



Monsoon

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Firefighting efforts gradually ramp up to address Australia bushfires

By **Harrish Thirukumaran**

Firefighting efforts gradually ramp up to address the Australia bushfires that have severely impacted different animal species, especially Koalas, along with land and people

Since September 2019, bushfires have burned across Australia as a result of record-breaking temperatures and months of severe drought. The state of New South Wales has been the most hard hit, with the fires affecting more than four million hectares that have destroyed more than 1,300 houses, forcing thousands to seek shelter elsewhere. As for the human impact, as many as 24 people have reportedly been killed by the fires.

In New South Wales, it is estimated that over 480 million animals have been killed in the bushfires since September. Australia's bushland is home to a range of Indigenous fauna such as kangaroos, koalas, wallabies and possums. There have also been thousands of koala bears killed because of the fires. Accordingly, a majority of koalas on Australia's east coast live within the "Koala Triangle," a region where the species could be extinct in as little as 30 years. The fires that have been raging in this area could potentially accelerate this timeline. The Koala Hospital in Port Macquarie, New South Wales has been admitting a number of bushfire koalas since November 2019 from Taree Koalas in Care and are now starting to receive koalas from the horrific Blue Mountains fires.

In response, the United States and Canada have sent firefighters to manage the situation. 69 Canadians travelled to Australia during the 2019 holiday season to deal with some of the fires. A group of 21 firefighter specialists from the US made their way into Sydney in early December 2019 to assist domestic firefighters on the ground to contain the fires. 22 firefighters from New Zealand have joined 150 New Zealanders in Australia on January 2, 2020 to fight the fires as well.

With the latest fires raging in Australia, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted out his support for Australia in this time of crisis, saying, "when wildfires spread through our communities, Australia answered our call for help. Now Canadians are do-



Receiving treatment for burns at the Koala Hospital in Port Macquarie New South Wales - pic via: koalahospital.org.au

ing the same. Our two countries are close allies, and so many Canadians have connections to Australia. We're going to help our friends get through this." The Salvation Army in Canada has been accepting donations to support emergency disaster work to help in the management of these fires as well. Overall, firefighting efforts have gradually ramped up to address the Australia bushfires that have had a severe impact on different animal species, especially Koalas, while also affecting the land and people.

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Please see pages 16 & 17 for details...

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Happy Thai Pongal

From Prime Minister Justin Trudeau & Liberal Members of Parliament
as we celebrate Tamil Heritage Month across Canada



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THAI PONGAL - THE THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL OF THE TAMILS

In gratitude for the bountiful harvest reaped for the year

C. Kamalaharan

Thai Pongal the thanksgiving festival also referred to as Tamilar Thirunal is a festive occasion held annually in gratitude for the bountiful harvest reaped for the year. Thanksgiving is not only for the Sun God but also for the farm animals. It is celebrated on the first day of the Tamil month 'Thai' which usually falls either on the 14th or 15th January. This year it falls on the 15th of January. Thai Pongal is of astronomical significance as the day coincides with the Sun's journey northward referred to as 'Uttarayanam' which is considered auspicious. It is also of astrological importance as the Sun enters the 10th house 'Makaram' (Capricorn) from the 9th house 'Dhanu' (Sagittarius).

The word Pongal means 'spill over' of the milk mixed in water while boiling. The word Pongal also refers to the dish prepared by boiling rice with milk and jaggery. Ingredients such as cardamom raisins cashew nuts split green grams and ghee are added for additional flavour. Besides this sweetened Pongal 'Ven Pongal' is also prepared without the addition of sweetened items. This Pongal is consumed with 'sambol' and 'sambar'.

Pongal is prepared outside the house in direct view of the Sun. In rural areas the square shaped plot where the boiling is done is disinfected by sprinkling a mixture of cow dung and water. Floral designs 'Kolams' are meticulously sketched with rice flour around the four bordering sides. A new earthenware pot decorated with mango leaves is gently placed on the improvised oven using a tripod of three stone bricks or concrete slabs. Milk mixed in water is boiled in the earthenware pot. The 'spilling over' of milk in water while boiling is the anxiously waited moment for the people to set off crackers. In rural areas farmers shout in ecstasy 'Pongalo Pongal'. During 'spilling over' the head of the family drops a handful of newly harvested rice into the boiling

pot. Later the remaining rice is let to slide into the pot. When the rice is almost cooked all the ingredients are added to make the Pongal sweet and palatable.

Within the sanctified area a portion of the Pongal is served on banana leaves with short eats; 'murukku' 'vadai' 'payasam' etc as offering to the Sun God. All the members of the family and visitors take turn and circumambulate the sanctified area thrice and shower flowers on the hand made cow dung statue of 'Vinayagar.' On request a member of the family sings 'Thevaram' (hymns) after which 'Viputhi prasadam' is served and the function comes to a close with the Pongal feast.

Nowadays due to socio-economic changes rural areas have been urbanised with congested buildings without leaving ample space for celebrating Pongal in the open. This is true in crowded cities. So the residents celebrate Pongal in the kitchen using ever silver utensils. A portion of the prepared pongal is served on a tray in the shrine room. Later all of them assemble in the shrine room pray in piety and take part in the Pongal feast.

In Tamil Nadu Pongal is an elaborate celebration extending for four days each day being set aside for a particular activity:

1. Bhogi Pongal
2. Thai Pongal
3. Maatu Pongal and
4. Kaanum Pongal.

Bhogi Pongal



Bhogi Pongal is celebrated on the last day of the Tamil month

'Margazhy.' People awake very early in the morning and set fire to their discarded belongings in a bonfire in front of their houses. The houses are refurbished and kept clean to provide a festive look. But it is regretted to note that over enthusiastic youths not at all bothered about polluting the atmosphere set fire to discarded vehicle tyres and other combustible items as a result the city will be completely engulfed with dark dense smoke. Due to invisibility flights at airports are cancelled.

Mattu Pongal



During this celebration farmers venerate the farm animals especially the cows for producing dairy products and fertilizers for ploughing the fields and for transportation. The cows are bathed and their horns coloured also their foreheads smeared with sandal paste and 'kunkumum.' Multicoloured beads tinkling bells and flower garlands are tied around their necks and taken around. In rural areas the traditional sport 'Jallikattu' is a crowd puller. It is the taming of the bull by the youths and witnessed by thousands of spectators who throng around cheer and encourage the youths. The bull seemed terrified tries to flee from the arena. This annual event had been in practice for more than 2500 years. Following strong objections from animal rights activists that 'Jallikattu' is a cruel sport tormenting a frightened animal within an enclosed area the sport was banned by the Supreme Court in 2014.

But defending the sport supporters say that 'Jallikattu' is part of Tamil Nadu's socio-cultural heritage. Lot of controversies arose and mass scale protests erupted as a result 'Jallikattu' was permitted under certain conditions.

Kaanum Pongal



It is an occasion when people richly attired visit relatives and friends. They go outing in bullock carts tractors cars buses and two wheelers around the city or into the countryside. In the evening there will be a sea of heads at Marina beach Elliot's beach in parks or in all other amusement places where people usually congregate. For them Kaanum Pongal is the day of fun and frolic outside their homes.

Pongal is one of the happiest festivals when people of all ages jointly participate and thoroughly enjoy particularly those in Tamil Nadu. It's an occasion for family reunion when people rejoice and share their joy. When the Tamil month 'Thai' dawns people become active and enthusiastic hoping for a bright future in accordance of the Tamil proverb 'Thai piranthal vazhi prakkum' meaning the dawn of 'Thai' will pave the way for a bright future. Hopefully the dawn of the Tamil New Year will usher health wealth and prosperity for the Tamils spread far and wide throughout the whole of 2020.



Ontario Expanding Access to Cardiac Care in Kitchener

Province Also Investing in Critical Hospital Upgrades and Repairs

December 18, 2019 3:06 P.M.

Ministry of Health

KITCHENER — As part of the comprehensive plan to end hallway health care, Ontario is expanding access to cardiac care for patients in the Kitchener-Waterloo region by making increased investments in hospital infrastructure.

Today, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, was at St. Mary's General Hospital to announce that Ontario is investing a total of up to \$7.4 million to redevelop the Heart Rhythm Program. Through this project, the hospital will add new cardiac services that treat abnormal heart rhythms to the existing cardiac program to reduce wait times.

"Our comprehensive plan to end hallway health care includes building additional capacity for specialized services in communities like Kitchener-Waterloo," said Elliott. "This project will enable the hospital to offer a full continuum of cardiac services and provide patients and families with better access to the quality care they expect and deserve closer to home."



