a shower and laundry
- ▶ More home-like, tranquil rooms

To learn more about Providence's Palliative Care program, visit www.providence.on.ca.



Main Entrance



Patient Room



Living Room

hope
starts
here.

SUPPORT HOPE STARTS HERE TODAY.

Providence Healthcare is embarking on a \$16 million fundraising campaign called *Hope Starts Here* that will transform the future of health care.

"Providence helped me gain the strength to walk my daughter down the aisle."

WINNIE WONG,
FORMER PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL PATIENT

Please **give** generously.

www.campaignforprovidence.ca

PROVIDENCE
Healthcare Foundation



Aging Well

By: Andrea Shanmugarajah



Every single day, the media forces a multitude of information about aging well at us. And every day, it feels as though the messages that are being delivered change – one minute we are told that supplements are detrimental to health, and the next we are being encouraged to take calcium tablets to protect our bones as we get older. Shortly after we have determined that alcohol consumption is surely damaging to our health, someone is promoting the numerous health benefits of having a glass of wine every night. With all the conflicting information out there, it can be too easy to become confused. So, what is the truth? How can we actually age well, and remain healthy well into old age? While our bodies are indescribably complex, and there is no way to know what may happen as we get older, there are still some simple steps that we can all take to stay healthy at any age. Surprisingly, these steps do not consist of running marathons, or completely eliminating carbohydrates from our diets, or anything else that involves completely and dramatically overhauling our lifestyles. Instead, they are simple things that we can all benefit from doing every single day, both now and in the long-run.

Manage Stress

By now, most people know that stress can wreak havoc on our minds and bodies. Unfortunately, despite knowing this, for many of us, stress is simply an unavoidable aspect of our lives, built into having jobs, families and other responsibilities. But stress can contribute negative to our mental health, leading to problems such as depression, as well as our physical health, by causing problems sleeping or concentrating. So, one of the best ways to help yourself age better and remain healthy even in old age is to learn to manage your stress. You can do this by either eliminating the things that cause you stress, or by learning new techniques to appropriately deal with your stress. To eliminate your personal stressors, start by accepting that you cannot worry about everything at once. Instead, write down all the things that happen to be stressing you out at any given time, and work on them one at a time. That way, you will be able to have control over your stressors, rather than allowing them to control you. However, even as you eliminate stress-



ors, you will always have problems that you still have to cope with, and for this reason, it is important to develop behaviours that you know will allow you to destress. These behaviours can be anything from meditating, going for a walk or partaking in a hobby of yours.

Spend Time with the Right People

Our social lives and the people we surround ourselves with may be more important to our health that we realize. Being social helps us on an emotional and psychological level, and even as we get older and friendships become harder to maintain, it can be extremely beneficial to keep our social lives as active as they always have been. So, despite possibly feeling busier and less energetic than ever, continue to make time for friends, both old and new. Find social activities that get you out of the house, and interacting with others. If you feel that your social circle is dwindling, don't be afraid to be adventurous and try new things, regardless of age. Join clubs, activities or organizations as a way to meet like-minded people and make more friends. Volunteer some time to causes that are close to your heart, so you can meet people who are passionate about the same things you are. Join a walking group so you can meet people who encourage and motivate you to maintain your fitness. There are numerous ways to stay social and surround yourself with the right friends, at any age, so make it a priority to engage and connect with others.

Find Ways to Move

For most people, as they age, they find it harder to stay as active and participate in the same activities they once

did. But, that should not be an excuse to cease being active altogether! At any age, there are a plethora of activities that one can participate in, so find activities that you find fun, and incorporate them into your daily life. The scope of these activities can vary widely, depending on your own interests and abilities, but the important thing is integrating some sort of movement into your life. This can be in the form of taking walks every day for example, which is an activity that most people are able to enjoy even as they age. It can also include activities such as yoga, which has been shown to be beneficial for both the body and the mind. If you prefer activities that allow you to be around others, consider starting a walking group in your neighbourhood or joining a dance class with your friends. The options for getting your body moving are endless, so find an activity that excites you, and start making it part of your daily routine.

Keep Learning

One of the key ways to keep ourselves feeling young is to continuously working towards self-improvement. Never let yourself believe that now that you are older, your time to learn things and have new experiences is over. Don't let your age undermine your desire to start new hobbies or learn things you had always wanted to learn. For example, join an art class or start playing a new instrument if those are things that interest you. Alternatively, learn a new language to keep your mind sharp. Open yourself up to new experiences and adventures, and in doing so, you will find that you are

able to grow and improve in ways you hadn't expected. Constantly seek for ways that you can improve yourself or expand your knowledge and challenge yourself to do things you never thought possible. By surrounding yourself with unfamiliar activities and places, you will keep yourself feeling young and able to tackle whatever the world throws at you.

Know Your Limits

Even if you are able to make all the small changes outlined above, you may still be faced with one of the hardest parts of aging: accepting that you are getting older, and are no longer able to do some of the things you used to. This is unfortunately part of aging for many people, and while some are able to age remarkably well, many of us will see changes in our energy levels, stamina and physical capabilities. Understand that this is completely natural, and there is nothing wrong or shameful about being unable to participate in the same activities you were able to when you were younger. So it is important to understand that your body and your mind have developed over the years. To protect yourself and your wellbeing, know your limits, and what you are and are not able to do. Understand that the above suggestions are general, and it is up to you to tailor them to meet your specific needs and abilities. If you are able to apply these small lifestyle changes in a way that is appropriate for you, you are sure to lead a happier and healthier life, and to see yourself remaining active, even as you get older.



WORDS OF PEACE



Fact or Fiction

People have believed any number of things that have done them no harm—that the sun revolves around the Earth, or the moon is made of green cheese.

“You can believe as many fictions as you want,” says Prem Rawat, known around the world as a non-partisan ambassador of peace. “Maybe it’s entertaining for a few minutes, but it has no bearing on anything. It doesn’t mean anything.”

When it comes to things that do impact our lives, however, it’s important to be able to separate fact from fiction.

“So what is a fact?” Mr. Rawat asks. “A fact is something real, something that is. It doesn’t dress itself up. It doesn’t have to. It is what it is.

“Everybody is looking for peace. Everybody is looking for betterment. People want to improve themselves. Maybe some think new technology on the horizon will be an answer, will be the door to another kind of freedom. To me, it’s very clear that there is one fact that, if this fact is understood and accepted in one’s life, can bring unimaginable joy, happiness, peace, tranquility, serenity.

“So, what is this fact? What is the truth? It is simple. It is simple, and it is profound. The truth is that you are alive. If this is true, then

should I be concerned with fiction?”

For many years, Mr. Rawat has devoted his life to bringing an appreciation of that one fact to people everywhere. Understanding its implications, he says, brings the contentment we yearn for. Throughout the ages, he adds, there have always been sages who bring the same profound message to the people of their time: you are alive, and you need to know who you are, because what you are looking for is within you.

“When people in the most hopeless of situations start to understand that,” he says, “do you know what they find? They find happiness.

“People think that happiness is all about their circumstances, and they work to improve their circumstances every single day. This is why people are quite willing, at times, to punish themselves. Nobody enjoys sitting in a traffic jam, but people endure it because they have to get to their job. Six billion people are of the opinion that it is circumstances that bring happiness. So is happiness a result of circumstances? Fact or fiction? I can’t let anybody get away with that, because I know what the fact is—that circumstances have nothing to do with happiness, nothing to do with joy, nothing to do with contentment. It has everything to do with who you are.

“Your existence is the miracle of miracles—unbelievable, unimaginable. This breath is a gift that comes into you from that power that sustains this universe; that makes it possible for the stars to glow; for dirt to be compressed to form heavenly bodies, become dust again and then be formed again. Every twinkle in the heavens, every little touch of wind on this Earth, every drop of water and every grain of sand, exist because of the courtesy of that divine power.

“Within you is that divine, but you should not take my word for it. I don’t want to make a believer out of you. I want you to be a knower—someone who knows the value of this breath, the value of this existence. That’s a fact, not fiction.

“I just want you to sort out facts from fiction. There’s too much fiction around. Fact is what’s going to matter in your life.

“Within you is your heart, the place where reality dwells, and that reality is beautiful. This is my song, and this voice is my instrument. These vocal chords move, not for fiction, not to give explanations, but to sing, in my own way, in my own words, the glory of the divine that dwells in the hearts of everyone.”

To learn more about Prem Rawat, visit:
www.wopg.org
www.tprf.org



Does learning occur while playing?

By Janani Srikantha

"It was great! We played!" your child replies to your enquiry of their day, as you meet them outside the school gate. And, you may wonder, "As my child plays, can learning really be happening?"

With today's increasingly competitive education system and standardized assessments, it is evident that more young children are completing numerous worksheets as they learn to read words on a page and calculate numbers in columns. However, the focus on learning this way may not have the benefits that we want.

A kindergarten student who can write the numbers, say the numbers, and has memorized the method of adding numbers in a column, may not necessarily understand the true mathematical concept behind these symbols that we use. Children from when they are a toddler to the age of seven are in a pre-operational stage of cognitive development, as described by Jean Piaget. At this stage, children tend not to comprehend mental manipulation of concepts. Yes, they have memorized to "carry the one" while adding, but they may not fully grasp that the written one can be representative of a ten or a hundred. Even older children, between the ages of seven and eleven, tend to be able to reason logically only as long as the reasoning is connected to concrete examples.

In addition, worksheets and practice textbooks being the primary source of learning tends to reinforce the idea that there is mostly only one right answer, and the red circles on a page indicate failure. Some children convince themselves that it is best not to guess and have an incorrect answer, and eventually stop taking risks to demonstrate their understanding. Authentic learning occurs when children utilize deeper thinking skills and apply the concepts they have learnt, and to do this they need to be comfortable with taking risks and making educated guesses.

To be able to learn at the pre-operational stage, children need concrete objects to work with, and essentially play with. Playing creates an environment where it's safe for children to try different possibilities. By stringing beads to make a necklace, a child explores patterning with multiple attributes, like colour and shape. Numbers and mathematical concepts can become more tangible by using blocks, counters, Lego pieces (which are great for introducing the concept of fractions), and even while baking by sorting the chocolate chips into equal groups for each cookie.

Along with a print-rich environment, role playing or pretend-play helps children develop language. As the conversation matches the objects within the play setting, children associate words with meaning. Also, they begin to infer the meaning of words that they do not know because they have materials in their immediate surrounding to make connections to. By playing doctor, fireman, chef or princess, a child is learning phrases and vocabulary that is specific to a setting and interaction. Research shows a relationship between play and gains in literacy skills, in both comprehension and expression, which continue to be evident in later academic years as the child grows.

Play is essential in developing children's social skills as they explore and discover together to find solutions in meaningful contexts. Studies show that it is in our early years that we identify the rules we follow to engage socially and how we fit within societal roles. It is important that we foster an environment where children actively engage with each other, and we provide the time for them to participate in social tasks through play.

Children who engage in play are also known to be better divergent thinkers. As they engage in a pretend-play setting, they learn to see different perspectives. This leads to being able to see multiple possibilities and solutions while problem solving. Children also learn to substitute items for objects,



where a teddy bear can be the dragon. This practice allows them to later use mental representations as substitutions for concrete objects. Through the development of their creativity in pretend-play, children also become better at asking the "what if?" questions and making inferences based on what they have and know, as the setting and narrative of their play evolves.

There are a myriad of benefits to play-based learning, so the next time you hear a child say, "We played!" ask them what they played. Most often, you will see that play is fostering learning, and not random or chaotic. As a parent, at home, guide opportunities for learning and ask your child extending

questions about their play. Pretend-play astronauts exploring space, or build a tower of blocks with your children. Cultivate your child's imagination and explore possibilities through play, because we need more children growing up asking "what if?" questions and making connections between what they see. Those possibilities are what leads to children using their knowledge to solve problems at school and in the world, which is what I believe the true purpose of learning is.

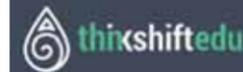
In celebration of Family Day, win a family cooking class in your home with Vintage Flavors with Luisa.

1. Take a photo of your children and yourself playing to learn
2. Submit the photo and get more details on our Facebook Page (facebook.com/ThinkshiftEdu)

Janani Srikantha

is a teacher with experience of the Ontario curriculum and the International Baccalaureate. The education landscape is changing, and she helps parents and families to engage their child in learning. She is currently completing her graduate studies to further understand how the integration of technology is redefining how a student learns. Janani has led workshops for educators and parents on topics that address different facets of education. She also provides academic support to students through tutoring. For more information or queries on how to help your child with learning, please contact info@thinkshiftedu.com.



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Play to Learn Photo Contest



Win a Family Cooking Class in Your Home with Vintage Flavors with Luisa

Take a photo of your children and yourself playing to learn

Submit the photo and get more details on our Facebook Page facebook.com/ThinkshiftEdu



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Photo Credit: Israel Ministry of Tourism, ann_jutatip, USAG-Humphreys (Flickr)



SURYA NAMASKAR: MAKING THE BODY A STEPPING-STONE

Sadhguru looks at the impact of Surya Namaskar on the human system, and presents a few simple steps that can maximize its benefits.

Sadhguru: Generally, people understand Surya Namaskar as an exercise: it strengthens your back, your muscles, etc. Yes, it definitely does do all that and more. It is quite a complete workout for the physical system – a comprehensive exercise form without any need for equipment. But above all, it is an important tool that empowers human beings to break free from the compulsive cycles and patterns of their lives.

Surya Namaskar means to bow down to the sun in the morning. The sun is the life source for this planet. In everything that you eat, drink and breathe, there is an element of the sun. Only if you learn how to better “digest” the sun, internalize it, and make it a part of your system, do you truly benefit from this process.

The physical body is a fantastic stepping-stone for higher possibilities, but for most people it functions like a road block. The compulsions of the body do not allow them to go forward. Being in sync with the solar cycle is an important part of balance and receptivity, a means of taking the body to the point where it is no longer a hurdle.

Surya Namaskar: Syncing with the solar cycle

It is quite a complete workout for the physical system – a comprehensive exercise form without any need for equipment

Surya Namaskar, which is known as “Sun Salutation” in English, is essentially about building a dimension within you where your physical cycles are in sync with the sun’s cycles, which run at about twelve-and-a-quarter years. It is not by accident but by intent that it has been structured with twelve postures or twelve asanas in it. If your system is in a certain level of vibrancy and readiness, and in a good state of receptivity, then naturally your cycle will be in sync with the solar cycle.

Young women have an advantage in that they are also in sync with the lunar cycles. It is a fantastic possibility that your body is both connected to the solar cycle and to the lunar cycle. Nature has granted this advantage to a woman because she has been entrusted with the extra responsibility of propagating the human race. So she has been given some extra privileges. But many people don’t know how to handle the extra energy that is generated by that relationship and so they treat it as a curse and even a kind of madness, as evidenced by the word “lunar” turning into “loony.”