In addition, Minister Elliott announced that Ontario is providing St. Mary's General Hospital with nearly \$750,000 in additional funding to help support roof replacements and upgrades to generators. This is part of the government's investment of \$175 million this year through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund to help

hospitals across the province maintain their infrastructure and ensure a safe and comfortable environment for patients to receive care.

"Investments in hospital infrastructure will help ensure that patients in Kitchener-Waterloo and across Ontario can receive the care they need in a safe and comfortable setting," said Elliott.

"Maintaining hospital infrastructure is one more example of how we are working towards ensuring that Ontarians have the health care services they can depend on while building the capacity we need to end hallway health care."

As the government continues to work toward bringing Ontario's world-class health care system into the 21st century, this funding will help hospitals to address urgent issues, including upgrades or replacements of roofs, windows, heating and air conditioning systems, fire alarms and backup generators.

"We are thrilled to bring these important services to St. Mary's General Hospital, one of Canada's top three centres for cardiac patient outcomes," said Dr. Thomas Stewart, CEO of St. Joseph's Health System and Niagara Health. "We are extremely grateful for the commitment by the Ontario government to support this important program that will reduce wait times and bring new cardiac services to the Waterloo region."

Via news.ontario.ca

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International Day of Education 2020: Ensuring that education continues being a key to upward social mobility

By Harrish Thirukumaran

2020 marks the beginning of a new decade along with a new year for a population of 7+ billion. This new year will be accompanied by a series of new resolutions among the population in order to better themselves. One way this can be realized is through education. It can also be beneficial for the advancement of education as a tool of mobility in peoples' livelihoods. On January 24 annually, the United Nations (UN) has marked this occasion with International Day of Education.

As a relatively young day of observance, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed January 24th as International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education for peace and development. Without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, countries will not succeed in achieving gender equality and breaking the cycle of poverty that is leaving millions of children, youth and adults behind.

Today, 258 million children and youth still do not attend school; 617 million children and adolescents cannot read and do basic math; less than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school and some four million children and youth refugees are out of school. Their right to education is being violated and it is unacceptable. After adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the international community recognized that education is essential for the success of all 17 of its goals. Sustainable Development Goal 4, in particular, aims to "ensure inclusive and

equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.

Generally, education offers children a ladder out of poverty and a path to a promising future. But about 265 million children and adolescents around the world do not have the opportunity to enter or complete school. More than a fifth of them are of primary school age. They are thwarted by poverty, discrimination, armed conflict, emergencies and the effects of climate change. Migration and forcible displacement also affect the achievement of the education goals, as presented in the 2019 Global Education Monitoring report. By proclaiming the International Day of Education, UN member states recognized the importance of working to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels.

The 2020 celebration will position education and the learning it enables as humanity's greatest renewable resource and reaffirm the role of education as a fundamental right and a public good. It will celebrate the many ways learning can empower people, preserve the planet, build shared prosperity and foster peace. The theme for 2020 is 'Learning for people, planet, prosperity and peace,' which highlights the integrated nature of education, its humanistic aims, as well as its centrality to our collective development ambitions. It also gives stakeholders and partners flexibility to tailor the celebration for diverse audiences, a variety of contexts and for priority themes. You can access more information on activities from the United Nations website about how you can support efforts to ensure education continues being a key to upward social mobility.

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Canada Historical Milestones: January 16, 1939

Superman makes his debut in newspapers—a comic strip created by Toronto illustrator Joe Shuster and American writer Jerry Siegel.



“There is no way to peace, peace is the way” - Mahatma Gandhi - (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948)

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

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Statement by the Prime Minister on the Speech from the Throne

December 5, 2019
Ottawa, Ontario



The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement on the Speech from the Throne:

“This fall, Canadians sent a clear message: they want their Parliamentarians to work together on the issues that matter most to them. We have a mandate from Canadians to fight climate change, strengthen the middle class, walk the road of reconciliation, keep people safe and healthy, and position our country for success in an uncertain world. Canadians have chosen to keep moving forward, and this is our plan to do just that.

“Our children and grandchildren will judge us by how we confront the defining challenge of our time – climate change. We must act now to protect the environment, while growing the economy and making life more affordable. This Government will continue to lead with a price on pollution, and set an ambitious target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. We will also support cleaner, more efficient communities and homes, and protect more of our land and oceans. At the same time, we will work to get Canadian resources to new markets, and provide unwavering support to the hardworking Canadians in our natural resources sectors.

“All Canadians should benefit from our country’s economic success. This Government’s first act will be to cut taxes for all but the wealthiest, giving more money to middle class families and those who need it most. We will also make it easier for people to get an education, buy their first home, and find care for their kids. In the last mandate, we reduced poverty across the country, and we will continue crucial investments in areas like affordable housing. For workers, we will help people enter the workforce, grow their skills, and transition between jobs. This is part of our responsible plan to build a strong and growing modern economy.

“In 2015, we promised a new relationship with Indigenous peoples – one that would help deliver a better quality of life for their families and communities. While we have made important progress, there is still much to do. We will continue to move forward in partnership to deliver on the distinct priorities of Indigenous peoples. This will include, among other things, action in the next year to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“All Canadians want to live in a country where, when people are sick, they can get the help they need. We will work with the provinces and territories to ensure that people can access quality health care, including drug coverage.

“A better quality of life also means feeling safe. We will take action to prevent the devastating effects of gun violence by banning military-style assault rifles, and allowing municipalities to ban handguns. In addition, we will take further steps to address gender-based violence in Canada.

“Importantly, we will also continue to recognize our solemn duty to those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, and invest to improve mental health care supports and housing for veterans.

“Finally, in an uncertain world, we

Ontario Government Launches 2020 Budget Consultations Government looking for ideas that will Build Ontario Together



December 18, 2019 11:20 A.M.

Ministry of Finance

BROCKVILLE — The Ontario Government is asking people from every region of the province for their best advice on how to make life more affordable, invest in critical public services and balance the budget by 2023 through public consultations for the 2020 Budget.

Today, Minister of Finance Rod Phillips along with Minister Steve Clark, MPP for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, were in Brockville to launch the first of a series of consultations that will run across Ontario throughout the months of January and February.

The government is looking for ideas that will help build Ontario together by putting jobs, skills and workers front and centre, while continuing to focus on putting more money in people’s pockets, connecting people to places,

building healthier and safer communities and making government smarter.

“Budget consultations are an important part of our budget planning — we listen to people throughout the province in order to help us develop a Budget that addresses Ontario’s priorities,” said Minister Phillips. “I am confident that, working together, we can make our plan to build Ontario together a reality.”

Minister Phillips and Parliamentary Assistant Stan Cho will be hosting community budget consultations along with MPPs across the province to hear directly from Ontario’s hard-working individuals, families and businesses.

Visit Ontario.ca/BudgetIdeas to learn how to attend a consultation, or to submit your ideas by email, mail, or by filling out a survey. Budget consultations will close February 11, 2020.

Via news.ontario.ca

will stand up for the values and interests that are core to our prosperity and security – democracy, human rights, and respect for international law. We will continue to build partnerships that make our country, and world, more safe, just, prosperous, and sustainable. We will also renew our commitment to peacekeeping, and continue to help the

world’s most vulnerable people reach their full potential.

“Canadians are counting on us, and this plan is a path forward for everyone. We have common ground and shared purpose. Together, we can and we will overcome the challenges of today to build a brighter tomorrow.”

Via pm.gc.ca

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Canada signs agreement on amendments to the new NAFTA



December 10, 2019

Mexico City, Mexico

The Government of Canada is committed to further strengthening the Canadian economy, improving the lives of Canadian families, the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Today, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister, signed on behalf of the Government of Canada an agreement on amendments to the new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Since the beginning of negotiations, the Government of Canada has consistently stood up for Canadian jobs and interests, and worked hard to ensure that the new NAFTA is a progressive trade agreement.

The amendments involve improvements to the new NAFTA signed by Canada, the United States, and Mexico

on November 30, 2018, in the areas of:

- state-to-state dispute settlement
- labour protection
- environmental protection
- intellectual property
- automotive rules of origin

Canada's focus has always been on what really matters: this agreement preserves jobs, fosters growth and supports hardworking Canadians. These improved outcomes make the deal more progressive, will further strengthen the trilateral economic relationship, and support the efforts of each of the three countries toward ratification and implementation of the new NAFTA.