Using cycles to go beyond the cyclical

Between the lunar cycle, which is the shortest cycle (a 28-day cycle) and the cycle of the sun, which is over twelve years, there are many other kinds of cycles. The word “cyclical” denotes repetition. Repetition means that in some way it is compulsive. Compulsiveness means it is not conducive for consciousness. If you are very compulsive, you will see that situations,



experiences, thoughts and emotions will be cyclical. They keep coming back to you once in six months or eighteen months, three years or six years. If you just look back and see, you will notice this. If they come once in over twelve years, that means your system is in a good state of receptivity and balance. Surya Namaskar is an important process to enable that to happen. The sadhana is always to break the cycle so that there is no more compulsiveness, and you have the right kind of foundation for consciousness.

The physical body is a fantastic stepping-stone for higher possibilities, but for most people it functions like a road block

The repetitive nature of cyclical movements or systems, which we traditionally refer to as samsara, is the necessary stability for the making of life. If it was all at random, it would not be possible to house a steady life-making machine. So, for the solar system and for the individual person, being rooted in cyclic nature is the firmness and steadiness of life. But once life has reached the level of evolution that human beings have reached, it is natural to aspire not just for stability, but for transcendence. Now, it is left to individual human beings either to remain trapped in the cyclical, which is the basis of stable physical existence, or to use these cycles for physical wellbeing and ride them and go beyond the cyclical.

Maximizing the Benefits of Surya Namaskar

Hatha yoga is about creating a body that will not be a hurdle in your life but a stepping stone towards blossoming into your ultimate possibility. There are a few simple things you can do to prepare your body and get the most out of your practice.

• Bathe in cool water to charge the cellular structure

Before starting your practice, take a shower or a bath using water that is a little cooler than room temperature. If a certain volume of water flows over your body, or your body is immersed in water that is cooler than room temperature, the epithelial cells will contract and the intercellular spaces will expand. If you use warm or hot water, the pores of the cells will open up and absorb water – that is not what we want. For the practice of yoga, it is important that the cells contract and the intercellular spaces open up, because we want the cellular structure of the body to be charged with a different dimension of energy. If the cells contract and allow

space in between, practicing yoga will charge the cellular structure.

Why some people seem to be far more alive than others is essentially because their cellular structure is more charged. When it is charged with energy, it will remain youthful for a very long time. Hatha yoga is a way to do that. In South India, tap water is generally just a little cooler than room temperature. If you are in a temperate climate, the regular tap water may be too cold. Three to five degrees centigrade below room temperature would be ideal. A maximum of ten degrees centigrade below room temperature would be acceptable – the water should not be colder than that.

• Rub sweat into the skin to retain energy

Whether you practice asanas, Surya Namaskar or Surya Kriya – if you start sweating, do not wipe off the sweat with a towel – always rub it back, at least into the exposed parts of your skin. If you wipe off the sweat, you drain the energy that you have generated with the practice. Water has the capability to carry memory and energy. That is why you should not wipe off sweat with a towel, drink water, or go to the bathroom during practice time, unless there is a special situation that makes it absolutely necessary.

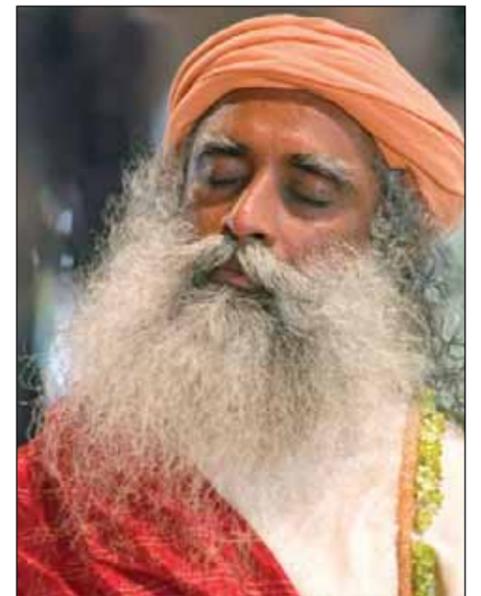
And, after practicing yoga, wait a minimum of 1.5 hours before taking a shower – three hours would be even better. Sweating and not showering for two to three hours could be a bit of an olfactory challenge – so just stay away from others!

Learn to consume the right amount of water

After practicing yoga, wait a minimum of 1.5 hours before taking a shower

Learn to just drink as much as the body needs. Unless you are in a desert or you have habits that dehydrate you – such as excessive consumption of caffeine and nicotine – there is no need to constantly sip water. About 70% of the body is water. The body knows how to manage itself. If you drink according to your thirst plus an additional 10%, it will be enough. To give an example – if your thirst is gone after two sips of water, drink 10% more. That will take care of your body’s need for water. Only if you are out in the sun or trekking in the mountains, sweating heavily and losing water rapidly, you need to drink more – not when you are doing yoga under a roof.

As I already said, rub back the sweat as much as possible, but you need not do



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 worldwide program information, visit www.ishafoundation.org

that all the time. It can drip a bit – just don’t use a towel. Push it back because we don’t want to drain energy – we want to build it up.

Sadhguru J. Vasudev is a contemporary mystic rooted as strongly in worldly and pragmatic matters as he is in inner experience and wisdom. Named one of India’s 50 most influential people, he has addressed prominent global forums on issues as diverse as socio-economic development, leadership and spirituality. He has served as delegate to the United Nations Millennium Peace Summit and the World Peace Congress and has been a special invitee to the World Economic Forum (2006-2009), the Australian Leadership Retreat (2006) and TED (2009).

His interviews are featured in The New York Times, BBC, Bloomberg, CNN and CNBC. He is the author of several books, the subject of four books and co-author of the Amazon Bestseller “Midnights with the Mystic”. His public talks frequently draw crowds of over 300,000 people.

Founded by Sadhguru, Isha Foundation is a non-religious, non-profit organization with over 200 centers worldwide and over one million volunteers. Isha Foundation offers Inner Engineering Online – a practical approach for inner transformation in a fast paced world. The course designed by Sadhguru presents simple, yet powerful tools for an individual to experience life on a deeper level with more awareness, energy, and productivity. This program is an ideal opportunity for those with time and travel constraints to experience the same profound effects of the traditional Inner Engineering program, which has impacted millions of people over the past 25 years. To learn more, view the free Introductory Talk, or to register visit www.InnerEngineering.com

**www.ishafoundation.org
email: toronto@ishafoundation.org
local contact: 416 300 3010**

What is Funeral Insurance/ Final Expense Insurance Or?

When we pass away, there's always one cost we need to have a plan for: our Final Expenses AKA funeral expenses. In Canada, the cost of a funeral can vary between \$7,000 and \$10,000; a cost that would have to be paid for by your family if you don't have a funeral plan in place.

Funeral insurance is typically a low-cost life insurance policy designed to help your family cover the costs of a loved one's funeral, as well as other final expenses which may include: legal fees, capital gains taxes, and as small gifts to family members.

Funeral costs can vary in Ontario depending on the type of funeral you'd like to plan for, but it will never be cheap. You can plan a funeral ranging from \$1,500 and \$2,500 on average for cremation and burial.

There costs only cover the most basic of internments, there is no visitation or memorial. With this costs you cannot expect more than the basic they have to offer with the basic quality of the internment or rental for a proper funeral service.

A basic cremation with no service or visitation may be economical, but it's hardly desirable and isn't the most

sentimental way to memorialize our loved one.

As funeral industry is maintained by a wealth of different businesses operating different stages of the funeral process, "package deals" are uncommon and often ill-suited for a proper service. With a complete service including casket/urn, a grave plot, memorial service, clergy costs, administrative fees, and dreaded government taxes and a generous estimate may be closer to \$10,000, if not closer to \$20,000. Suffice to say: dying is expensive, and leaving those costs to your family can put an unnecessary burden on their finances.

Canada Pension Plan also offers a measure of coverage for funeral expenses through pensioners, and it commonly believed to be a good avenue to obtain expense coverage. What many people aren't aware of is that this coverage limit is \$2,500, with minor stipend benefits for a surviving spouse or dependents.

Employment and Social Services provides help on behalf of deceased city residents who do not have enough funds in their estate to fully cover funeral costs. The deceased person does



"If I die, why do I need money?"

You don't -- but your family, your business or your favorite charity might.

LIFE INSURANCE

not have to have been in receipt of Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits at the time of death to be eligible.

Help with funeral costs can include:

Funeral services - Employment and Social Services will pay for the transfer of the body for cremation, burial, or for a traditional funeral service.

Burial services/Cremation services - Employment and Social Services will purchase a burial lot. If the deceased person owned a lot, Employment and Social Services will pay to open and close the grave, will pay for cremation, including a standard urn, also covers the cost of scattering the remains in a cemetery or a burial in a pre-owned plot.

To determine eligibility, a caseworker will consider the financial situation of the deceased person and his/her spouse at the time of death.

This includes, for example, looking at assets, income, RRSPs and life insurance.

To Make the Most of Funeral Insurance, You Should Start Now

Keep in mind a guaranteed life policy isn't an emergency policy you can pick up as a last resort. Most policies do not pay out the full benefit until two years have passed, opting to pay the sum of your premiums should you die before then. While the option will remain open to you in the event other types of insurance can't cover you, it's still important to plan your policies wisely to ensure you'll be able to collect on your policy and cover your funeral costs. This means buying as soon as you're able. The earlier you buy, the longer you'll live to validate the policy and obtain a healthy benefit.

For all your inquiries regarding your insurance, please contact:

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TAKING STOCK OF CIVIC PRIDE AT THAI PONGAL

By *Harrish Thirukumar*

The New Year, now being 2016, has once again been marked by the Thai Pongal Gala dinner organized annually by the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC).

The CTC held its 9th edition of the cultural event at the Hilton/Toronto Conference Suite Centre in Markham, Ontario on January 16th. Aside from celebrating the harvest festival of the Tamil people, it also raised considerable funds for initiatives assisting war-affected female widows in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The activity essentially reflects the broader altruistic purpose of the organization, which is to help Tamil people integrate into Canada, and address issues concerning Tamils abroad, particularly in Sri Lanka. As in previous years, it enthusiastically presented a microcosm of the grand achievements and endeavours of CTC in 2015, all towards their goals for Tamil Canadians and Tamils abroad.

Often joyously characterized as the Tamil Thanksgiving, Thai Pongal has been a way of giving thanks to Surya, or the Sun, farmers, and livestock for ushering in an abundant harvest. Pongal, a traditional Tamil sweet rice dish customarily overflows in a big cooking pot, symbolizing the great abundance and prosperity shared amongst one another. It is marked on January 1 of the Tamil lunar calendar, with this harvest bringing an ambivalence of energy from darkness in the atmosphere. This was fully embodied by an entertaining Bharatanatyam performance by a few talented youth that commenced this event's honouring of the festivity. Defined by a sense of renewed commitment and positive outlook, the special occasion has served as a unique backdrop in learning of the ongoing results CTC's work has realized for the Tamil community.

Raj Thavaratnasingham, President of the Canadian Tamil Congress, first highlighted Tamil Fest as one of the various 2015 successes for the organization's commitment to Tamils. "CTC planned and executed Tamil Fest, a street festival attended by nearly 90,000 people, featuring Tamil arts, culture, and most importantly, mouth-watering spicy food," said Mr. Thavaratnasingham amusingly. Moreover, the organization aspires to make the historic event into an annual tradition, similar to prominent Torontonians festivals, such as the Taste of Danforth. Another 2015 accomplishment was the continued presence of CTC at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), successfully passing a resolution in October to further reinforce post-war reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Mr. Thavaratnasingham was also particularly proud of the collaboration with organizations like the United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC), British Tamil Forum, and Global Tamil Forum in meeting these goals.

He further expressed that although changes on the island have not emerged as envisioned, there is nevertheless optimism about the serious efforts to move Sri Lanka in a better direction. His speech applauded the Canadian government in undertaking a new policy role for ameliorating the regular injustices experienced by First Nations people as well. Additionally, he specified that the Tamil community also have a responsibility to play in advancing the betterment of the First Nations in Canada. Looking ahead in 2016, two projects that CTC hopes to get off the ground in partnership with



Pongal Greetings



Pongal Greetings

others like-minded groups are a Tamil community centre and an economic development centre.

Giving greetings on behalf of the new federal Liberal government led by Justin Trudeau to the nearly 1000 attendees and observers of the 9th Thai Pongal dinner was Stéphane Dion. "Vanakkam!" said a gleeful Mr. Dion, who is currently representing Canada on the world stage as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet. With his subsequent speech, Mr. Dion echoed the PM's rhetoric that Canada's own strength is not in spite of its diversity, but rather it is precisely because of it. Furthermore, he took aim at Sri Lanka for not acknowledging this with their own diverse society, for not seeing it as "an opportunity to be bigger human beings and learn from each other." Presumably in his capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dion is dedicated to ensuring the relationship between Canada and Sri Lanka is enhanced, by consistently showing its role in all Sri Lankan affairs relevant to Tamil Canadians.

Despite the ongoing global trauma caused by acts of terrorism, most recently in Burkina Faso, individuals should not lose faith, because at the same time, positive action has somewhat been seen in other

countries such as Sri Lanka. "We believe it's possible to have people of different religions in Sri Lanka to look at each other as friends, brothers, and sisters that's possible," Mr. Dion proclaimed. Yet in terms of practically attaining this prospect, Canada must revitalize its role in the United Nations to enable any substantive impact of the UNHRC accountability resolution in Sri Lanka. Leveraging the knowledge of the Tamil community in Canada is particularly crucial in addressing the outstanding problems facing Tamils and all Sri Lankans, the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister emphasized.

Other speeches made by prominent politicians included Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, New Democrat Leader Andrea Horwath, and Toronto Mayor John Tory. Regardless of the apparent political differences, especially with the former two, they commended the contributions of Tamil Canadians in all walks of life in Ontario, and Canada.

Another highlight of the evening was the recognition of exemplary services to the community. Awards were granted to two individuals who have had distinctive impacts on the Tamil community in Canada, and abroad. Rajavorthiam Sampanthan, a Tamil Member of Parliament (MP) of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and now the Leader of the Official Opposition in Sri Lanka received the first recognition, the Living Hero Award. Though Mr. Sampanthan was unable to attend the gala in person, Mathiaparanan Abraham Sumanthiran accepted the award on his behalf.

A leading MP in the TNA back in Sri Lanka, Mr. Sumanthiran spoke of Canada in high praises in supporting the ongoing struggles of Tamils in the country. Moreover, he emphasized the importance of a soft power approach for Tamils to gain their rights. This is most readily channeled through a well-respected renowned leader, a quality exhibited by Mr. Sampanthan according to MP Sumanthiran. Importantly, Mr. Sumanthiran noted that individuals of Sinhalese origin, the majority ethnic group in Sri Lanka, genuinely respect the TNA leader. However, the Tamil MP is mindful of some Tamil community members' opposition to these gestures, believing



Premier Kathleen Wynne in conversation with Rev. Fr. S.J. Emmanuel, Dr. Elias Jeyarajah of United States Tamil Political Action Council (USTPAC) and David Poopalapillai of Canadian Tamil Congress.



Mr. Sampanthan to be disingenuously representing Tamil concerns. In spite of these, and other challenges to his leadership for Tamils, confidence lies in the fact that the TNA has won elections continuously, demonstrating the implicit faith a majority of the

community has in Mr. Sampanthan to empower Sri Lankan Tamils, Mr. Sumanithiran asserted.