Canada remains committed to working closely with the United States and Mexico to ratify and implement the new NAFTA, and to supporting Mexico's historic labour reform efforts.

Via pm.gc.ca

TDSB Celebrates Tamil Heritage Month in January

Tuesday, December 31, 2019: The Toronto District School Board is the largest, and one of the most diverse school boards in Canada. Nearly one-quarter of our students were born outside of Canada and collectively, we speak more than 120 languages. Understanding all cultures is essential to the success of our young students today as they transform to our future leaders of tomorrow.

Poster for Tamil Heritage Month January 2020 featuring artwork by eighth grader Khaviyaa, from Milne Valley Middle School

To honour this, we formally recognize 14 heritage months throughout the year. During the month of January we're excited to be starting off the New Year by celebrating Tamil Heritage Month. This year the chosen

theme selected by the volunteer planning committee is, Vision 2020: Yengal Kathaigal - Our Stories / Vision 2020: Vqfs; fi j fs; - Our Stories.

Toronto has the largest Tamil population outside of the South Asian subcontinent with thousands of TDSB students and staff members heritage identified as Tamil. All have stories of their journey of how they or their families arrived in Canada, and how they continue to embrace this country as their home. The attached poster reflecting the theme is being shared with all schools. Our intent is that it will be used as an educational tool to examine stories within and across cultures of students in the TDSB and how they shape our individual and collective identities.

- via: tdsb.on.ca

Ontario to Implement Needs-Based Autism Program In-Line with Advisory Panel's Advice



December 17, 2019 12:30 P.M.

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

TORONTO — Today, the Ontario government announced it is adopting the Ontario Autism Panel's key recommendations for a needs-based autism program. The program recognizes that every family's experience and needs are different, and that children and youth on the autism spectrum have different levels of need at different points in their lives. These changes will put Ontario on track to deliver a comprehensive, sustainable and family-centred program.

"We heard loud and clear from the autism community that we needed to partner and redesign a program together - one that supports the needs of individual children and youth and puts them at the centre of care," said Todd Smith, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. "The changes we are making address the concerns we've heard from families, experts and the autism advisory panel."

Aligning with recommendations of the advisory panel, Minister Smith presented key elements of the new program, including a broad range of services that will offer families more supports for their child's specific needs.

Families will have access to the following service pathways in the new program:

- Core services that include Applied Behaviour Analysis, speech language pathology, occupational therapy and mental health services;
- Foundational family services for all families in the program, to build their capacity to support their child's learning and development;
- Early intervention and school

readiness services to help young children access critical services when they will benefit most, and to prepare them to enter school;

• Urgent and complex needs services to support children and youth who are in service, or are waiting for service, and have significant and immediate needs.

At any point in time, families and caregivers will be able to access services such as peer mentoring, training, workshops and coaching sessions to further support their child's ongoing learning and development. This broad range of needs-based services will provide families with new options as recommended by the advisory panel.

Minister Smith also accepted the panel's recommendation for an implementation team and announced the creation of an Implementation Working Group to provide the government with input on a number of key design elements. Those elements include service caps and the transition of children into service.

"Almost every parent I've met has asked for two things: services that address their child's specific needs, and a plan from their government to get there," said Smith. "The work has started, and we are continuing to listen to experts and families. Thanks to the panel, we know where we have to go. And we have the right plan, and the right people, to help get us there."

The first phase of implementation will begin in April 2020, to be followed by additional phases throughout 2020 and 2021. The Implementation Working Group will have their first meeting in the coming weeks.

Via news.ontario.ca

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Pakistan blasphemy death sentence 'travesty of justice', say UN experts



© UNICEF/Josh Estey - Only in exceptional circumstances and with incontrovertible evidence of intentional murder does international law permit the death penalty. (file)

27 December 2019

Human Rights

Independent UN human rights experts condemned on Friday the death sentence of a university lecturer charged with blasphemy in Pakistan, calling the ruling "a travesty of justice".

Thirty-three-year-old Junaid Hafeez, a lecturer at Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan, was sentenced to death – despite last year's landmark Supreme Court ruling in which Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi was tried and condemned to hang for blasphemy but was later acquitted.

"The Supreme Court ruling in the Asia Bibi case should have set a precedent for lower courts to dismiss any blasphemy case that has not been proved beyond reasonable doubt," the experts said.

Moreover, they raised concerns in an urgent appeal to the Government over the legal merits of the case

"In the light of this ruling, the guilty verdict against Mr. Hafeez is a travesty of justice, and we condemn the death sentence imposed on him", spelled out the independent experts.

"We urge Pakistan's superior courts to promptly hear his appeal, overturn the death sentence and acquit him."

International law permits the death penalty only in exceptional circumstances, and requires incontrovertible evidence of intentional murder, the experts noted.

"The death sentence imposed on Mr. Hafeez has no basis in either law or evi-

dence, and therefore contravenes international law", they continued, adding that "carrying out the sentence would amount to an arbitrary killing," they said.

They expressed their serious concern that blasphemy charges are still being brought against people "legitimately exercising their rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression".

Prolonged solitary confinement

Mr. Hafeez was arrested on 13 March 2013 and charged for allegedly making blasphemous remarks during lectures and on his Facebook account.

He has been in solitary confinement since his trial began in 2014, seriously affecting his mental and physical health. The death sentence was imposed by a district and sessions court in Multan on 21 December 2019.

"Prolonged solitary confinement may well amount to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," the experts said.

Mr. Hafeez's case has gone through lengthy trials in Multan, with the prosecution failing to provide convincing evidence of his guilt, they pointed out, while also noting that "some documentary evidence submitted to the court was never subjected to independent forensic review despite allegations it had been fabricated, and that a lawyer representing Mr. Hafeez in 2014, Rashid Rehman, was murdered and the killers have not been brought to justice".

New citizenship law in India 'fundamentally discriminatory': UN human rights office



UN India - Photo of New Delhi, India

13 December 2019

Human Rights

A new law in India which expedites citizenship for certain religious minorities has been criticized by the UN human rights office for being "fundamentally discriminatory in nature."

The amendment to the Citizenship Act gives priority to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians resident in India before 2014, but excludes Muslims, including minority sects.

"Although India's broader naturalization laws remain in place, these amendments will have a discriminatory effect on people's access to nationality", Jeremy Laurence, a spokesperson with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said on Friday.

India's Parliament passed the controversial law on Wednesday, which has sparked protests and clashes in several locations. Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Mr. Laurence said it appears to undermine India's commitment to equality before the law, as enshrined in its Constitution.

He added that last December, India joined the international community in endorsing the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, which

commits countries to ensure that all measures governing migration are based in human rights. "All migrants, regardless of their migration status, are entitled to respect, protection and fulfilment of their human rights," he said.

Furthermore, while protecting persecuted groups is welcome, the UN human rights office said this should happen through a "robust" asylum system based on equality and non-discrimination, and which applies to all people regardless of race, religion, national origin or other status.

"We understand the new law will be reviewed by the Supreme Court of India and hope it will consider carefully the compatibility of the law with India's international human rights obligations", said Mr. Laurence.

Meanwhile, international media outlets are reporting that two people were killed and many others injured, in demonstrations held in northern India on Thursday to protest the new measure. OHCHR has urged the authorities to respect the right to peaceful assembly, while all sides should refrain from resorting to violence.

Via news.un.org

"There seems to be a climate of fear among members of the judiciary handling this case, which may explain why at least seven judges were transferred during this lengthy trial", the UN experts concluded.

The independent experts are the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

or Punishment; and members of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

Via news.un.org

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Cold Snap Kills 50 in Bangladesh



People browse through street vendors' stalls selling winter clothes in Dhaka on Dec. 21, 2019

By Reuters

December 29, 2019 04:49 AM

At least 50 people have died in Bangladesh as cold weather continues to sweep across the country, health officials said.

The country's lowest temperature this year was recorded at 4.5 degrees Celsius (40.1 degrees Fahrenheit) early on Sunday in Tetulia, a border town in Bangladesh's north, the weather office said. At least 17 people died of acute respiratory infection and 33 from diarrhea and other diseases across Bangladesh from Nov. 1 to Dec. 28, said Ayesha Akhter, a senior official of the government's health directorate.

Hospitals have been crowded with

people suffering from cold-related illnesses, such as influenza, dehydration and pneumonia, said Ayesha Akhter, she said.

Those on low incomes, particularly laborers, are the worst affected by the cold weather because they lack clothes while many others, especially children and the elderly people, are prone to diseases such as pneumonia, Akhter said.

The weather office said the cold snap, accompanied by chilly winds and dense fog, week was likely to continue for few more days.

Thick fog forced authorities to divert several flights and delay others, aviation officials said.

Via voanews.com

India Plans Bio-Gas Plants to Tackle Toxic Pollution, But Experts Skeptical

By Reuters

December 18, 2019 10:55 AM

NEW DELHI - India is planning to set up more than 100 bio-gas plants and provide thousands of farmers with machines to dispose of crop stubble in a bid to halt the choking crop-burning pollution that blights the country every winter.

A major source of the smog that engulfs vast swathes of northern India, including the capital New Delhi, is the burning the straw and stubble of the previous rice crop to prepare for new planting in October and November.

New Delhi is regularly judged to be one of the world's most polluted major cities. Government-backed Indian Oil Corp Ltd will invite private companies to apply to set up 140 bio-gas plants that will use rice stubble as feed stock, said two government officials, who didn't wish to be identified in line with official policy.



FILE - An Indian farmer walks through his paddy field as he burns the paddy husk in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh, Oct. 21, 2003.

The plants would cost 35 billion rupees (\$487.67 million) and each would require two tons of crop residue every hour for at least 300 days to produce

Modi Unveils Plan to Tackle Water Shortages in India's Heartland States



FILE - India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks to the media inside the parliament premises on the first day of the winter session in New Delhi, Nov. 18, 2019

By Reuters

December 25, 2019 07:39 AM

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday launched a 60-billion-rupee (\$842 million) plan to tackle water shortages in the country's seven heartland states where agriculture is a mainstay.

India, the world's second-most populous country, faces the worst long-term water crisis in its history as demand outstrips supply, threatening farm output and overall economic growth in Asia's third-largest economy.

Almost every sector of the \$2.6 trillion economy is dependent on water, especially agriculture, which sustains two-thirds of India's 1.3 billion people.

"Water shortages in the country not only affect individuals and families; the crisis also has an effect on India's development," Modi said. "We need to prepare the new India to deal with every single aspect of the crisis."

The plan launched by Modi would help replenish ground water and boost overall availability in Rajasthan, Karnataka, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharash-

tra and Gujarat states, which produce staples such as rice, wheat, sugar and oilseeds.

India is the world's leading producer of an array of farm goods, and nearly 60% of the irrigation for agriculture comes from ground water, mainly through electric water pumps. Subsidised electricity gives farmers an incentive to pump out more water, a key reason behind fast-depleting water tables in the vast country.

Supplying clean drinking water to millions of poor people and reviving moribund irrigation projects were a key part of Modi's policies for India, where the monsoon accounts for nearly 70% of the annual rains needed to water farms and recharge aquifers and reservoirs.

Nearly half of India's farmland, without any irrigation cover, depends on annual June-September rains to grow a number of crops.

Drinking water is also an issue, as about 200,000 Indians die every year due to inadequate access to safe water and 600 million face high to extreme water stress, according to the National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, a think tank chaired by Modi.

According to UK-based charity WaterAid, about 163 million people in India — roughly 12% of the population — do not have access to clean water close to home.

Every summer water shortages tend to be more acute in large cities such as the capital New Delhi, Chennai — a car-making center dubbed "India's Detroit", and Bengaluru, the country's software capital.

Modi also exhorted farmers to increasingly adopt drip and sprinkler irrigation and use water-management techniques as well as eschewing water-guzzling crops such as rice and sugar cane.

Via voanews.com

"an optimum amount" of compressed natural gas (CNG), one of the sources said.

The government would earmark funds for the project that would make it attractive for farmers to sell their waste rather than burn it, they said.

The stubble pollution has become more acute in recent years because mechanized harvesters leave more residue than crops plucked by hand.

Other than helping farmers sell their residue to the new bio-gas plants, the government would provide 100,000 new machines every year to farmers to dispose of the farm waste in their fields, the sources said.

"We'll give farmers the choice to ei-

ther get rid of crop residue or sell it to the bio CNG plants," one of the sources said.

Doubts persist

Environmental experts were skeptical.

"Given the amount of resources that the government has, what will decide the efficacy of this plan is consistent engagement with farmers," said Nandikesh Sivalingam, a program manager for Greenpeace.

"But if you expect results next winter, it can't happen."

Via voanews.com

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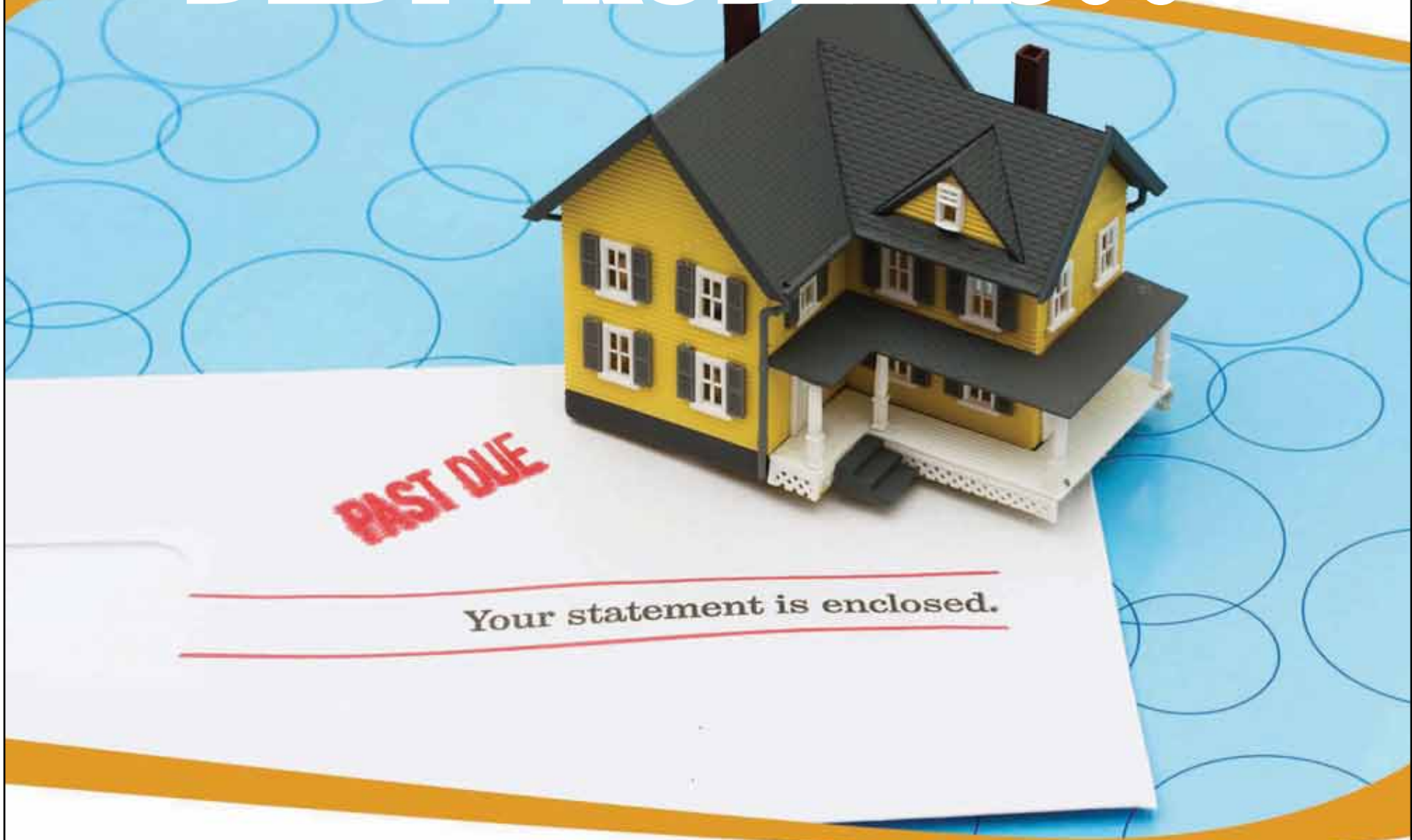
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Journalist **Gopalapillai Thiruketharanathan** honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award



Gopalapillai Thiruketharanathan

Gopalapillai Thiruketharanathan (G.T. Ketharanathan), a longtime professionally acclaimed journalist in the fields of modern literature, alternative cinema and translation has recently been honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented at the 20th Special Media Awards ceremony of the Sri Lanka Press Institute and the Editors Guild of Sri Lanka held on 10th of December, 2019 at the Mount Lavinia Hotel. The award was in recognition of G.T. Ketharanathan's work on topics

in politics, cinema, literature and arts and criticism. His brother, renowned artist and educationist Gopalapillai Kailasanathan received the award on Ketharanathan's behalf at the Mount Lavinia Hotel.