For his fundraising efforts following the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka and cofounding the “Canadians Concerned about Sri Lanka,” Toronto and York

Region Labour Council President, John Cartwright accepted the Leaders for Change Award.

This 9th annual Thai Pongal gala is considered the first since Gary Anandasangaree was elected as the Member of Parliament for the

new federal riding of Scarborough-Rouge Park on October 19, 2015. Mr. Anandasangaree was heavily involved with the CTC in a number of leadership roles, where he took the stage to make a special announcement. Accordingly, a formal celebration is to occur in St. Johns, Newfoundland in August 2016, to mark the 30th anniversary when Canada cordially admitted more than 150 Tamil refugees arriving via the sea. As with the Canadian government’s appropriate response to the Syrian refugee crisis, the Tamil Newfoundland experience exemplified the passion of Canada for the wellbeing of refugees.

“Thai Pongal event by Canadian Tamil Congress” – The charming Tamil Festival of Thanksgiving has now firmly transpired into an important annual Toronto dateline in taking stock of civic matters, duties and pride for the invited guests of honor and attendees. The 9th annual Thai Pongal dinner turned out to be another great success and firmly encrypting the event as a hallmark to commence the year.



TNA Leader R.Sampanthan awarded “Lifetime Living Hero” recognition-Being received by M.A. Sumanthiran MP



Gary Anandasangaree MP



Stephane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs



Andrea Horwath, Leader of Ontario New Democrats



Attendees at the Pongal Event



John Tory, Mayor of Toronto



Presentation by Ahillan Ilangko, Vishali Ratnam, Mathangi Gesland, Ajantha Nadesalingam and Aaran Suthakar, Youth Leadership Program (YLP) members of The Centre for Leadership and Innovation.



Event marked with tradition



– Pictures by visionphotos.ca via Canadian Tamil Congress

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WINNING ESSAYS

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The Destruction of Our Planet: Global Warming

In today's rapidly growing modern society, there are several issues we must pay attention to and focus on. Every day, through various media platforms, we see these issues being presented to us. Unfortunately, there are still many we have yet to pay more attention to, specifically, global warming. Global warming is a growing crisis and poses several threats to our planet. Humans are the reason behind this immense problem. The toxic gases we emit into our environment form the greenhouse gases in our atmosphere and slowly start destroying our atmosphere. These gases trap escaping heat waves and return them back to earth, thereby causing the earth's temperature to increase. Climate change is creating a negative impact ecologically and creating a lot of damage to our wildlife. Global warming is also affecting humans in various ways. It is crucial that we take action against this growing issue and stop it now before global warming destroys our planet.

Climate change has created a lot of changes ecologically. Due to climate change, there has been an increase in natural fires. Areas that are already very dry and do not have an abundance of water are in more risk of these fires. The increase in heat can spark deadly wildfires and destroy habitats, important resources, and put the lives of humans at risk as well. Global warming has also caused the melting of glaciers. This causes water levels to rise at a drastic level and the elevation of land to decrease. There has been an increase in droughts as well. This has reduced the production of crops. Global warming has led to changes in our landforms. The changes in the environment have a direct link to wildlife and the impacts on them because of global warming.

Global warming has had several negative biological impacts. Climate change has put wildlife at risk. Currently the extinction of twenty species has been linked to global warming. After an extensive study, scientists believe one fourth of all the species on our planet will be extinct by the year 2050. The change in the environment because of climate change has made it more difficult for these animals to survive. Many of these animals have lost their natural habitat because of climate change. Polar bears, for example, are

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finding it more difficult to survive because the increase in temperature is causing the glaciers they live on to melt away. Food has become more scarce and difficult to find for these animals. Global warming has created an off balance in the food chain in several ecosystems. Not only has it impacted the availability of food for animals, it is also affecting humans as well.

If global warming is not curbed, it will affect our production in food. Studies show that three percent of all the land used for agriculture will be reduced down to only one percent. Droughts will decrease the amount of crops grown, as well as livestock. Other ecological impacts such as natural fires will destroy a lot of the fertile land that could potentially be used for agricultural development. Due to the increasing amount of land loss because of climate change and the decrease in the production of food, it will impact humans severely. Approximately eighty-five million people will be left malnourished and with a majority of them from developing countries, who may already be suffering. Several countries which do not have a large water source nearby and also face severe droughts due to climate change, will also have to deal with dehydration and the ability to distribute clean water to the people. Alongside, not having proper nutrition, global warming will also take a toll on our health.

Climate change has begun to impact human health in various ways. Malnutrition has been a leading factor in the impact of our health. Many people, specifically young children, do not get the nutrition they need for their bodies, as well as their minds to grow and thrive. This has also led to a decrease in the human mortality rate and has had a bigger impact on developing countries compared to countries that are already developed. Global warming has increased the production of allergens and asthma, making it more difficult to breathe – especially for those who are older or have respiratory problems. The increase of carbon dioxide

because of global warming will also affect the quality of air we breathe which affects our health. If we do not act now, global warming will destroy our planet.

It is important we take action against global warming as soon as possible. There are several ways, both domestically and globally, we can do to help stop and reverse the effects of global warming. Locally, we can all try to find ways to travel and get to our destination in a more eco-friendly way. Whenever possible, we can carpool, take public transportation, or walk. We can start using renewable energy resources to generate energy. By using solar power, wind energy, thermal energy or any other renewable resource, we can help reduce the amount of toxic gases we release (burning fossil fuels (ex. coal) to create energy). By spreading awareness on this issue to the public and putting more attention on this ongoing crisis, we can help encourage others to take part in helping stop global warming. There are also several national, as well as global organizations fighting for a change against climate change, targeting specifically youth and future generations. These organizations encourage and spread awareness on global warming throughout the globe, hoping to stop this growing problem. All of these little changes can make a large change on a global level and demolish climate change forever.

Global warming is an important issue we all must definitely pay more attention to. It has been creating several negative ecological changes which have had a direct impact on wildlife and their survival. Global warming has also jeopardized the survival of the human race because of several growing problems related to food production, as well as our health. There is still time left to take action and create change against global warming and it is important we start now. Global warming is a problem that was created by humans and it is time for us to end the problem that we created before climate change destroys our planet.

SALVAGING

A RISKY BUT GALLANT EFFORT

(A narrative poem based on the deluged city)



C. Kamalaharan

Chennai the city of pride
Devastated by cruel tide
That spontaneously intensified
Leaving the residence terrified

Braving the gushing flood water
He hoists the bags above water
And wades through neck deep water
Without gulping contaminated water

Nothing else to salvage
Except two heavy luggage
That remained after the wreckage
Caused by flood's ravage

Clad in tattered rags
And carrying battered bags
His benumbed legs he drags
Far behind others he lags

His face pale and weary
And eyes sunken and bleary
He attempts to move in hurry
To beat the tides fury

Having lost his neighbourhood
He fears losing his livelihood
There's also a likelihood
Of losing his fatherhood

Just then he hears
Jubilant sound of cheers
Inch by inch he nears
And sees his children in tears

As he set foot on land
They rushed and held his hand
Together they left the swampy sand
Happily hand in hand



Written By

Mr. Muthuthamby Perairavar,
in 1993

Every morning, when the air is serene and the rising sun is far from scorching, the temple bells penetrate the village quiet, and the community awakens to its daily routines. Inside the temple, the priest bathes the deity, raises the veil separating the deity from the devotees, chants praises and prayers, offers light and flowers, and finally celebrates the communion of Prasad among the worshippers.

These are typical morning scenes and rituals in the numerous villages that dot the northern and eastern plains in Sri Lanka. Indeed, traditional worship practices have survived even the changes of



In memory of
Late Mr. M. Perairavar
(Emeritus Principal Manipay Hindu College)

symbolism of Vyravar worship is the overpowering of the dog (evil) by the trident (representing God), and the education of the devotee to seek the help of God in order to overpower the evil in him with the good that is also part of his self.

A more celebrated idol is that of the dancing Shiva; it is the dance of life, ever fresh as morning, and full of colours and joy, its venue is the human heart, the centre of the universe, the seat of the immortal soul, and the Hindu pilgrim's ultimate destiny. In the pilgrim's progress, eventually the soul trapped is liberated, cleansed, and reconditioned. The idol of the dancing Shiva represents the dance and the drama of life, and forever reminds the worshipper of the spiritual learning process, which is the evolution of

the architecture, the great bakthi (devotional) literature, the music, and dance were all developed to improve and perfect this educational process. It is not a closed, or proselytising process, but open to accommodating all those who are seekers of Truth.

The message of the universality of the humankind and of divinity has been echoed in every age by the poets and savants of the Tamil society. The Hindu educational program is also emancipationist, as opposed to being impressionistic. It recognizes the 'form', but leads into the realm of the 'formless' individual path of Gnana or Yoga.

In a worldly sense, the purpose of Hindu education is to produce wise men to provide counsel to the community. The inherited wisdom of a

Learning through Worship

Hindiusm and its traditions among the Sri Lankan Tamils

urbanization and are very much alive in the Tamil towns and cities.

Worshipping with flowers and devotional singing are inseparable and integral aspects of Tamilian lives. The repertoire of rituals are deeply symbolic and are also pregnant with meanings and lessons for the individual worshipper. The temple in the recumbent body, and deity the truth within the human being ; the priest is the agent revealing the truth within by raising the veil of arrogance (annava), of past sins(karma), and of illusion(maya), while the devotee is the autodidactic beneficiary of the morning worship. The rituals are the outward representation of a subtle process of inner learning, of self-revelation, of appreciation of the simplicity of and contentment in life. The Tamils, through the ages, have harnessed all of their architectural, sculptural, literary, musical, and dancing skills to glorify and celebrate the spiritual lesson and experience enshrined by worship. The insistence on spiritual self-learning is captured in the Tamil term for God, namely, Kadavul, which literally is an instruction to 'cross the barrier and step inside'.

For the uninitiated, the worshipping of idols may appear to be weird and incomprehensible;



but, in the Hindu universe, idol worship serves as a visual aid for spiritual education. A common idol in the Tamil pantheon of deities is the Vyravar Idol, represented by a dog with a trident on its head. The dog and the trident signify the dichotomic co-existence of the good and the evil, of the ego and the id (a la Sigmund Freud), of dog and God himself in human beings. The

the soul and , as well, the promise of Hinduism.

The temple, its central location in Tamil Settlements, and the whole ethos of worship, have served the Tamil society as a temple-centered educational program. The curriculum is the God-given and inherent divinity in man; the teaching methods, the visual aids,

child's ancestors is always a helping hand to the child to discover its own identity and sustain its self-esteem. Assured of its own identity, the child would grow familiar with and learn to respect other cultures as well. It is our duty to transmit to our children the wisdom we inherited from our forefathers.



VALLUVAR'S VIEWS: PLEASANT WORDS

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb,
sweet to the soul, and **health**
to the bones.
Proverbs 16:24



Photo by: Deborah H. Bateman

By: JJ Aputharajah

The speech of enlightened men will be both pleasant and kind, with no trace of harshness. The lips of the righteous know what is wise and acceptable. The word spoken by them is born of sound knowledge and genuine affection. It is indeed the substance of all virtue.

The kindly word and loving smile, accompanying a spontaneous gift, make the gift even more valuable. Gift becomes a virtue when it is given spontaneously, with cheerful countenance and kind words. The essence of the virtue of giving comprises of kindly look, pleasing words and sincere heart, but it is not just pretense. It should be prompted by spontaneity and genuine consideration for the affected man. Distressing poverty will not affect a man, who pleases

everyone by his kind words. His investment in kindness will definitely pay dividends. Humility and pleasant speech constitute one's ornaments; other things are of no value. If one seeks always to do good by pleasant speech, virtues will flourish and sins will vanish. Valluvar is defining the soft skills spoken much in modern times. Pleasant words from a well-mannered man will do good to others and generate blessings. Kind words free from meanness will confer blessings in this world as well as in the next.

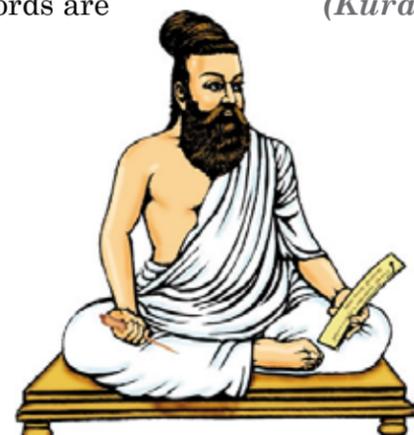
The Bible says in the same vein in the words: "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life; but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked". A man will not resort to harsh words when he knows that kind words bring joy and happiness.

Nanneri, a didactic work of the post-sangam period asserts that: 'In sollal lanri iru neer viyan ulagam;van sollal enrum mahilathey-poncey athirvalaiyai pongathu arlalkathiral thanen kathir varaval pongum kadal.'(The sea does not swell by the heat of the sun. But rises to welcome in the cool of the moon. Similarly, the world rejoices at hearing pleasant words. But is not happy to hear when harsh words are

spoken). Gentle and tender speech has marvelous effect.

Valluvar tops it all in his astounding couplet: 'Inniyava iruppa innatha kooral, kanniyuppa kai kavarthattu'. Using harsh words instead of pleasant ones, is like going in for raw fruits when ripe ones are available. Making use of pleasant words are indispensable for smooth human relationships.

(Kural:91-100)



"Vaiyathul valvaangu Vaalpavan,
Vaanuraiyum theivathul Vaikkpadum".

WORLD CANCER DAY – LIGHT A CANDLE FOR HOPE

Light at Night, Shiftwork, and Lack of Sleep Can Raise Cancer Risk

By: *Uthayan Thurairajah*

Each year on February 4th, World Health Organization (WHO) and International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) supports the Cancer Control to promote the new approaches to ease the world problem of cancer. The Candle Light mission is to enrich the lives of cancer patients and their families coping with cancer and to promote awareness and understanding of the impact of cancer on the patients and their families. Cancer is a foremost cause of death worldwide, accounting for 8.2 million deaths in 2012. Lung, stomach, liver, colon and breast cancer cause the most cancer deaths each year. The campaign explores how we can implement what we already know in the areas of prevention, early detection, treatment, and care.

Cancer can modify almost any part of the body and is the uncontrolled growth and spread of cells. The cancer grows often invade surrounding tissue and can spread to distant sites. With the proper prevention, detection and treatment programs, many lives can be saved. Several cancers can be prevented by avoiding exposure to common risk factors, such as tobacco smoke. A considerable percentage of cancers can be cured, by surgery, light therapy, radiotherapy or chemotherapy, especially if they are detected early.

CN Tower and Empire State Building Lights Up In Blue and Orange

In affiliation with the American and Canadian Cancer Societies, Empire State Building & CN Tower will be set alight in blue and orange on February 4th to honor World Cancer Day, which focuses on early detection and treatment of all cancer patients worldwide.

Sleep Crisis, Melatonin, and Cortisol

Between stress, work, light, and school, more than 70 percent of the population are not meeting the recommended 8 hours of sleep they need, and it is safe to say, people are suffering from a severe sleep crisis. A hormone melatonin is produced at night is believed to play a significant role in fighting off cancer.