Ketharanathan's cinema-related articles, reviews and translations are soon to be published as a book, his colleagues in Colombo said.

A brief profile note on G.T. Ketharanathan released to the media by Sri Lanka

Press Institute and the Editors Guild of Sri Lanka is follows: A native of Madduvil-North in Chavakacheri, Jaffna, Gopalapillai Thiruketharanathan, known to most as 'Ketharanathan,' after completing his education at Vaitheeswara Vidyalayam, Jaffna started his career in journalism at Virakesari, newspaper during the early 1980s.

In Virakesari, at the inception, Ketharanathan worked as a clerk/translator for a short period, and then joined the

local and foreign thinkers, observers and analysts for Sunday Virakesari, during that period, was very much appreciated by the readers.

Ketharanathan had a specific place among the Tamil writers and journalists who contributed immensely in making the readers of Virakesari newspaper familiar with the local and foreign alternative cinema.

After retirement in 2006, following a tenure of more than a quarter century,



(2nd L to R) Dudley Jansz, Thilakaratna Kuruvita Bandara, Gopalapillai Kailasanathan and K.M.L.B. Senaratne



editorial department as a sub-editor at the foreign news desk. In addition he was entrusted to handle local news as well. Since Ketharanathan was deeply interested in the fields of literature and arts, at the insistence of his superiors he was absorbed into the Sunday Virakesari section under the veteran editor late Pon. Rajagopal. There he made a contribution in writing and selecting inspiring articles in the spheres of politics, literature and arts and criticism.

Ketharanathan's keen interest and commitment in selecting and translating the insightful writings of eminent

Ketharanathan has been continuously writing to newspapers and magazines on various subjects.

Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred upon four other professionals as well belonging to the Lake House, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and other Sri Lanka's leading media houses at the Sri Lanka Press Institute and the Editors Guild of Sri Lanka organized 20th annual ceremony.

They are veteran journalists Dudley Jansz, Thilakaratna Kuruvita Bandara, A.L.K. Perera and K.M.L.B. Senaratne.

COLOURFUL VITALITY OF SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL IN COLOMBO

By G.T. Ketharanathan

(This Article, first published in July 2012 is reproduced here in honour of G.T. Ketharanathan being a winner of the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the Sri Lanka Press Institute and the Editors Guild of Sri Lanka)

The Colombo SAARC Cultural Centre, which hosted the SAARC Film Festival 2011 once again extended its hospitality for the SAARC Film Festival 2012. The big

day was celebrated with all enthusiasm in Colombo on 16 May at the National Film Corporation Cinema Hall.

SAARC member countries, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Maldives had sent in their productions for screening at the festival. Besides feature films, the inclusion of documentaries at this year's festival was a progressive aspect, a step forward in the right direction. Cine field artistes and stars were also offered an opportunity to participate in a one day workshop.

Artistes very actively involved in the film industry in these nations had especially been invited to lend the festival colour and vitality. A panel of three jury members comprising, Mary Nashari from Russia, Phillip Sa from Singapore and Mohamed Resa Arab from Iran had been flown into evaluate the films and recommend them for awards.

The Indian feature films Ranjana Amiar as Pona directed by Anjan Dutta, Rayari by K.B. Suveeran and the documentaries Red Building Where the Sun Sets directed by

the Tamil and Malayalam film star Revathy and We Play On by Pramod Pushwani were screened.

Anjan Dutta's feature film A Ranjana Amiar as Pona is the story of an aging rock star, whose expecting wife was killed in an automobile accident years ago.

As he was way behind the wheels of the vehicle the day when this fateful event occurred, he suffers guilt ridden. Unable to get over the grief, he finds refuge in alcohol and drugs. The Music Maestro's life in derailed and as he gets older in the grip of a



(Continued from page 16) **COLOURFUL VITALITY OF SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL IN COLOMBO** By G.T.Ketharanathan.

deep sense of alienation, he happens to meet the poor, but young Ranjana who has a mad passion for rock music. The old Maestro captivated by Ranjana's mind blowing performances and her excellent skill in writing lyrics, eventually moulds and guides Ranjana into perfect rock stardom. Ranjana really rocks.

This film by Anjan Dutta is a mature and honest creation. The life of a great musician with his strength that makes him adorable and admirable, and with his weaknesses that turns him into a detestable character, is portrayed in a lively manner. Musical films are often full length entertainments with a lot of fun and frolicking. This film of Anjan Dutta is exceptionally towed along a novel track from the outset to the very end, enriched with weighty substance.

Swiftly switching shots and richly scored music enhance each other. What is unacceptable about the film is the stunt sequences towards the end, that sends the otherwise speeding horse on an entirely different track. Somlata's melodious voice lend fire to the wonderful heart throbbing composition of Neil Dutt that add a lofty dimensions to the film.

Director Anjan Dutta's unbelievable performance as his own hero makes the audience wonder if the Music Maestro's spirit has got into his veins. He has just walked into the shoes of his own protagonist.

The chief character in K.B. Suveeran's feature film Bayari is a tender child, Nadira whose wedding is unexpectedly fixed on the very day she flowers into womanhood. She is destined to be the wife of a man who is three times as old as her. Unaware of the gravity of the situation, the innocent girl is seen playing hide-and-seek with a boy friend of her age. Burdened at a tender age, Nadira's life turns out to be a uphill struggle along a rough and rocky road.

Meanwhile, we are moved to tears to see Nadira's mother praying incessantly that her daughter should not experience the troubles and torments she herself has undergone.

Bayari depicts the life of the backward minority Muslim community that dwells along the Kerala, Karnataka borders. The film makes a genuine effort to analyze sympathetically the woes and worries, the agony and anguish of the women's predicament as they confront the restrictions, taboos and rigid traditions of Islamic customs such as Talak (divorce) and Ithath (marriage). Despite the fact that Nadira's husband loves her truly and dearly the traditional taboos and rigid laws they had been abiding by for ages heavily intrude into and ruin their life, making their reunion impossible.

We pity Nadira when she falls victim to the rage of both her father and husband whenever there is a tussle or bitter quarrel between them. Separated from her husband at a tender age, she comes back home burdened with a baby to feed and look after. No sooner she returns home, than she gets her divorce. She gets imprisoned in her father's house and she loses all contact with the outside world. Meanwhile her husband takes the

baby away from her through cunning means.

As days roll on, a situation though arises for her to reunite with her husband after surmounting all the obstacles. She is hapless that again



and again fresh impediments emerge from within. It is funny and strange that the religious law has a provision for possible reunion with her divorced husband only when she remarries another man and gets divorced from him.

The film Bayari registers with a sense of pathos, the pathetic plight of women in a particular Muslim community living in a certain area trapped under unique cultural and religious norms. Director K.B. Suveeran claims that it was after a thorough study and scrutiny of the documents related to the events in the real setting that they ventured out to make this film.

Director K.B. Suveeran's entry into the big screen followed his successful career on stage. He is of the view that creations on celluloid last longer than on the stage and films are in a way eternal. Bayari is his first feature film and as he is more conversant with the stage techniques and skills he admits that some of those stage elements might have inevitably crept into this film unawares.

I think that he has handled the visual medium in a balanced manner in this limited dud-get 16mm film portraying the characters in a unique style. This is the first film made in the Bayari language that doesn't have a writing script. Malliha, the Tamil and Malayalam film star has played the role of Nadira commendably. Elated at his debut film getting national award for the best film in his country, Suveeran said the film was about the conditioning of women in the Bayari Muslim community, based on sexuality.

Red Building Where the Sun Sets is an Indian documentary directed by the celebrated Tamil and Malayalam film star Revathy who has etched out for herself a unique image playing vibrant feminist roles. What is unknown even to many of her fans is the fact that Revathy is excellently equipped to direct feature films and documentaries projecting her creative personality.

In Revathy's documentary, she has depicted the episodes in the life of a husband and wife Aravind and Radhika and their seven year-old-son Arya. They belong to a fairly well-

to-do modern day Indian family. The closeness and intimacy that reigned their life deteriorates in a few years after their marriage and they suffer under severe stress. Faults are thicker when love is thinner. Minor prob-

lem throughout India. Vivek Singh is synonymous with hockey and countless hockey players are emerging every year from the institution. What a true documentary should focus on is very clearly illustrated through And We Play On.