American Journal of Epidemiology proposing a new theory that “the use of electric lighting, resulting in night light, may produce circadian disruption.” This causes changes in the level of melatonin known as the hormone of darkness. The use of electricity for night time lighting; television, computers, cell phones, and other devices have changed not only our lifestyles & sleep habits but also changed our hormonal regularities.

The sunlight suppresses melatonin production. Before the artificial light, we have twelve hours of darkness, keeping our melatonin levels high and our risk of getting cancer low. Melatonin is an antioxidant. The disruptive melatonin levels happen when we do

not sleep well. This may reduce the ability of the body to hunt free radicals that can cause cancer.

Cortisol is also a circadian hormone and released in response to stress and produced by the adrenal gland. Cortisol supports to regulate the immune system and releases cells that fight off cancer cells. It is at its highest when waking up, goes down throughout the day and is low by the evening.

If a cancer patient loses his/her duration of cortisol, he/she likely to die sooner. People wake up from sleep frequently tends to have higher cortisol levels. High levels of estrogen may increase the risk of breast cancer. Sleep deficiency can be a source for Cancer. Cortisol, like Melatonin, lowers the production of estrogen. It is essential to balance of the Cortisol and melatonin level that influence cancer cells.

Light at Night and Cancer Risk

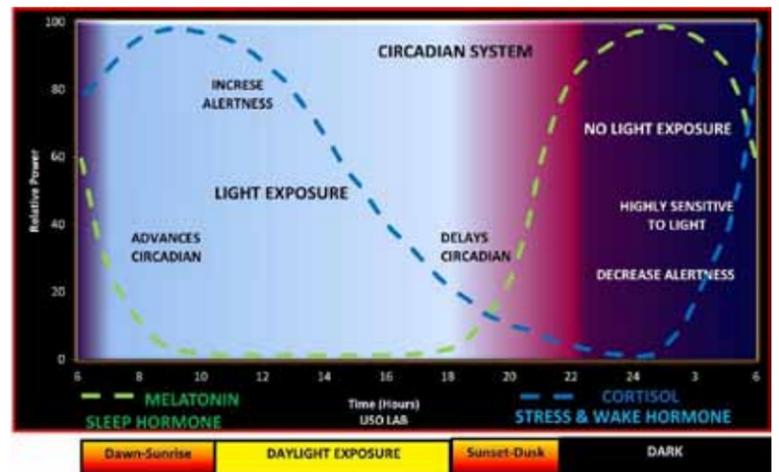
There is a deadly connection between light at night (LAN), circadian disruption, cancer and other health issues. Circadian disruption increases the likelihood of breast, prostate, colon, pancreatic cancers; some lymphoma; metabolic disease; type 2 diabetes; obesity; sleep, mood, memory and mental disorders; heart disease and more.

Some lighting industry holds part of the blame for their denial of the health impact of light spectrums at an inappropriate time. There are luminaires and lighting practices that are being sold today that is harmful, and it must be stopped. The lights that shine into the bedroom windows at night are part of the problem. The computers, TV, iPhone and iPads are sold without blue-blocking filters which can be removed during the day. It is logical to say that sunlight has a blue light and therefore not harmful, but it is very incorrect - the issue is the timing of blue light exposure to the sleep cycle.

Recent research indicates that light exposure could render the chemotherapy drug Tamoxifen useless. Light not only have serious effects on circadian rhythms, including increased cancer risks, but it can directly interfere with the treatment of cancer. Blue-rich light is shown to be the most disruptive.

Shine the lights upward onto buildings and trees and into the night sky causing sky glow for hundreds of miles from the source, harming people, ecosystems, and the environment. I think everyone endorses the ambition to have a “darker Sky.” The Lighting professional can solve the problem using shields, controls, and other approaches. It is not that people are clueless or unfaithful - it requires both a deeper understanding of the effects of additional illumination.

It took 50 years for the tobacco industry to be held accountable. Do we want it do take 50 more years to keep the lighting industry accountable? Don't we think that people ought to be alerted that light trespass from streetlights raises the risk of severe disease and even death? What about kids and adults sleeping with the TV on and looking at their computers close to bedtime without a filter or blue-blocking glasses? Why are there monitors in hospital rooms blasting blue light on the sick patients? Why is there a blue light in the premature baby hospital rooms? Why are any



night lights sold with (blue-rich) white light? When could they be supplied with dim red or dim amber with a caution that replacement bulbs should be only dim red or dim amber to minimize health risks from circadian disruption? What about parents who buy cute little lights that shine upon their child's ceiling- to comfort them- not realizing they are harming their child. What about cancer patients who do not know that LAN can interfere with their chemo treatment. It is sinister to install potentially harmful lighting when there are safe technology and practices available.

A recent study has found that ensuring a woman has enough darkness during the evening is essential for both conception and the healthy development of her fetus. Exposure to artificial light during the night hours can seriously affect a woman's reproductive health and even mess with the health of her baby.

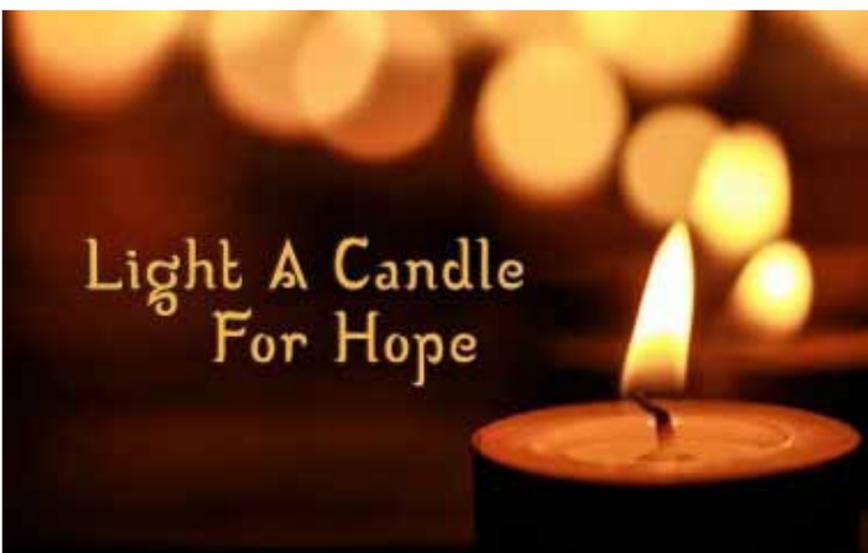
Steps we can take to embrace the dark for better health

It is complex to tell how much darkness is required to turn on melatonin production. If we are concerned about excess light exposure at night, we may want to:

- ♥ cover the bedroom windows with opaque covers
- ♥ stop even brief light exposures at night
- ♥ turn-off the lights, computer, and television in the bedroom when we sleep
- ♥ avoid television or computer right before sleep.
- ♥ use low-wattage yellow/red bulbs in nightlights below the eye level
- ♥ install a low-wattage or red-bulb nightlight in the bathroom(s)



Uthayan Thurairajah is a Senior Engineer and Associate at WSP|MMM Group with over twenty years of experience in Electrical Engineering and Lighting field, and he also holds a Lecturer position in the Department of Communication and Design at Ryerson University. Uthayan is a member of several Canadian and international professional association including Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine (AIHM) and Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR). He has worked on multi-disciplinary lighting and electrical projects for the Ministry of Transportation, various Towns, Municipalities, Regions and others. Ha carries out research on the subject of lighting and taken part in several projects. He also has extensive research experience in the value of lighting design in the mental, emotional, and social well-being of a person. He is a frequent presenter and author on lighting design & health. He is passionate about integrating science and health into the lighting design.



Book Review



Special Feature

STRANGE RELATIONSHIP

By PON KULENDIREN

Review by Thuraiyuraan

This is an anthology of twenty one short stories dealing with various topics and various places in Sri Lanka and a few in Toronto. An overview of the backgrounds of some of the stories in this collection is given by the author himself in the foreword. The readers will have an idea of the customs and traditions of Sri Lankan Tamils and their efforts to preserve them, wherever they are living now. I went through all the stories and found that the author has painted a vivid picture of the Jaffna villages and other places appearing in the stories. The history of the villages which have been passed on from generations by word of mouth have been well documented by the author and will be used by future generations. Hence I thank the author for his foresight. I found most of those information about the villages were new to me even though I was born in Jaffna. The descriptions are so authentic that they captivate the attention of the readers and add flavour to the stories and make them interesting. His style and presentation is very lucid and smooth running. He has a natural gift of imagination along with clear and concise story telling. All in all this anthology is interesting and informative. Especially to readers who are new to Sri Lankan way of living and their internal family feuds.

I found some details given in some stories were unwarranted or antisocial in the present context but at the same time they throw light on the evils of caste system which prevailed in the Jaffna society three decades ago. Instead of very vivid details a casual mention may have been ideal.

Now I venture out to deal with salient features of some of the stories one by one. Some of the stories deal with questionable activities of Jaffna Tamils of the past and present.

The first story titled "Strange Relationship" deals with lesbian love and the reactions of a Sinhalese family. The same applies to any Asian family to such controversial issues which are not addressed properly even at this twenty first century. The tragic ending of the story appears to be to pacify the family concerned. This story brings out the ignorance of the Asians of the mental and physical make up of same sex lovers, which is abhorred and denounced. Incidentally the book is given the same title as that of this story.

The second story is also a controversial one in the eyes of the Asian society and not much spoken about, but found rampant because of tourism. Pedophiles make it a point to travel to some of these countries including Sri Lanka. This story is set in the background of Bentota, a beautiful seaside village in Sri Lanka a famous tourist spot. This brings about the social degradation and the teenagers attraction to quick money and falling victims to pedophile and the spread of HIV.

The third one paints detailed events in a rooming house in Colombo and its suburbs run by government servants for government servants living alone, when their families are in Jaffna. This may be because of economic and social reasons. These rooming houses were in old dilapidated houses with leaking roofs and badly maintained surroundings. These were found mostly in the sixties and seventies and I am not sure of these after the 1983 pogrom in the Sinhalese areas. I was familiar with these rooming houses as some of my friends lived in them.

The story titled 'Marriage' describes the life of a typical Jaffna family where the male sibling or siblings takes the responsibility of arranging marriage for their sisters by saving money for giving dowry and leading a frugal life. Some of them pass the age of their marriage in this process and remain a bachelor throughout their life. The dowry system was an evil societal custom prevalent in those days and was given up during the

three decades of war in Sri Lanka. I hear now it has shown its ugly head among some of the Diaspora Tamils.

"Rainy Day" is a story depicting the atrocities of the Sri Lankan army in Jaffna during the war, even though the story is happening in Badulla, a town in the central province. "Retribution" is also a similar one dealing with the same topic told in flashback. "Roadside Singer" another story also falls in this category. The author has used many forms of story-telling with vivid details of the background so as to captivate the attention of the reader. "Beauty" is a story set in a rich and influential area in Colombo called Cinnamon Gardens, similar to posh areas like Bayview or Richmond Hill areas of Toronto.

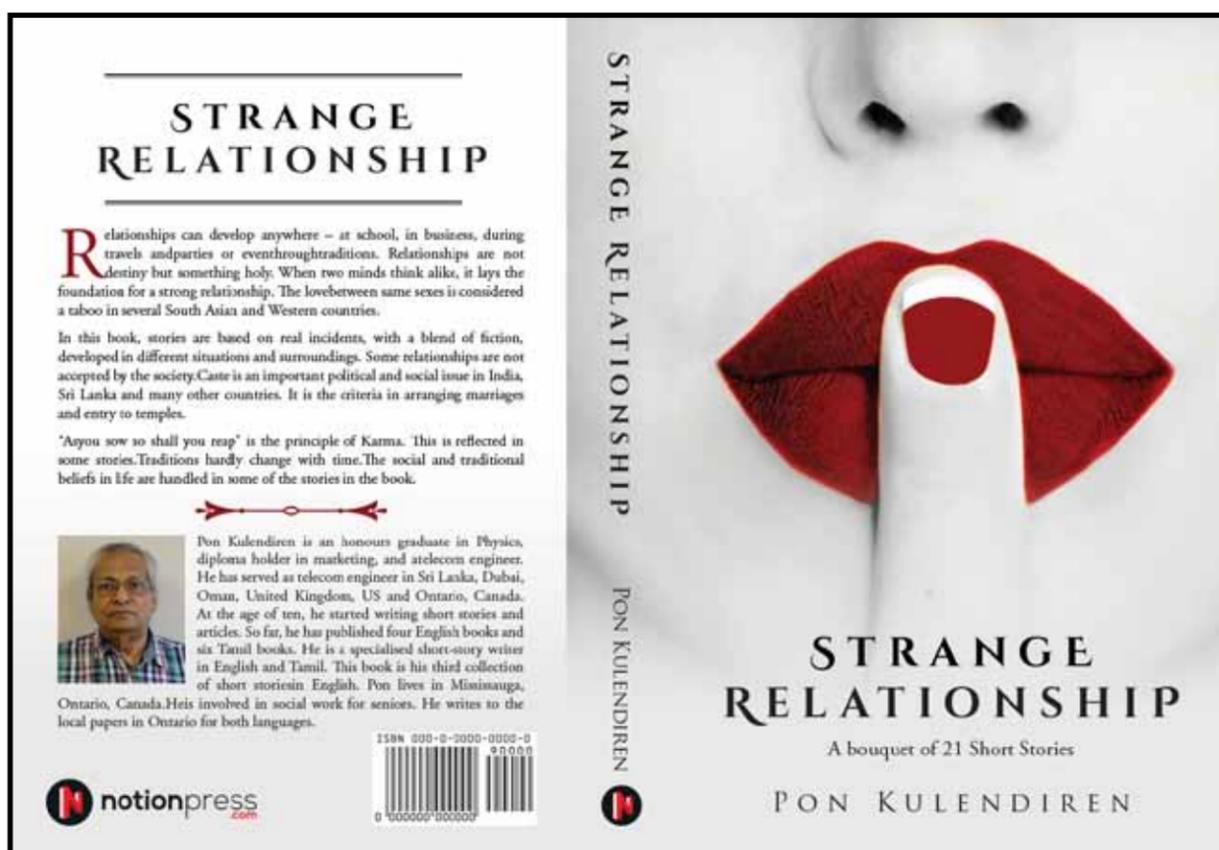
The story set in Jaffna titled 'Well' depicts the typical family feud over a well and Malayan pensioners bringing large amounts of money to Jaffna and building big houses for their children. "Gabriel" is a story connecting Toronto and Puttalam a coastal town in South Sri Lanka. This gives details of Kaffir community from East Africa, who were brought to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) as soldiers by the British and some of them settled there. This was an interesting piece of information which I was not aware of. Incidentally most of the stories contain historical information of villages which have been passed for generations by word of mouth and the author has taken the trouble of recording them and he deserves an honourable mention.

"Rajan's soul" and "Loneliness" are both set in Ontario and brings out the social issues faced by mostly immigrants. Stories like Chit fund, Intermarriage, Temple Entry, Bribe, and Caste are some very familiar events and the way of life of Jaffna families of those days before the war. Especially the caste system of those days was very well illustrated in these stories. The author may have avoided some details or treated them very casually. I found them a bit out of place at the present context. A Canadian or a Western reader may find them distasteful and may form a negative opinion about us. The story "Barren" deals with the modern technique of artificial insemination which is commonly practised by childless couples.