Akasa Kusum by Prasanna Vithanage and Vidhu by Asoka Handagama are the Sri Lankan feature films that vied for the awards. I missed the two documentaries from Sri Lanka.

Prasanna Vithanage's Akasa Kusum peers into the dark side of the film star Sandhiya Rani, who once sparkled in the Sri Lankan silver screen. Though she now lives as a recluse in a corner of the city after losing all her wealth and glory, once again Sandhiya Rani hits the headlines due to an unexpected event that occurs. Consequently she was to reveal the truth about her past life. Her sad story unfolds in such a backdrop.

Though Vithanage's screenplay for this film is lacking in strength in comparison to his earlier works he has managed to overcome the shortcomings through his direction that bears his own stamp.

Vithanage's unit is fortified by the amazingly able cinematographer Mahindapala, his excellently competent music director Seram and the veteran Malini Fonseka whose performance elevates the artistic value of the film. This trio have immensely contributed and extended their fullest co-operation, to bring about a balanced portrayal pushing behind the deficiencies in the screen play.

Though Akasa Kusum cannot be equated with his earlier outstanding creations Purahanda Kaluvara (Death on a Full Moon Day) and Pavuru Valalu (Within Walls) Prasanna Vithanage has established himself as a capable director to be reckoned. There isn't even a 'lota of doubt' that Vithanage is the pioneer powerful director among the third generation Sinhala film makers.

The other feature film Vidhu is the work of Asoka Handagama, the third generation film maker who finds a place of pride in the list next to Vithanage.

Vidhu depicts the desperate plight of a little boy who doesn't know who has fathered him. Even though Asoka Handagama makes an effort to analyze the social economic and political afflictions in our country, he presents the problem superficially and artificially and thereby the film ends up as a cheap commercial product.

As he has avoided the integral elements of an alternative cinema the film drags on a beaten track. This film doesn't have the essential characteristic elements of a good cinema at all. The cine lovers who has great expectations about Asoka Handagama have nothing but disappointment in this film, at the same time it will not be inappropriate to recall his outstanding work Flying with One Wing, which won him great admiration and the unanimous acclaim of the film critics.

Personally I am unhappy to note that Vidhu has not brought the best out him. (Via dbsjeyaraj.com)

Lakeridge Health Welcomes Durham Region's First Babies Born in 2020

Durham Region – Lakeridge Health welcomed the first babies of 2020 at Ajax Pickering, Oshawa and Port Perry Hospitals. Durham Region's first baby of 2020 is Jack Xavier Russo.

Baby Jack arrived at 12:33 a.m. at Lakeridge Health's Oshawa Hospital weighing 5lbs 5oz. Congratulations to proud parents, Jamie and Nicholas Russo.

At Ajax Pickering Hospital, new parents Justine and Mike welcomed Savannah at 2:27 p.m., weighing 7lbs 5 oz.

Finally, at Port Perry Hospital, parents Sarah and Richard Jones, welcomed Lilyanne at 11:50 p.m. weighing 5lbs 11oz. Big brother, two-year old Quinn, is excited to have a new sister.

With birthing suites at Ajax Pickering, Oshawa and Port Perry Hospitals, Lakeridge Health is the tenth largest birthing centre in the province, delivering close to 4,300 babies each year.

About Lakeridge Health

Lakeridge Health is Durham Region's acute health care provider.



With five hospitals, four emergency departments, a residential treatment centre and more than a dozen community health care locations, Lakeridge Health is dedicated to providing the highest standard of care and best experience for patients and their families. Lakeridge Health is home to several regional specialty centres, including the R.S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre, Pinewood Centre for addictions and mental health, and The Shoulder Centre.

SHN'S INAUGURAL FOUNDER'S LUNCHEON



Scarborough Health Network Foundation (SHN Foundation) held its inaugural Founder's Luncheon on Tuesday, December 10, which saw the induction of individual donors who have committed over 1 million dollars into our Founder's Circle – our most exclusive and prestigious donor recognition club.

Held at the Rosedale Golf Club, we inducted 7 couples into the Founder's Circle, whose efforts have helped us purchase new machines and equipment, support emergency care across our sites, and upgrade and support our centres and laboratories. The founding members invested in facilities and equipment that have led to less waiting, more access, and a better health care experience for our patients.

SHN Foundation expresses its gratitude for their transformative generosity and hope that it inspires more support from others to join the Founder's Circle. Their passion and commitment to supporting the people of Scarborough will help shape the future of care for all patients within our community.

SHN would like to recognize and thank the members of the 2019 Inaugural Founders:

- Drs. Michael & Amira Dan
- Carlo Fidani & Theresa Ferracuti
- Deepa & Narinder Lal
- Kenneth & Daisy Lee
- Farokh & Dr. Dhun Noria
- Edward & Suzanne Rogers
- Dr. Harold & Anne Stein

Toronto's First Saint may be in the making



Rev. Sister Carmelina's case for sainthood moves from Toronto to the Vatican

Sister Carmelina Tarantino was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Doctors removed her left leg, left hip and her right breast, and she lost the use of her right leg. She breathed her last nearly three decades ago.

However, it was not the end. Infact Rev. Father Claudio Piccinini is hoping to use a few miracles since just one miracle would really help Sister Carmelina Tarantino. She died in 1992, but a confirmed miracle now would send her sainthood application hurtling through to the next phase of the bureaucratic process in Rome.

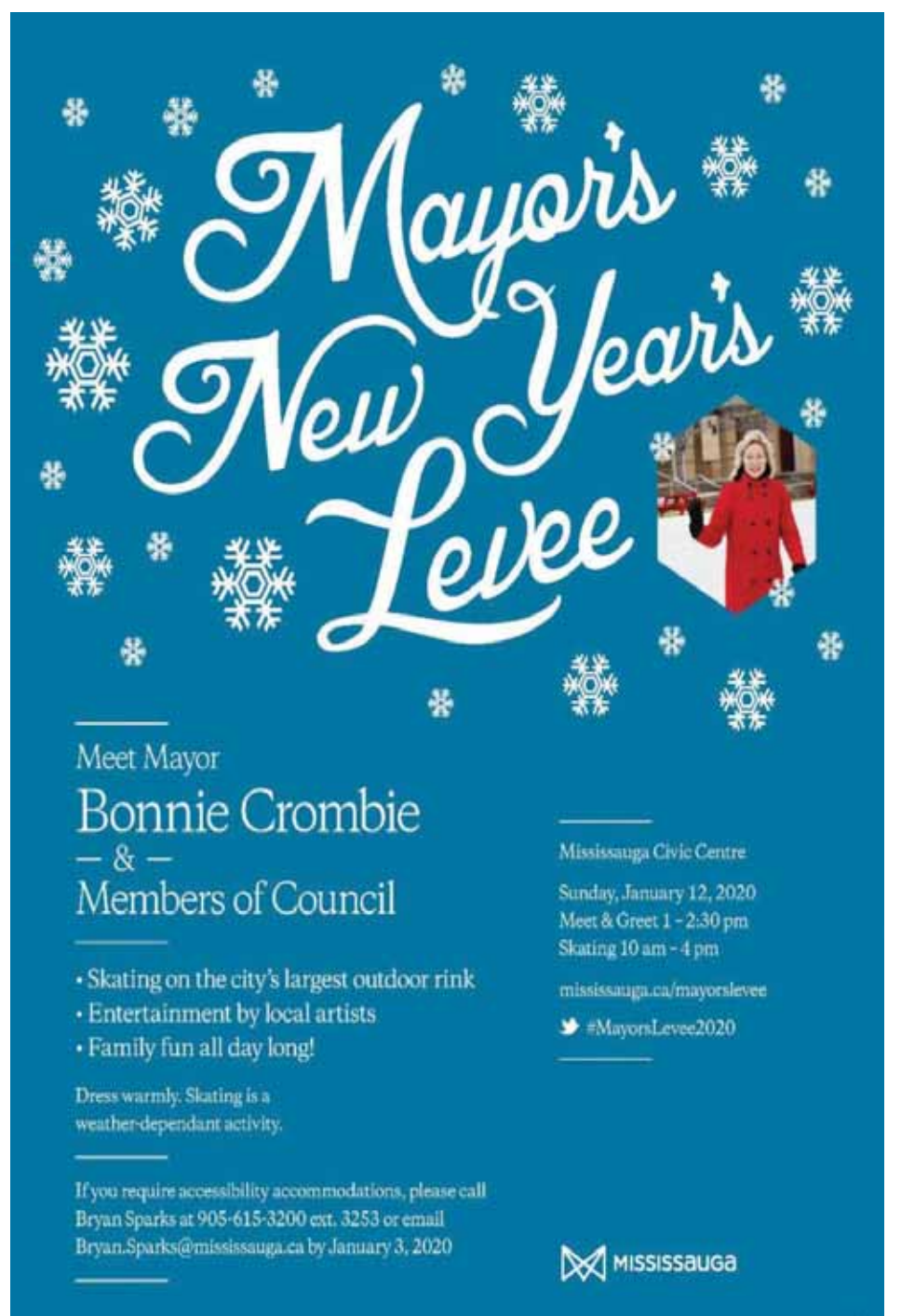
The Archdiocese of Toronto recently wrapped up its 10-year investigation of Sister Carmelina and sent 10,000 pages of documents to the Vatican in

November. If everything continues without any hindrance Sister Carmelina could be Toronto's first-ever saint, but the process can take years — even centuries — to complete.

Piccinini, a 79-year-old Catholic priest who belongs to the Passionist congregation, does not have that long. His once-dark beard and curly hair have gone white.

He stands on a bridge over a waterfall on a 200-acre property known as Teopoli, or the City of God, in Gravenhurst, Ontario. Beavers swim in the creek as he reflects on Sister Carmelina's life, and the time he has left.

"We really miss her. What she could do, I could not dream of doing," Piccinini says. What she could do was attract legions of devotees, who lined up to see her in what Piccinini calls the "glory days" of the 1970s and 80s.




Meet Mayor Bonnie Crombie & Members of Council

Mississauga Civic Centre
 Sunday, January 12, 2020
 Meet & Greet 1 - 2:30 pm
 Skating 10 am - 4 pm
mississauga.ca/mayorslevee
 #MayorsLevee2020

- Skating on the city's largest outdoor rink
- Entertainment by local artists
- Family fun all day long!

Dress warmly. Skating is a weather-dependant activity.

If you require accessibility accommodations, please call Bryan Sparks at 905-615-3200 ext. 3253 or email Bryan.Sparks@mississauga.ca by January 3, 2020





THE SRI LANKAN ETHNIC DIVIDE AND ITS IMPACT IN THE NATIONS' POLITICS

By: J. A. Rajah

A. The Ethnic Divide-its nature:

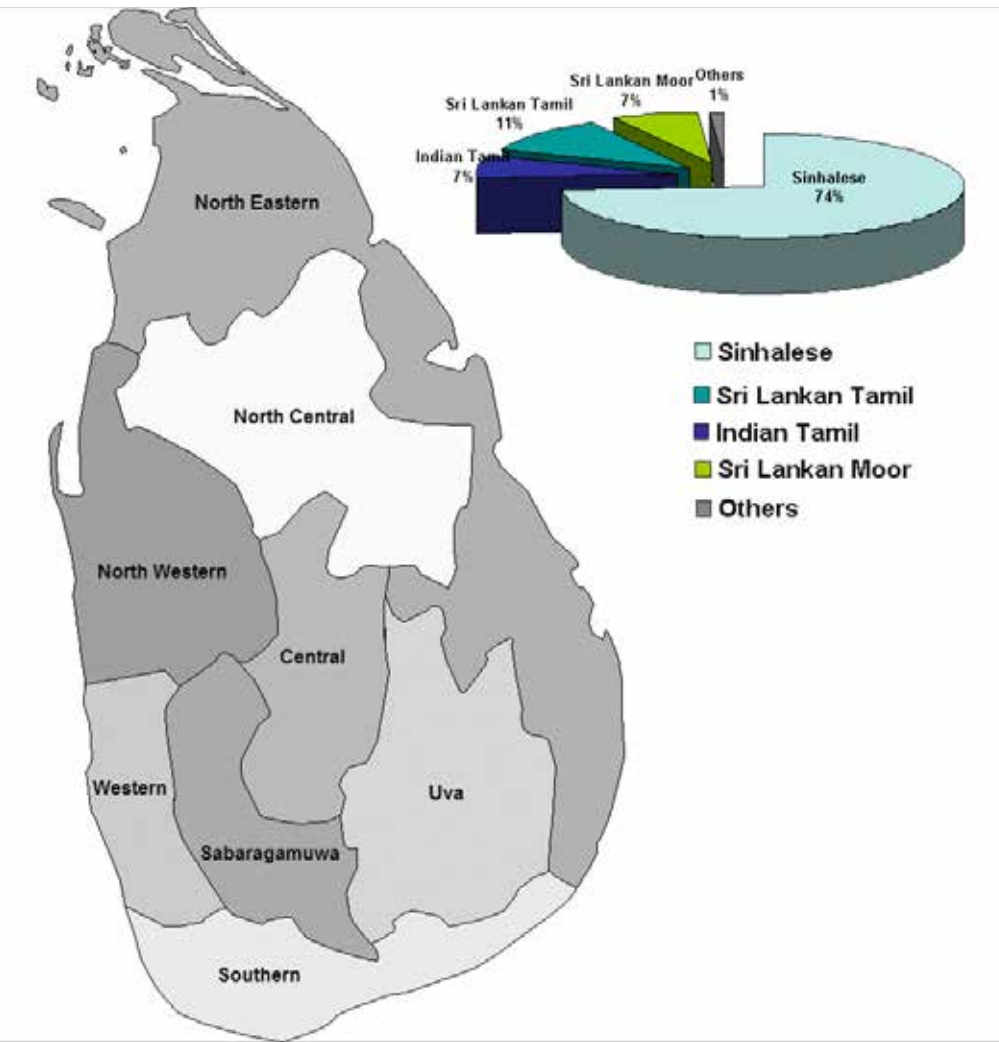
Even after seven decades of independence Sri Lanka has not found a lasting solution to its ethnic problem. There have been several attempts to solve it but nothing has materialised. Most politicians have exploited it to reach their own goals or aspirations but not made a sincere, well focussed solution.

Chelvanayagam who put forward the federal solution was misinterpreted and branded by many Sinhalese politicians as an attempt to divide the country. However every major party that was successful at the elections have used the ethnic issue to win the support of the people.

Right from the beginning, the ethnic issue started to develop as a canker in the body politic of the nation. F.R. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister started with the idea of colonising the Tamil areas with his development projects. G.G. Ponnampalam who was quick to understand the gimmicks of the Sinhala leader accepted the portfolio of the Minister of Industries and fisheries and used the office to develop the Tamil areas. He started the Cement at Factory, The Chemical Productions at Paranthan and the Paper Factory at Valaichchennai. It meant productive infra-structural installations in Tamil areas and employment opportunities for the Tamils. S.J.V. Chelvanayagam reacted differently and started the Federal Party to fight for the rights of the Tamils through constitutional reform. Federalism spelt jitters in the minds of the Sinhalese majority who were made to believe that it meant the division of the country. The Tamil politicians cunningly called Federalism as "Tamil Arasukk Kadchi", which meant Tamil government party; just to win votes of the Tamil areas. Many other issues like university admissions, language, colonization, religion, educational facilities, sports opportunities took significant roles in the development of the ethnic canker that spelt a disaster to the body politic of the nation (in Dr. Colvin R De Silva's words).

B. Its Impact in Previous Elections:

The ethnic divide showed its significant impact when S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike chose to introduce the Sinhalese only Bill in 1956. Bandaranaike who was in the U.N.P left the party and formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party as he wanted



to give the majority community the best of opportunities. He was not a communalist but chose this strategy to come to power as Senanayake overlooked his abilities and brought in his son Dudley as his successor. Tensions broke up between the major communities and the country became divided on the basis of language. The Tamil politicians took up the issue and fought for their language rights. They initially chose 'sathyagraha' as their instrument in the Gandhian style. There was communal strife in the country due to the differences between the two communities. Bandaranaike who became prime-minister in the subsequent elections tried to appease the sentiments of the Tamils with the BC pact (Regional Councils) which aimed at passing the reasonable use of Tamil act. It was opposed by the UNP which organized the Kelaniya march which put an end to it. Hence the ethnic divide raised its ugly head in every Sri Lankan elections. Sri Lanka lacked the services of a statesman-like politician who could put the country before communal interests. Dudley Senanayaka, who tried to come up to something like it had to give up when his DC pact (devolving of powers to Tamils) failed to see the light of day. When he was prime minister from 1965 to 1970 he was able to successfully introduce the Tamil language (reasonable use) as the language of administration in the north and east.