Most of the stories with Jaffna background deal with some lost practices like crying for money in funeral houses (Oppari), animal sacrifice in some temples, temple entry denied for some Harijans etc. These events are very well documented and may serve as valuable information for our younger generation.

All in all this anthology brings out the life of Tamils mostly and a few Sinhalese families from various strata of Sri Lankan society. Author's wide knowledge of the history, customs and traditions of these families are evident from these stories.

The general get up and formatting of this anthology, including the captivating cover is well done. The publisher Notion Press of Chennai, India deserves commendation. I recommend this book to all readers who are interested in knowing about Sri Lanka and its people. I congratulate Pon Kulendiren for his uncanny ability of remembering events and details of his experiences in these stories and making it an interesting anthology.





MANAGING YOUR MONEY

The cost of missing the RRSP deadline

David Joseph, M.A.(Economics), CFP®, CLU

It's an undeniable fiscal fact: Filling up your Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) contribution room each year is a great way to maximize the size of your retirement nest egg. But many Canadians have trouble coming up with a sizeable chunk of money as the contribution deadline looms—as a consequence, that contribution room goes unfilled and their retirement savings are diminished.

But there is an easy solution: A Pre-Authorized Contribution Program (PAC), an easy way to invest—so easy you may actually forget you are investing—that delivers these significant financial benefits:

*Your regular contributions have longer to grow and thanks to the miracle of compounding, you add significantly to your retirement nest egg.

* You enjoy the benefit of Dollar Cost Averaging—meaning that you buy fewer units of an RRSP-eligible mutual fund (for example) when prices are high and more units when prices are low. Over time, this strategy reduces the impact of volatility and usually results in a lower average cost to you and the accumulation of more units.

To start PAC-ing, simply arrange with your financial institution to deduct a specified amount from your chequing or savings account on a regular basis that is contributed to your RRSP.

RRSP deadline basics:

• February 29, 2016 is the deadline for contributing to investments in your RRSP for the 2015 tax year.

• The maximum contribution room that can be created for 2015 is \$24,930, depending your earned income in 2014 (and minus your pension adjustment if applicable).

• You'll find your personal maximum allowable contribution on your most recent notice of assessment from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

• You can carry forward unused contribution room from prior years.

• You can fill your unused contribution in a single year or over a number of years until the end of the year in which you reach age 71.

RRSP tips that defer taxes, save on taxes and build income:

• Maximizing your RRSP contribution this year (and every year) is one of the best strategies for tax savings and maximizing potential long-term growth.

• Catch up on your unused contribution room from previous years as

quickly as possible for additional savings and enhanced long-term growth.

• An RRSP loan can help you maximize this year's contribution and catch up on past contribution room. The money you borrow will generate a tax break and add to your tax deferred RRSP growth potential. But only when you can get an RRSP loan at a low interest rate and pay it back quickly. Use your extra tax savings to pay off the loan.

• If your spouse's income will be lower than yours over the next few years or in retirement, splitting income by way of a spousal RRSP can generate retirement income that is subject to less tax. The plan is in your spouse's name but you contribute to it and receive the tax deduction. Your total contribution can't exceed your personal yearly contribution room but your spouse's limit is unaffected by your contribution.

There's no doubt that a PAC can be instrumental to reaching your long-term goals, but it is only one element of a comprehensive financial plan that should also include such strategies as asset allocation, portfolio balance/rebalance, tax reduction, estate planning and other strategies tailored especially for you.

Year after year, many Canadians leave a key financial opportunity on the table by not contributing the maximum allowable amount into their RRSP. People come up with many excuses for not contributing an RRSP. Often we hear comment that "What is the point of putting money into RRSP if when you take the money out you have to pay tax on it?" When you contribute to RRSP, you get a tax deduction and for many of you, you receive a tax refund. If you did something constructive with the tax refund like paying down debts, then the fact that you have to pay tax on your RRSP withdrawals becomes irrelevant. By having the benefit of deferring that tax, you end up with significant more money in your retirement savings.

Disclaimer:

This report specifically written and published as a general source of information only, and is not intended as a solicitation to buy or sell specific investments or insurance, nor is it intended to provide investment advice. For more information on this topic and/or to arrange free educational seminars, please contact me.

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GENIE SISTERS SAMAYAL SANTHAI



Welcome to our recipe corner! We sisters will entice you with recipes that we have fallen in love with and teach you a little Tamil along the way, as all the ingredients will have their Tamil names. Both of us love to cook and we have developed very different styles. Niranjini has a very refined palate and cooks more contemporary world cuisine with an Asian touch. Rajini is a seasoned homemaker who loves making traditional dishes for her friends and family. Follow us on Instagram: @ninjaeatsfood and @tamil_food
Eat more, learn more!

Sisters Niranjini Thirunesan (left in photo) and Rajini Nathan live in London and are of Sri Lankan heritage. Niranjini is a graduate in Human Biology, and has a clear passion for food. You can find more of her recipes on her blog www.ninjaeatsfood.wordpress.com Rajini has a background in psychology and travels the world with her husband Victor and daughter Azaaryah. Their travels are detailed at www.myreluctanttravels.wordpress.com

BEETROOT CHUTNEY



February, the month of love and all things made of roses and chocolates. When the world sees everything through rose-tinted glasses...or beetroot-tinted ones should we say? Yes, that's right, beetroot! It's almost metaphorical; cut through a beetroot and find its love on your hands. Beetroot is one of those underrated vegetables that get no recognition for what it is worth. Studies have shown for it to slow the progression of dementia and be a good source of folic acid. At only 38kCal/100g of raw beetroot, why wouldn't it be a part of your diet? It's not such a foreign vegetable for us Asians, however. Beetroot is such a beloved staple in our Tamil households. No doubt you'll have it with rice, alongside some beans, pappadam, etc. However, have you ever tried beetroot chutney? It's sweet enough to change the flavour of your meal, but still holds well as chutney. So, here it is!

Ingredients:

- 1 medium grated beetroot**
- 3 tbsp oil**
- 1 tsp mustard seeds (kadugu)**
- 1 clove garlic (ulli/poondu)**
- 1 tsp chana dhal (kadalai paruppu)**
- 1 tsp Urid Dhal (Uzhunthu)**
- 1 tsp whole coriander seeds (kothamallivithai)**
- 1 tsp whole cumin seeds (seeragavithai)**
- 10 curry leaves (kari vepilai)**
- 1-2 green chilli (patchaimilagai)**
- 1 tsp paste or ½ golf ball size tamarind water (puli thanni)**
- Salt (uppu) to taste**
- ½ tsp turmeric (manjal)**

Method:

In a pan, heat 2 tbsp of oil and add ½ a tsp of the mustard seeds. Once they start popping, add ½ tsp of chana dhal, ½ tsp of urid dhal, 5 curry leaves, coriander seeds and cumin seeds and then the garlic and chillies. If you don't want it to be too spicy, add the chillies later and use just one instead of two. Add the grated beetroot, turmeric and let it cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Then add the tamarind paste/water and salt, according to your taste. If you are using tamarind paste, then add about 100 ml of water to loosen the mixture up. Cook for a further 10 minutes, or until the beetroot is soft and cooked through and then let the mixture cool and grind to a paste.

Again in a pan, heat 1 tbsp of oil and temper ½ tsp of mustard seeds, ½ tsp of chana dhal, ½ tsp of urid dhal and the remaining curry leaves and add this to the ground paste. Your beetroot chutney is ready! This can be eaten with idly, dosa, paratha or even mixed in some steamed basmati rice for a truly aromatic treat.

Try it this month and do hashtag #monsoonjournal on Instagram and send us your pics, comments and feedback. Spread the love (and recipe!)

Enjoy.....!

Inforce Life Financial Service's Award Night 2016

We are so proud that we had the best award ceremony and an exclusive event with over 300 guests! Congratulations to all the award recipients!, Chandran Rasalingam, President & CEO.



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THAMIL HERITAGE SCHOOL OF WATERLOO REGION and GUELPH THAI PONGAL CELEBRATION 2016

By: Kuna-S-Kunasekaran

Board of Director - Tamil Heritage School of Waterloo Region and Guelph

On January 17, 2016, The "Tamil Heritage School of Waterloo Region and Guelph", the Tamil community organization serving the Tamils living in the cities of Waterloo, Kitchener, Guelph and Cambridge for the past 15 years has very proudly Celebrated the "THAI PONGAL", the Harvest Festival of Tamils.

It was attended by around 200 people. The "Pon-

gal" was made real-time in front of the people by setting up the pot on a burner and chanting "Pongalo Pongal" when the milk boiled over the pot. It was commented by all attended that, this "Pongal" brought back the sweet memories of our back home Eelam.

The "Pongal Making" was followed by many Tamil art performances performed by the students from the two Tamil schools run by the above community organization. Some of those performances are; "Kummy" Dances, Songs and Speeches just to

mention a few.

The event hall was decorated by the real "Thoranam" and "Maavilai" to add additional cultural feature to the festival.

The Highlight of the festival was that the Pongal and all other food items were served to all on Banana Leaves.

This "Thai Pongal" was celebrated by the "Tamil Heritage School of Waterloo Region and Guelph" to honor our Tamil Heritage Month in Ontario, Canada.





Traditional Thai Pongal reflects the culture in Waterloo

Roseville, Cambridge: She's a strong black beauty with a big day on her horizon. Most of the time she's just one of the 500 cows being milked on a century old farm on the eastern edge of Roseville in the Waterloo region. But this weekend, January 16th, she is the centre of attention.

About 80 people gather around her Saturday afternoon as the Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region held a special Thai Pongal day ceremony (also called Tamil Thanksgiving) at Meadow Lee Farms in Roseville, Ontario. It was part of Tamil Heritage Month, in Ontario.

The ritual commemorates a three day festival, called Thai Pongal, which starts on Friday, January 15. The annual celebration takes place after the harvest in Sri Lanka and South India, the traditional homeland of Tamil people. Community members thank the sun for making plants grow and thank cattle for producing milk and help till the soil. Farmers, too, are thanked by people who live in the city, said Dharini Sivakumar, the Secretary of the association.

"We don't produce food, but we

thank the farmer for giving us food." Thai pongal is considered as festival celebrated by all Tamils irrespective of their faith.

On Saturday, Dharini Sivakumar, the President of the association cloaked the cow with an ornate blanket and hang colourful garland of flowers around her neck. Traditionally, celebrants cover the cow-of-distinction's horns with metal caps. However, this time, she was painted in Orange by Rajivi Nadarajah.

The Tamil language school children were on hand to witness the ceremony along with their teacher Mrs. Kunamalar. "This is the only way our children, who are born in Canada, could witness the actual ceremony. I will thank the Tamil cultural association be part of the community and to preserve our culture."

For the Tamil community of Waterloo region – Brantford and Guelph, the ceremony is a way of passing their tradition and culture to their children. The day ended with a community get together at Roseville United Church. Please visit www.tamilculturewaterloo.org or their facebook.



The first Nano Technology conference in Waterloo



Waterloo Undergraduate Nanotechnology Conference (WUNC) Organizing Team (left to right): Thomas Storwick, Mayuran Saravanapavanantham, Akshayaa Govindan, Alisha Bhanji, Jatin Patil and Irene Lau

The first ever Waterloo Undergraduate Nanotechnology Conference (WUNC) was held at the Mike & Ophelia Lazaridis Quantum-Nano Centre on Saturday, November 7, 2015.

The conference featured presentations and posters by researchers, graduate students, and industry members, at the cutting edge of nanotechnology. This conference was fully organized by undergraduate students from the Nanotechnology Engineering program who took the initiative and wanted to seize the opportunity to learn more about the scope of nanotechnology in academia as well as industry.

The event was a forum to connect undergraduates, graduates, and faculty members from the Faculties of Sci-

ence and Engineering which included students not just from the NE programs but from other programs across campus.

The event lived up to expectations which was to offer the perfect opportunity to get a glimpse of the exciting and inspiring future of the field across a variety of disciplines that are impacted because of nanotechnology.

The WUNC organizing team would like to thank the Waterloo Institute for Nanotechnology (WIN), the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering who all graciously supported this initiative. Their goal for the coming years is to have a larger audience and reach out to more companies and academics who express an interest in nanotechnology.





Heritage day celebrations at JC's Banquet Hall organized by the Senior Tamils' Centre of Ontario

Tamil Heritage Day was celebrated at the JC's Banquet Hall on the 24th of Jan 2016. The month of January in each year is proclaimed as Tamil Heritage Month. Its objective is to celebrate the richness of the Tamil language and literature, the traditions, arts and culture of Tamils around the world and to educate Canadians of all backgrounds about the language, traditions and history of the Tamil people. With a view to showcase and share the above, an exhibition and a cultural event was organized by The Senior Tamils' Centre of Ontario. Mr. S. Srijevanathan, President of the Centre welcomed everyone. The event started with the traditional nathaswaram music followed by the lighting of the traditional oil lamp and Thamil Thai vaalthu. Traditional dance forms such as Kummi, Karagam,

Kavadi, Poikaal Kuthirai, Harvest dance, Parai isai dance were performed by young artists. Tamil Isai songs were sung by the staff and members of the centre. The highlight of the event was a musical parade, "Manvasanai" which was organized by the members and staff of the Senior Tamils' Centre who presented selected traditional clothing and styles maintained by the Tamil Community in villages. The models who presented the styles and fashions were specially picked for this occasion and they were serenaded by period music.

Mr. Chin Lee, Councilor for Scarborough Rough River, Mr. Raymond Cho, Councilor for Scarborough Rough River Mr. Parthi Kandavel, Trustee-Toronto District Board were some of the dignitaries who attended the event.

Mr. Ponniah Viveganathan was the guest speaker. A book released by Senior Tamils Centre of Ontario named, 'Rites and Rituals of Sri Lankan Hindu Tamils' written by Mr. Kumar Punithavel was distributed. This book explains vividly the rationale,

cultural ceremonies of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Meaningful ceremonies and rational rituals have been explained with reasons and in this respect this book is considered to be a guide for the younger generation interested to learn the roots of their forefathers.



THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple THAI PONGAL (MAKARA SANKARANTI)

By Kidambi Raj

Member, Board of Trustees

On Friday, the 15th of January, 2016, Thai Pongal (Makara Sankranti) was celebrated in a grand fashion at our temple attended by large number of devotees. In addition to Poojas to the main deities, a special Pooja was performed to Lord Surya Bhagawan for his blessings and benevolence for good crop around the world.

What is Thai Pongal (or Makara Sankranti) and when is it celebrated

Sankranti is the Sanskrit word in Indian Astrology which refers to the transmigration of the Sun from one Rasi (sign of the zodiac) to another. Hence there are 12 such Sankrantis in all. However, the Sankranti festival usually refers to Makara Sankranti, or the transition of the Sun from Dhanu rasi (Sagittarius) to Makara rasi

(Capricorn).

Thai Pongal (Makara Sankranti) is a major harvest festival celebrated in various parts of India. According to the lunar calendar, when the sun moves from the Tropic of Cancer to the Tropic of Capricorn or from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana, in the month of Poush in mid-January, it commemorates the beginning of the harvest season and cessation of the northeast monsoon in South India.

Makar Sankranti, apart from a harvest festival is also regarded as the beginning of an auspicious phase in Indian culture. It is said as the 'holy phase of transition'. It marks the end of an inauspicious phase which according to the Hindu calendar begins around mid-December.

It is believed that any auspicious and sacred ritual can be sanctified in any Hindu family, this day onwards.



Scientifically, this day marks the beginning of warmer and longer days compared to the nights. In other words, Sankranti marks the termination of winter season and beginning of a new harvest or spring season.

Scriptural and cultural significance

1. According to the Puranas, on this day Surya (Sun) visits the house of his son Shani (Saturn), who is the lord of the Makar rasi (Zodiac Capricorn). Though the father and son duo did not get along well, the Surya made it a point to meet his son on this day. He, in fact, comes to his son's house, for a month. This day thus symbolizes the

importance of the special relationship between father and son.

2. From Makar Sankranti starts the 'day' of devatas (Gods), while dakshinayana (southward movement of the sun) is said to be the 'night' of devatas, so most of the auspicious things are done during this time. Uttarayana is also called as Devayana, and the Dakshinayana is called Pitrayana.

It was on this day when Lord Vishnu ended the ever increasing terror of the Asuras (Demons) by finishing them off and burying their heads under the Mandara Parvata. So this occasion also represents the end of 'negativities' and beginning of an era of righteous living.



THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA

Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple

ARUDRA DARSANAM

By: **Kidambi Raj**
Member, Board of Trustees

The Arudra Darsam celebrations were held on Friday December 25, 2015 in our temple. On this day a special Abhishekham was done for Lord Nataraja. A large number of devotees came to seek His Blessings to help them overcome the difficulties in their lives.

WHAT IS ARUDRA?



Arudra is the Sanskrit name for the star Thiruvathirai, which is one of 27 stars in the Hindu Calendar. Arudra means a "Golden Red Flame".

WHEN IS ARUDRA DARSANAM CELEBRATED?

It is celebrated on the day when the moon is with the Arudra star

in the Tamil month of Margazhi (December-January) thus coinciding with the full moon day in that month.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ARUDRA DARSANAM

It is said that Lord Nataraja, the Cosmic dancing form of Lord Shiva was born on the day of Arudra star. So, it is the sighting of the Arudra star. Therefore the sighting of the Arudra star is known as Arudra Darsanam. The month of Margazhi is the twilight time for the Gods and the best time for Gods to rest and rejuvenate their powers.

WHO IS WORSHIPPED DURING THE ARUDRA DARSANAM?

On that day of Arudra, Lord Shiva in the form of Lord Nataraja is worshipped. Nataraja means the King of the dance. It is believed that the dance of Lord Nataraja represents the motion in the different particles that make up the universe.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DANCE OF LORD NATARAJA THE DANCE NOT ONLY REPRESENTS THE MOTION OF PARTICLES IN THE

UNIVERSE, it also represents the existence of the universe. The dance of Lord Nataraja represents the five vital activities namely, Creation, Protection, Destruction, Release and Embodiment. Lord Nataraja is also known as Sabesan, the Lord who dances on the dais. Lord Nataraja's posture is with His left leg lifted and suppressing the demon of ego under His right foot. The right hand is in the posture of Abhaya Hasta or the hands of protection of His devotees. It is believed that the power of Lord Shiva is at the nearest to the people of earth on the Arudra Darsanam day and hence devotees would come in large numbers to get



His blessings. The night on which the Arudra Star is sighted has the longest night in the whole year. From the following day onwards, the day starts to get longer thus making the nights shorter. This day is also believed to be significant for the enlightenment of one's mind.

Famous temples where Arudra Darsanam is celebrated All Shiva temples celebrate Arudra Darsanam. Out of all the temples around the world, the temple in Chidambaram (also known as Thillai) is one of the five places that represent the Pancha Maha Bhootas (Five great elements) which are; Fire, Air, Water, Land and Sky. Chidambaram is the place that represents the Sky or Aakaasa.



THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA

Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple

VAIKUNTA EKADASI

By: **Kidambi Raj**
Member, Board of Trustees

This year the Vaikunta Ekadasi was celebrated on Monday, December 21st. The whole celebration started early in the morning with the chanting of Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatham, followed by the chanting of "Thiruppavai" 30 verses composed by Aandal. Then the special abhishekham for Lord Venkateswara (or Srinivasa) took place. Then special Pooja for the Utsava idols of Perumal, Lakshmi and Aandal was done in the vasantha Mandapam. The beautifully decorated Utsavar idols were taken inside the temple and brought and placed at the special elevated portal. After another Pooja to the Utsavar idols, devotees came under the portal erected for this event from the back of the idols and get the Blessings of the Lord. It truly was a very well attended function. In all temples outside India, this kind of building a portal with a platform to place the Utsavar idols is the alternate to the Swarga Vaasal like the one shown below. This picture shown below symbolizes the "Swarga Vaasal" one would see at the Sri Ranganathar temple in Srirangam, South India. These doors are opened only once a year on Vaikunta Ekadasi day.



Swarga Vaasal (Entrance doors to Heaven or Vaikunta, the Abode of Sriman Naaraayana) at Lord Ranganathar Temple in Srirangam, South India

WHAT IS VAIKUNTA EKADASI & WHEN IS IT CELEBRATED:

Vaikunta Ekadasi is one of the important and auspicious days to the Hindus. It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It occurs in the Hindu calendar, in the month of Thai or Pausha (December - January). Also called the "Mukkoti Ekadasi" (in Telugu), when observed, it bestows liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Vaishnavism culture believes that "Vaikunta Dwaram" or "the gate to Lord Vishnu's inner Sanctum" is opened on this day. The Margashirsha Shukla paksha Ekadashi in lunar calendar is known as a "Mokshada Ekadasi". Fasting on Ekadasi is considered holier than any other religious observation.

SPECIALTY OF VAIKUNTA EKADASI:

There are 24 Ekadasis or 11th Moons in a year and "Vaikunta Ekadasi" is the most powerful and looked forward to by most of the devotees. This is the ideal day to seek for spiritual redemption or rescue from the current confusion and suffering. There is also a material energy that comes on the 11th Moon - prosperity energy as Vishnu is the archetypal God of Wealth. Be alert and access the abundance in abundance.

It is believed that if you celebrate and pray fervently to Lord Vishnu on Vaikunta Ekadasi, the gates to heaven will be kept open when your soul leaves the physical body. Indirectly, you are reserving your gate pass to heaven in advance. Chant the Mantra "Sriman Naaraayanaaya Charanou Saranam Prapatyae" on this power day and also observe fasting to dedicate your fervent prayer to Lord Vishnu.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING ON VAIKUNTA EKADASI:

It is believed that a partial or total abstinence from food on Ekadasi is rewarded with bliss. Doing so keeps you alert in receiving the spiritual energy that comes directly from Lord Vishnu on this most powerful day. According to Vishnu Purana, fasting on Vaikunta Ekadasi is equivalent to fasting on the remaining 23 Ekadasis of the Hindu year. However, according to Vaishnava tradition fasting is mandatory on all Ekadasis of both Shukla Paksha and Krishna Paksha.

Fasting on Ekadasi is considered holier than any other religious observation.

THE LEGEND ABOUT VAIKUNTA EKADASI:

The significance of Vaikunta Ekadasi is mentioned in the "Padma Purana". As per the legend, the Devas unable to bear the tyranny of the demon, "Muran", approached Lord Shiva who directed them to Lord Vishnu. A battle ensued between Lord Vishnu and the demon, Lord realized that a new weapon was needed to slay Muran. In order to take rest and create a new weapon, the Lord retired to a cave called "Himavati" in Badrikashrama. When Muran tried to slay the Lord, who was sleeping, the female energy that emerged from the Lord burnt him to ashes in one look. Lord Vishnu who was pleased, named the female energy



"Ekadasi" and asked to claim a boon. Ekadasi, instead beseeched the Lord that people who observed a fast on that day should be redeemed of their sins. The Lord thus declared that people who observed a fast on that day and worshipped Ekadasi, would attain Vaikunta. Thus came into being the first Ekadasi, which was Dhanurmasa Shukla Paksha Ekadasi.

LORD RANGANAATHA TEMPLE IN SRIRANGAM:

In Sri Ranganathaswamy temple in Srirangam, Vaikunta Ekadasi celebration lasts 21 days and is divided into two parts of Pagal pathu (morning ten) and Ira Pathu (night ten). Lord Vishnu as Lord Ranganatha is adorned in an armor of diamonds (rathnaangi) and is brought to the Thousand-Pillar Hall from the sanctum sanctorum through the northern gate known as 'Paramapada Vaasal', the Gate to Vaikunta.

HUMANS OF NORTHERN SRI LANKA



BY
THULASI MUTTULINGAM

The face Book Community page “Humans of Northern Sri Lanka” is a pictorial page by Thulasi Muttulingam.

Thulasi Muttulingam is a journalist based in the North of Sri Lanka. Having grown up away from her hometown of Jaffna, it is currently her mission to research and document as much of her culture and heritage as she can.

If you are similarly interested, check out more of her work at the facebook page ~ Humans of Northern Sri Lanka: To follow the updates, “Like” the page at: www.facebook.com/pages/Humans-of-Northern-Sri-Lanka

“The adage, “everybody has a story to tell” is especially true of Northern Sri Lanka!

Cut off for several decades from the South, the people of the North have many unique characteristics and issues that hardly get press coverage!

Here, inspired by Humans of New York, is a small attempt to redress this - dedicated to all lovers of Sri Lanka, including Northern Sri Lanka!”

Here are few recent pictorials that featured in Humans of Northern Sri Lanka:

Ms.Hema Malini

Ms.Hema Malini helps run a small handicrafts shop - a local women’s initiative to market their products, situated by the Karaddipokku junction, Kilinochchi along the A9 road. Ask for the Kili-Mullai local producers’ handicrafts shop next time you are in the area. They are worth checking out: “I am an Art & Craft teacher. The government invests in teaching handicrafts to war affected women in these parts to earn a living from, but marketing their individual produce from their rural villages is a problem.

Many women are too shy to go out and market their produce but I am not. I use every opportunity I get to give a sales pitch to people likely to buy my products. On a visit to the Government District Secretariat (Kilinochchi) one day, I noticed that all their flower vases were plastic ones. I pointed out to them that if they were sincere in giving us women a livelihood, the least they could do was source locally hand-crafted flower vases from us. They almost immediately placed an order for 30 such vases from me.



So my vases are the ones gracing most of the work stations at the Kilinochchi DS office today.”

“As poor rural women, our greatest challenge is not having enough money to invest in raw materials for our products. I am very frugal and careful about not letting anything go to waste therefore.

In fact, I sometimes actively use others’ cast off waste materials too. Every other week, I go on a round of the local tailors’ shops to gather their cut waste materials that they are about to throw away. Then I make purses and cloth bags from them, mixing and matching the materials to come up with innovative designs.”

(Photo Courtesy: Tara Jeyaratnam)



MAKING FLOWER GARLANDS



Paraphernalia for making flower garlands - a favorite past-time of the ladies of the North, especially to bedeck their temple deities



Some use cotton twine but traditionally twine from banana stems were used to weave the garlands; they still are.

“Some of the younger people use needle and thread to make the garlands but the traditional way of spinning the twine round the flower stems is the best way of holding them together. They stay fresher longer too.”



Garland of vases, along with the garlands of flowers for the ‘Vairavar’ deity represented by the Trident.

Vairavar worship is popular in many areas of Jaffna. According to local folk lore it was because temple edifices and statues were banned during Dutch Colonial rule - so people stuck tridents in the open air and worshiped them as symbols instead. Until a few decades ago, it was still possible to see these tridents being worshipped as village deities out in the open or under a tree - but now they have mostly been enclosed within temples - some of which have become very elaborate.



Women breadwinners

Ever since the war ended, some people might have been able to move on but many have not. The most affected segments of this society are the war widows and their families. Due to the stigma of the word ‘widow’ in our society, and due also to the fact that there are many other women similarly affected even if not widowed - those abandoned by their husbands for example, or those with disabled husbands unable to earn a living, or with husbands still detained in camps / jail, collectively necessitating these women to be the breadwinners as well as primary careers of their families - the NGO sector working here coined a term for them: Female Headed Households or Women Headed Households (FHH / WHH).

This terminology, now in common use in NGO and civil society parlance for years,

has somehow not yet been codified. Today there was a conference held in Jaffna in an attempt to rectify this. Government officials from all over Jaffna were invited to give their input on what exactly defines an FHH and who could come under this umbrella term.

A male government official had something more important on his mind however: “traditionally, the man is the head of the household. Just because he might be disabled or otherwise incapacitated to provide for his family, necessitating his wife to be the breadwinner, you can’t categorize that family as a female headed family.”

And this while knowing that the definition of this term is important for her family to gain both government and NGO Aid.

Yes, yes Dude. You have raised a VERY important point. We’ll take that on board (Jan 29, 2016)



“The odds are stacked against us women. The men are the ones equipped to be breadwinners. And if they turn out to be alcoholics like my husband, then it falls to us women, with very few resources, to look after the family. I never went to school yet taught myself to do basic math so that I could run a shop.

I made sure that my five daughters got a good education as I wanted them to have better choices than I did. All of them are unemployed however. There just aren’t many job opportunities even for educated youths in these parts. My second son-in-law has become an alcoholic now. He wasn’t one when he married. So the task of looking after my married daughter and her two daughters has fallen to me too. It never seems to end.”

— in Mannar, Sri Lanka.





OBITUARIES

February 2016

SINNATHAMBY KATHIRGAMANATHAN

(Former Assistant General Manager - Seylan Merchant Bank)
Loving husband of late Satgunanayaki, loving father of Karthiga Lakshmi (WNS) and Sitha Lakshmi (DFCC Bank), father-in-law of Shanthikumar (Informatics), and Jeyapragash (Nations Trust Bank), son of late Sinnathamby Udaiyar and Soubagyawathy, brother of Sivaloganathan, late Sathiyalanathan and brother-in-law of Shanmugeswaran.

KRISHNANANTHAN – SUBRAMANIAM

(Former Finance Director and Deputy Chairman of Hayleys Group of Companies)

Dearly beloved son of late Mr&Mrs Appacutti and Nagaratnam Subramaniam of Manipay, Kondavil and Dehiwela, beloved brother of Jegathambikai, Leelavathi, Jeyarani, Sarvambikai and Sarvananda.

BALACHANDRAN - SARATHA

Beloved wife of late Dr S. Balachandran, daughter of late Marimuthu Supramaniam and Kamalambikai, sister of late Subatra, Simitra, Sri Kantha, Saroja Manickavasakar and Shanthikumar, sister-in-law of late Gunasingam, Pathmanathan, Chandra Coulson, Chandraleka and Sita.

RAJENDRASINGHAM - T.S.J. PRINCE

Son of late Thirurajasingham (Principal) and late Pooranam, husband of late Pakyam (Principal - Udupiddy Girls' College), brother of Rani Sinnappapillai, Rajesh and Thivi, father of Romola.

SANGARAPPILAI - Mrs MANONMANI

wife of late Ponnampalam Sangarappillai, mother of Dr. C. Mohan, Dr. Asokan, Dr. Nagendran, Mahendran, late Jayanthi, Manohari and Dr. Manoharan mother-in-law of Ranjana, Chitramali, Gwendoline, Amitha, Dr. Maha, Jeyenran, Suthanthira Raj, grandmother of 16 and great grandmother of one, passed away peacefully on Jan 9th in Chicago.

VAIRAVANATHAN - THIAGARAJAH

Beloved husband of Indra, loving father of Kishan, Mala, Sanjiv and Chhaya, precious grandfather of the late Lahiru and of Ashwyn, Anya, Aindri, Kiran and Dhiya, loving brother of the late Dr Vishvanathan and Manon Sivasupramaniam, passed away peacefully on 12th January. Funeral was held on the same day according to his wishes.

RAJAKULASEGARAM THAVAMINI

Wife of late N. Rajakulasegaram, formerly 47, Nelson Place, Colombo 6, passed away peacefully in Victoria Canada, daughter of late Mr & Mrs. Kanagaratnam, mother of Vijaya Naveena - Chandran, Jothi Anderiesz, Nadesan & Sulocana Sarawanabawan, grandmother of Rohin, Ashley, Samantha, Biaka, Dillon & Neelan and sister of late Mrs. Canagarayar.

EUGENE MARIAMPILLAI

(Attorney-at-Law and Notary Public - Commissioner for Oaths),

expired on the 15th January 2016. Beloved son of late V. Mariampillai and Mrs. Therese Mariampillai, beloved husband of Mrs. Susila Mariampillai (retired teacher G.S.C., G.T.M.V. Col 13), Beloved father of Shakila Mary (H.H.R), brother of late Julian (Canada), Tharcisuis (Canada), Aloysius (Canada) Josephn and Hycintha of Jaffna.

KANDASAMY - K.

(Retired Director of Customs)

Loving husband of Pushparatham (Kili), father of Ganesh (London), Sritharan (Capital Maharajah), Manoharan (Canada) and Vasuki, father-in-law of Yoganani, Vinothini, Nilani & Sanakan, precious grandfather of Rishi, Delaksan, Aneesha, Vijay, Hrithik & Seyon

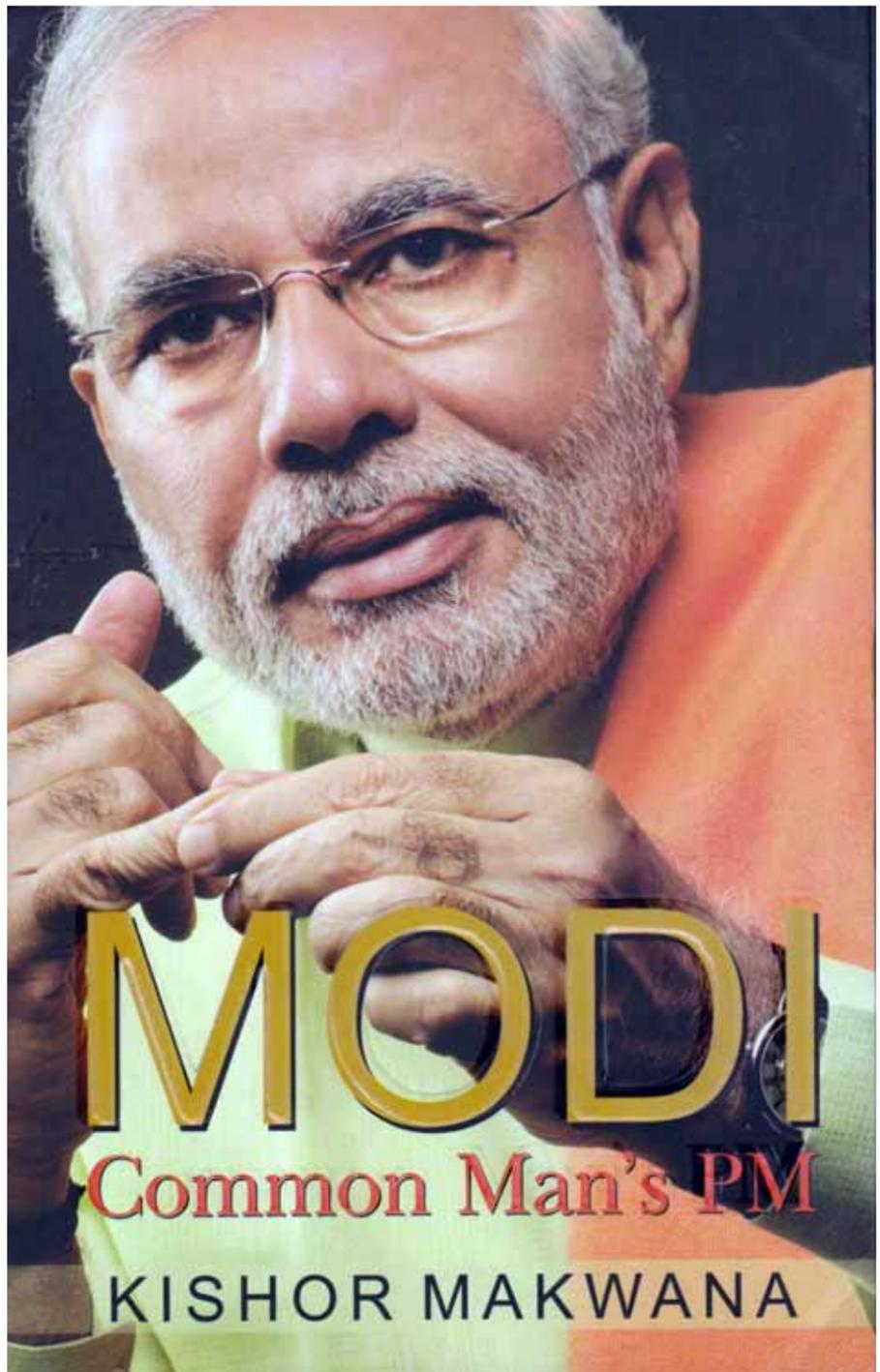
BOOK REVIEW

Modi – Common Man's PM

Author: Kishor Makwana
Publisher: Prabhat Prakashan
Reviewed By:
Siva Sivapragasam

“A strong government is where the will of the people matters, where the voice of the people is heard and where the dreams of the people are fulfilled.”

- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India



Narendra Modi will complete two years of stewardship as India's Prime Minister coming May 2016. The world renowned Time magazine predicted in 2013 "If Modi succeeded to reach national politics, it would necessarily change the picture and essence of India". No one can deny the fact that Modi is today the strongest leader in the country's politics and his initiatives are certainly changing India's landscape both in political and economic fields. The whole of India is looking to this great leader with hope and optimism to reform and rejuvenate the country.

The book titled "Modi – Common Man's PM", authored by Journalist Kishor Makwana and published by Prabhat Prakashan, is an insightful life-sketch of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has become a ray of hope from the position of a humble farmer and a tea-seller to a position of a Prime Minister of the largest democracy in the world. The whole of India is therefore naturally looking upon him with ray and

hope to make India a great country.

The book is a tribute to Modi to look into the life, personality and thoughts of Modi. The author considers him as an able administrator, organizer, impressive speaker, thinker and visionary. The special marks of his life according to the author are complete devotion to his work, self-confidence and discipline towards work and achievement.

The book discusses the important stop-overs of his life, personality, his patriotism, his working efficiency and vision. The author focuses a detailed interview focusing his life and personality. Modi responds to many questions in the interview ranging from his likes, dislikes, his views, ideas, doctrines and aspirations.

The book is a detailed account of Narendra Modi's personality and would therefore interest any reader who wants to know about him. The book is available for purchase online from the publisher at prabhatbooks@gmail.com



THAI PONGAL FESTIVAL

BY DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE TOWN OF AJAX

Thai Pongal Festival was celebrated on January 23rd by Durham Tamil Association in partnership with the Town of Ajax to mark the Tamil Heritage Month. The HMS Banquet Hall which is located in the Ajax Community Centre was beautifully decorated with numerous artifacts depicting Pongal.

The event commenced with the lighting of the lamp ceremony by Regional Councillor of Ajax Shaun Collier, Ward 1 Councillor Marilyn Crawford and Ward 3 Councillor Joanne Dies.

Many dignitaries including

Martyn Beckett, Director of DDSB

Barry Bedford, Equity & Diversity Officer for DDSB

Shane Joseph, Diversity Coordinator for the Town of Ajax

Sterling Lee, Outreach & Stakeholder from the office of Hon.MP Mark Holland
Chanjay Nimalraj, Outreach Advisor for MP Patrick Brown

Kathy Williams, Public Relations Director at the Pickering Library

Esther Enyolu, Executive Director of WMRCC

Shashi Bhatia, Chair Person of ICCAD
Cecil Ramnauth, President of Hanuman Mandir

Roland Rutland, Outreach Coordinator of the Bahai Community

Vaqr Raees, President of the Friends Indeed

Tariq Fahimi, VP of the Canadian Afghan Council

Michael Crowley, VP of Durham Asian Cultural Association

Mrs. Shireen Whitmore & Bill Houston



Diversity Coordinator Shane Joseph, Ajax Councillor Joanne Dies, Director of DDSB Martyn Beckett, Bill Houston, Shireen Whitmore, Exec. Director of WMRCC Esther Enyolu & Public Relations Director for the Pickering Libra



The Big Cheque for \$1245 which was raised for the Thilagavadiyar Girls Home in Srilanka was presented to the dignitaries



DTA's Salini Sivalingam



DTA's Sarika Navanathan



Regional Councillor Lorne Coe

were in attendance. They got a glimpse of the richness of Tamil culture through a variety of programs. Around 52 children and youth of TEAM DTA showcased different styles of dances and art forms depicting the Tamil culture.

During the Youth Festival of 2015, a total of \$ 1,245 was raised for the Thilagavadiyar Girls Home, Batticaloa – Srilanka by TEAM DTA. During this Thanks Giving Festival of Tamils, the big cheque for the raised funds was presented by TEAM DTA to all the dignitaries. Delicacies including traditional Pongal, Vada, Kadalai & Samosas was served to all the guests.



Greetings by MPP Todd Smith



Greetings by MPP Joe Dickson



Kalai Natyalaiya Fine Arts School of Bharathanatyam by Mrs.Kalamathy Vageesan



Regional Councillor Shaun Collier Lighting the Lamp



Director of DDSB Martyn Beckett & Diversity Officer for DDSB Barry Bedford appreciating TEAM DTA Youth



DTA's Anchana Jeyamohan as the Peacock Dancer



Tamil Fashion Show by Tiny tots of DTA



DTA's Mayuran Thananjeyan



Bhaarati School of Indian Classical Dance by Mrs. Shiyama Thayalan



Bharathalaya Dance Academy by Ms.Nivedha Ramalingham



Kollywood Twisters of DTA by Ms.Durga Sathiananthan



DTA's Luxana Mohanachandran



DTA's Nigharika Senthilkumar performing



Traditional Karagattam by DTA's Eyalini & Aschika



DTA's Pongal Display in Ajax Library



Appreciation by the Mayor of Town of Ajax



DTA's Pongal Display in Pickering Library



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The Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce is seeking applications/nominations from Tamil Canadians who have continuously owned a business for the duration of 10, 15, 20, or 25 years.

In order to apply for the awards, applicants/nominees must satisfy the following eligibility requirements:

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- Applicant/Nominee is of Tamil origin resident in Canada
- Applicant/Nominee cannot be an undischarged bankrupt
- Applicant/Nominee cannot have been previously or currently criminally convicted unless pardon has been received
- Applicant/Nominee cannot have been or is currently a publicly elected member of municipal, provincial or federal government
- Applicant/Nominee is not an employee or in recipient of remuneration from the municipal, provincial or federal government
- Applicant/Nominee may only be nominated in one category
- Nominee must have continuously owned the business for the length of the achievement year.

* Special consideration will be given to family owned businesses where child or spouse of original owner has taken over the business

An Award Selection Committee, appointed by the Board will be responsible for the selection of the recipients for these awards.

Application packages are available online on the CTCC website at www.ctcc.ca and must be sent either by post to the CTCC office or by email to roshan.ctcc@gmail.com. Applications should be received on or before April 29th, 2016 at 5PM.

For further inquiries, contact

Roshan Thavaratnam, Program Director, (416)-561-5733



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Premier of Ontario - Première ministre de l'Ontario

January 14, 2016

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to everyone celebrating Tamil Thai Pongal.

This is a beautiful tradition, which has been celebrated for more than a thousand years. In Tamil communities throughout the world, this is a time of great joy, a chance to get together with family, friends and neighbours to give thanks for blessings received.

This and the other customs and values brought by the Tamil community have enriched our culture, strengthened our links with the global community — and helped us build a society that is diverse yet harmonious.

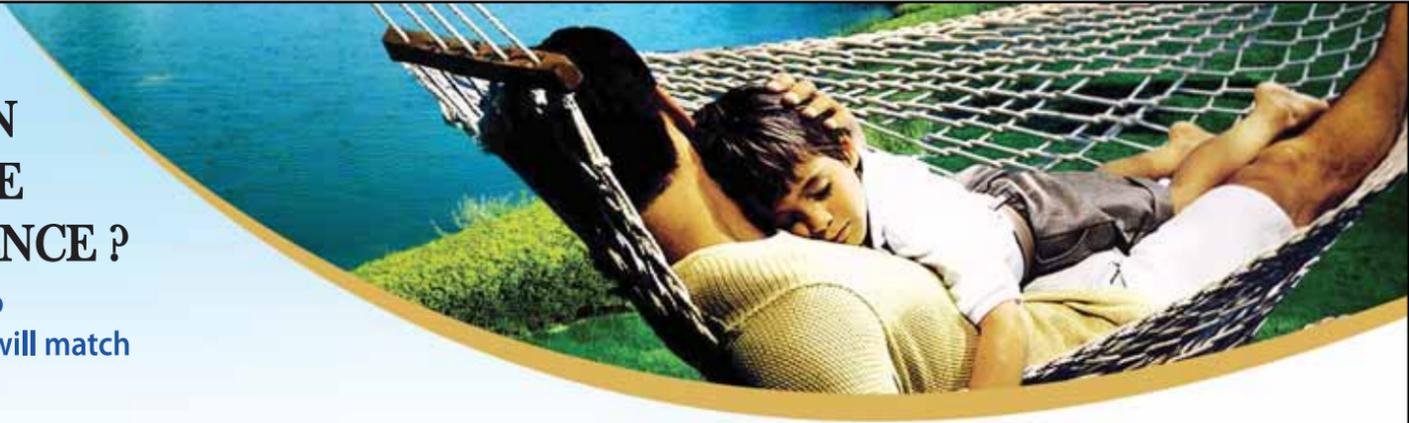
I offer my very best wishes for a joyous celebration — and for good health, happiness and prosperity in the year ahead.

Kathleen Wynne
Premier



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Life's brighter under the sun





Interesting facts about St Valentine's Day



In many countries couples can't wait until February 14th – the day which is called after Saint Valentine's name. In this day, most wedding proposals are made, thousands of love letters are sent, and people are looking for their "valentine", their one and only true love.

Here are some facts about this special holiday: - One of the origins for this holiday can be Lupicalia – the ancient Roman festival of health and fertility, traditionally celebrated between February 13 and February 15.

- The symbols of Saint Valentine's Day are doves, heart-shaped outline and a figure of little baby angel with wings
- Cupid. Cupid usually holds a bow with

arrows that bring love to the hearts of people.

- There were at least 14 people named Valentine who could have given the name to this holiday. They all were martyrs – people who were tortured and burned alive for their beliefs.

- Only in United Kingdom, about 25 million Valentine cards are being sent every year. In USA, the number of greeting cards or "valentines" is more than 190 million per year.

- In Finland, February 14th is called "Friend's Day" and friends, not lovers, are honored. Also in some Latin countries this day is for "love and friendship".

- Most popular present for St. Valen-

tine's Day is a heart-shaped chocolate. Thanks to this tradition, Japanese chocolate companies receive 50% of their annual income around this holiday.

- Private investigators also have their reasons to celebrate St. Valentine's Day. They get unusual tasks on this day: many people who receive anonymous "valentines" – love letters without the name of the sender – want to know who sent them.

All in all, this beautiful holiday reminds that spring is close, and air is filled with love. So, just take a pen and a heart-shaped paper, and write one simple phrase to a person you love: Let me be your Valentine!...

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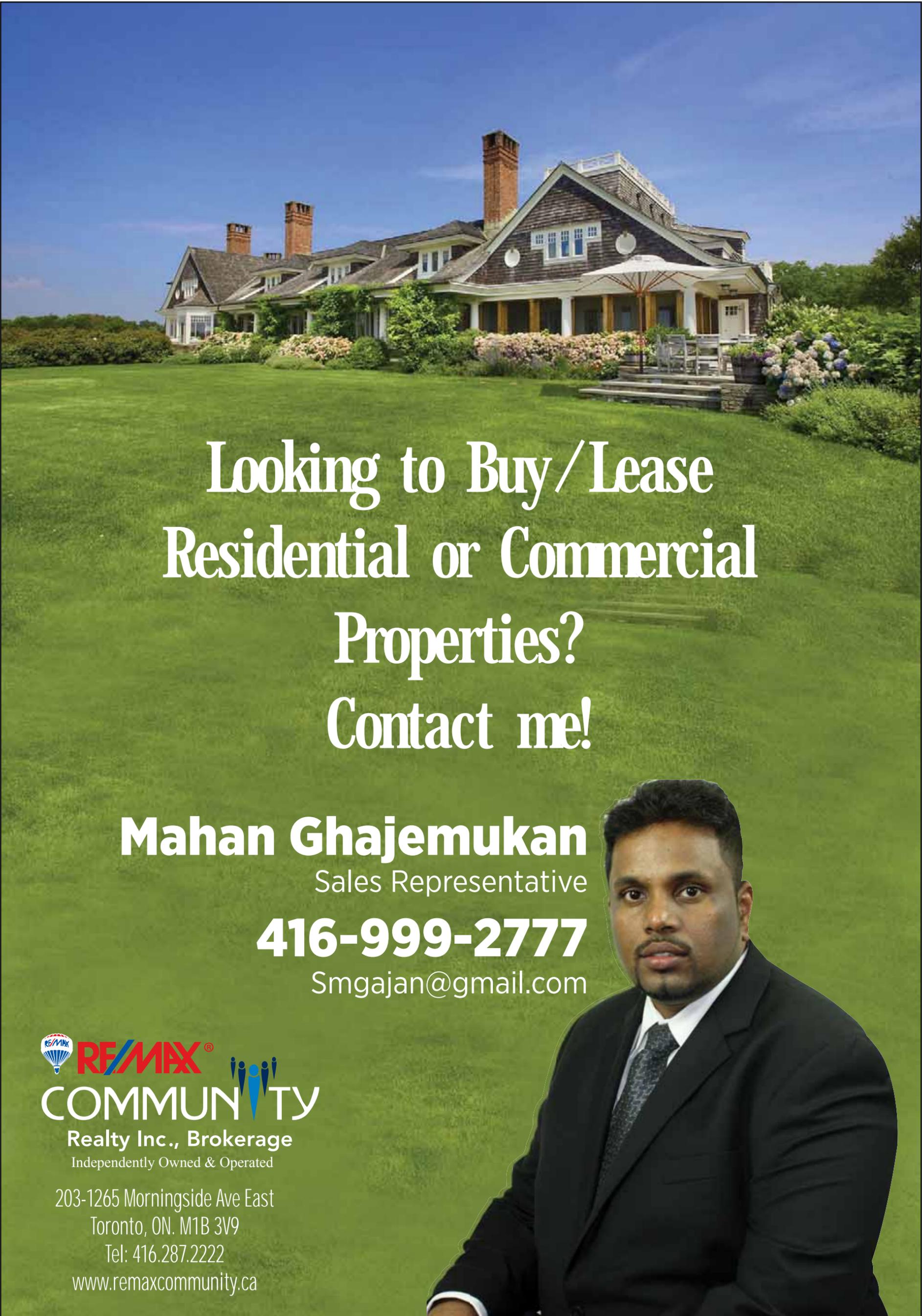
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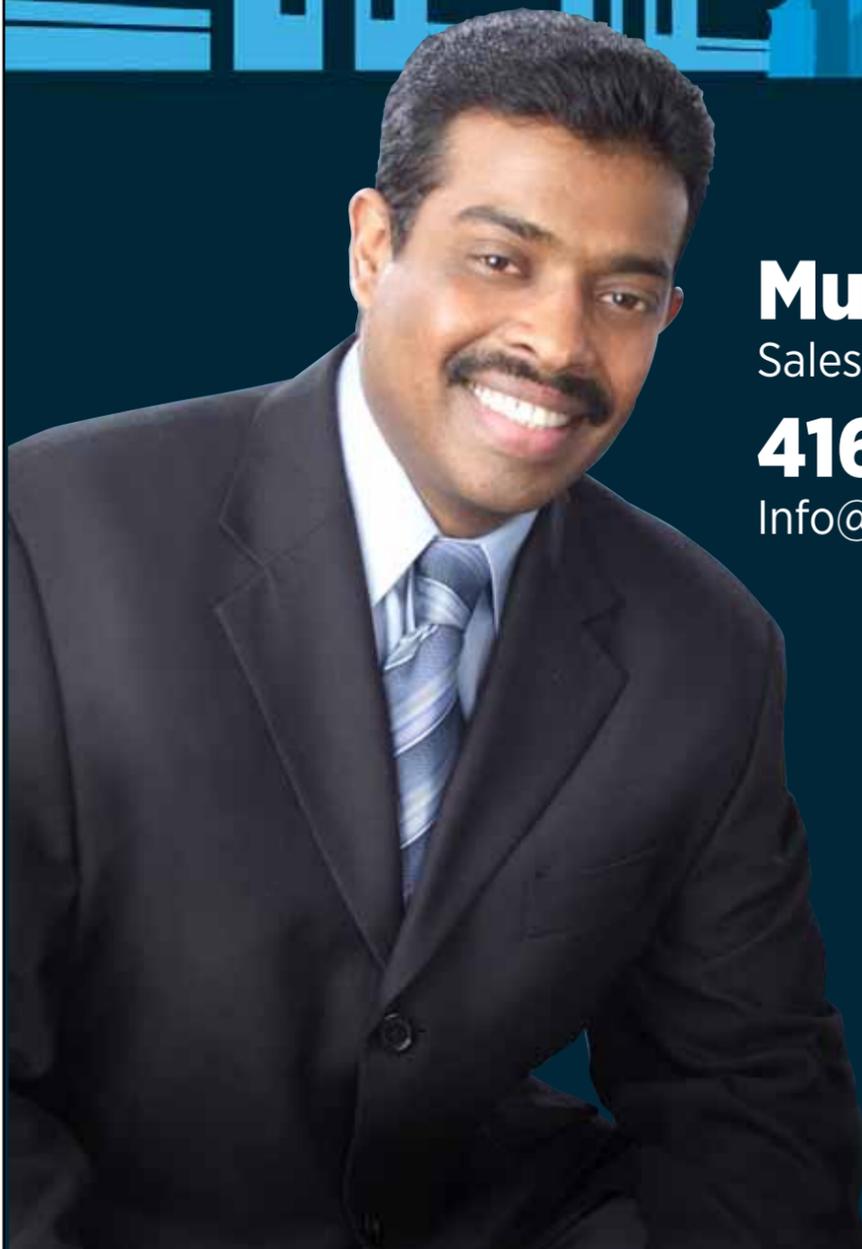
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Monsoon Journal has media accreditation to access many corporate events.

Ideal candidate will be - Passionate to cover events by Federal, Provincial, Municipal Govt, Healthcare Providers, Corporate, Private Companies, Leading Banks, Major events such as Pan Am, Caribana etc..

Interested to meet people and cover social events.

Motivated to gain professional experience by working in a fast-paced newsroom environment, including internships.

Requirements include: the ability to meet deadlines; communication skills; being adept at time management; proficient with DSLR camera and Photoshop; have a journalistic and creative eye; excellent people skills; know how to work in a team setting.

The photojournalist will produce and process images primarily for the editorial department, including its website and multimedia platforms, plus special sections and advertisements.

Assignments will include photos to accompany stories, wild art, and photo essays.

Schedule includes weekends. Must have reliable vehicle, to travel and attend events at various locations.

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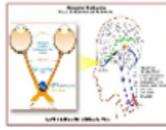
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Thai Pongal & Tamil Heritage Month

Thai Pongal January 14, 2015 A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER On behalf of the Government...

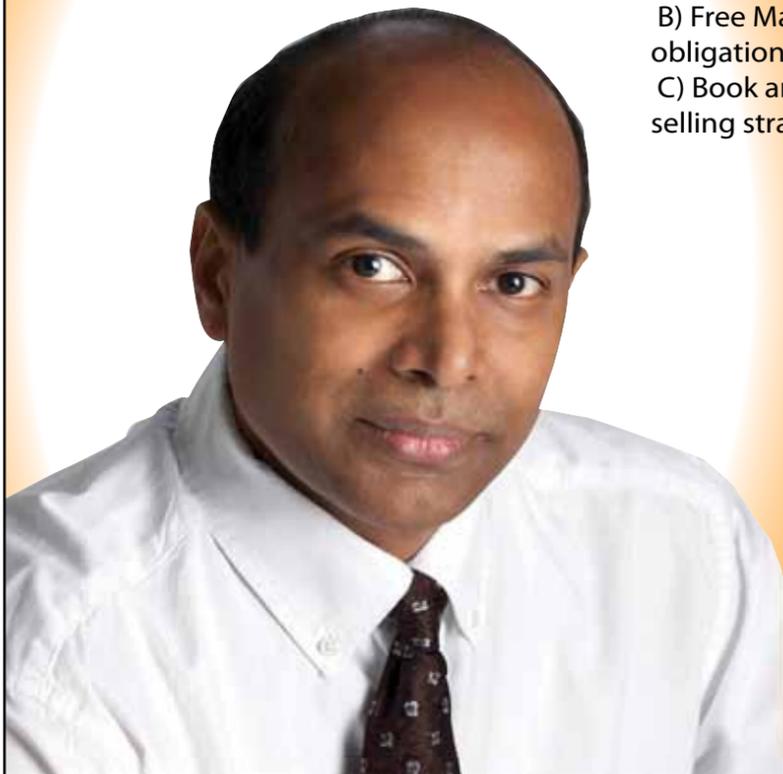
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Are you passionate to cover events host by Federal, Provincial, Municipal Govt, Healthcare Providers, Corporate, Small Businesses, Leading Banks, Major events such as Pan Am, Caribana etc.

Are you interested to meet people and cover cultural and social events.

The ideal candidate will gain experience working in a fast-paced newsroom, including internships.

Requirements include: the ability to meet deadlines; being adept at time management; well-versed in AP style for cutlines; proficient with DSLR camera and Photoshop; have a journalistic and creative eye; excellent people skills; know how to work in a team setting.

The photojournalist will produce and process images primarily for the editorial department, including its website and multimedia platforms, plus special sections and advertisements.

Assignments will include photos to accompany stories, wild art, and photo essays.

Monsoon Journal supplies one Canon camera body and one versatile lens. Mostly based in GTA and Schedule includes flexible hours including weekends. Must have a reliable vehicle.



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Premier of Ontario - Première ministre de l'Ontario

January 14, 2016

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to everyone celebrating Tamil Thai Pongal.

This is a beautiful tradition, which has been celebrated for more than a thousand years. In Tamil communities throughout the world, this is a time of great joy, a chance to get together with family, friends and neighbours to give thanks for blessings received.

This and the other customs and values brought by the Tamil community have enriched our culture, strengthened our links with the global community — and helped us build a society that is diverse yet harmonious.

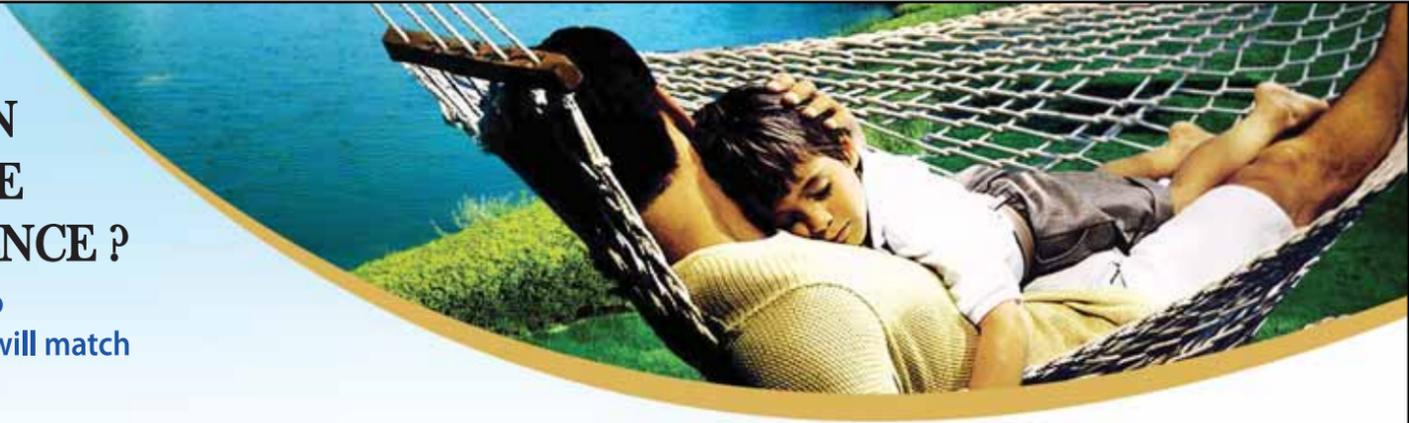
I offer my very best wishes for a joyous celebration — and for good health, happiness and prosperity in the year ahead.

Kathleen Wynne
Premier



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