C. Non-Violent Protests By the Federal Party:

In 1952, the Federal Party was formed by S.J.V. Chelvanayagam to agitate for a federal system of government to work for the regional autonomy of the Tamils. It was prompted by G.G. Ponnampalam of the Tamil Congress when he refused to support the bill to ensure citizenship for the estate Tamils. The federal party engaged in non-violent actions to reach their political aims. The failure of the DC Pact and the BC Pact made the Tamils to agitate for a separate state under a new integration of Tamil parties known as the Tamil United Liberation Front (Vaddukkodai Resolution) under S.J.V. Chelvanayagam in 1976. The tensions between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamil reached greater heights at the demise of SJVC and the change to a violent path under Velupillai Pirabakaran.

D. The Violent Protests and the Repercussions:

In 1977 J.R. Jayawardene of the UNP introduced the presidential system of government with executive powers in the hands of the president with Ranasingha Premadasa as prime minister. The LTTE waged civil war against the government and gained control of the north and east. The IPKF left and the militants regained control of north and east. In 1987

the Indian government under Rajeev Gandhi sent the IPKF to maintain rule and order in the North and East. In 1989 and later Chandrika became the presidents but the ethnic problems continued to prolong with increased ferocity. In 1995 October the militants wanted the people of Jaffna to evacuate Jaffna and move to Point Pedro. The militants also moved to the Kilinochchi area to avoid the impending army assault to reclaim the Jaffna Peninsula. Later in May 1996, the people of Jaffna were allowed to return to their places of residence. The people had to undergo tremendous difficulties and loss of belongings during this period of instability and confusion.

In 2005, Mahinda Rajapakse of the SLFP became president. He took increased action to fight the militants and defeated the Tamil Tigers. A large numbers of civilians and militants were done death especially at Mullaitivu. In the Presidential elections that followed in 2015, Chandrika Bandaranaike succeeded in wresting power with the help of the UNP and introducing Maitripala Senanayake as the President. Chandrika was able to bring all the opposing groups together including the TNA to beat Mahinda's government. However nothing positive was done to solve the ethnic problem.

E. The Current Situation:

The 2019 April attacks on Christian and Buddhist religious institutions challenged the stability of the government. Hence Mahinda was able to raise the Sinhala Buddhist and anti-Tamil factor to get his brother elected as the president (winning 52.25% of the votes) of Sri Lanka in November 2019. Hence the ethnic factor continued to influence Sri Lankan elections from the time of independence. Sagith Premadasa who contested Gotabhaya Rajapakse lost because he was alleged to be planning to give more regional autonomy for the Tamils. Though he had the positive attitude of giving more rights through provincial councils, it was ignored and used against him to defeat him. There were two occasions in which the language issue (1956) and the religious issue (2019) were brought to the forefront to win at the elections. There was calamity in 1956 but it is creditable that it was being avoided in 2019. The ethnic issue continues to be a canker the body politic of the nation and has to be solved only by the rise of a Sri Lankan statesman in the future..



Take it or Leave it

Where Courage Resides

Courage can go beyond an act of bravery. Courage is also an enduring strength that enables you to forge ahead and flourish. It is the resilient power of the heart.



You don't need fear; you need strength; and it is already within you.

You have a mind and you have a heart; you're balanced. If you learn how to use both of them equally, not only will you be in peace, but you will prosper. Most people only know how to use one. The heart, they don't understand.

I say "the heart," and people go, "What are you talking about? What is this thing called the heart?" But let me tell you what it is. The heart is the place where the courage resides, the courage to move on, to go forward, to fulfill who you really are.

The heart is the place where your truest wisdom resides. The heart is

the place where you will find your passion. The heart is the place where you will find your compassion. The heart is the place where you will find the quest, the thirst for being fulfilled.

All that is good in you—not from the perspective of the world, but that is good in you from the perspective of a human being—is the place where all these beautiful things reside. And that is the place referred to conveniently as being the most important, and thus called "the heart."

That's what a heart is. The courage. The courage to seek clarity in the midst of confusion. When everything is going wrong, the courage to

say, "No! I want clarity; I want to be fulfilled."

Have you experienced this courage? Have you felt this courage? Have you understood this courage? It's your power to thrive in this world—to thrive, to shine, to be.

You don't need fear; you need strength. And the strength that I am talking about is inside of you. Knowledge of the self, of you! So you can understand, so you can see, so you can feel, so you know.

To welcome every single day like you will not get another one—and that's when every day starts to become a gift.

– Prem Rawat

www.timelesstoday.com



An Innovative Peace Education Program

by Sury Suryanarayanan

Introduction

Since the early decades of the 20th century, “peace education” programs around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, nonviolence, conflict resolution techniques, tolerance of diversity, coexistence, among others. Peace Education is an effective way of learning to coexist with fellow members of society. It is hard to imagine that someone without inner harmony could be an instrument of peace for their community.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines that “Peace Education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself, with others and with the natural environment.”

Description

The Peace Education Program (PEP for short) described here was created by The Prem Rawat Foundation (TPRF) on the premise that the strongest foundation for world peace is personal peace on a grand scale. TPRF, which was founded in 2001, is a non-profit public foundation with supporters and volunteers internationally.

PEP started as a pilot program in Australia in 2012 and aimed to help participants live with a sense of hope and dignity. It provided an opportunity for individuals to reflect on their own need for and understanding of peace, contentment and wellbeing.

PEP consists of 10 sessions, each focusing on a particular theme. These customized, interactive workshops are non-religious and non-sectarian. The themes are: Peace, Appreciation, Inner Strength, Self-Awareness, Clarity, Understanding, Dignity, Choice, Hope, and Contentment.

PEP presented here is based on the innate resources of each human being including peace, appreciation and understanding and addresses the similarities in people, regardless of culture, religion, age, gender or any particular issues they may be experiencing. The program is based on core, universal human principles, such as equality, respect, dignity, and, as such, fits very well in a wide range of organisations.

Reach

Its effectiveness can be assessed from the fact that since its inception in 2012, it has now been offered in 84 countries and in 36 languages. Further translations are underway. Written materials are also available in Braille along with DVDs subtitled for the



hearing impaired. As of now, this program has been presented in over 1700 venues around the world.

PEP is currently offered in a wide variety of settings globally. Examples of the organizations hosting PEP are Civic & Government Groups, Community Groups, Corporations & Foundations, Correctional Facilities, Education, Health & Wellness, Police & Law Enforcement, Seniors, Veterans groups, and many special groups.

Comments and endorsements

Some of the benefits experienced by participants are:

- Developing a sense of worth
- Realising choices each person has in life
- Finding the ability to feel contentment regardless of changes in circumstances
- Becoming more hopeful about life
- Creating a positive impact on one's relationships with others

PEP was first introduced in correctional institutions based on the need for a structured course for inmates. Since then, many benefits have been observed from these courses in correctional institutions worldwide, viz., reduced violence in the prisons, reduced stress on staff, better morale amongst inmates, better morale and less absenteeism for staff, improved well-being generally.

Some of the comments of the organizers and participants of PEP are given here.

Robert Balli, Senior Warden, Dominguez State Jail, Texas states, “It is a program that seems to tap into the offender's need to find a source of inner peace even when they are in turmoil. I

think every warden in any prison probably in the world will tell you that if we can control how offenders react to conflicts and give them tools to deal with what we call ‘life issues’, it is a win situation which will benefit any warden in any penal institute anywhere in the world.” Captain L. Carter, former head of guards and Volunteer Services, notes, “The benefits are that those who attend the programs, we had very little problems with them. Only 3 offenders have returned to the Dominguez unit out of about 700 to 1000 who attended this program. The attendees have a positive impact on the staff.” (Usual rate of return to the jail there is 30% plus).

One lady who attended the PEP for ex-combatants in Sri Lanka, appreciates thus, “When I came in for these lessons for the first time, I was not myself. I had lost my happiness because of my fear and the differences in language. So I thought that the people who speak Sinhala looked at me differently. But this program showed me they are also our friends. There's no difference between us. I learned this completely. If everybody in Sri Lanka learned this message, Sri Lanka will never have an enemy. There won't be a word called “enemy.” I can fully say that.”

Mercedes Palarea, Professor at the University of La Laguna, Tenerife, says, “A program like this fits into education and academia without a doubt. We have to find a way to fit it in.”

Sister Cleofé López, a cloistered nun, Monastery of Sata Catalina de Siena, “I hope this course is heard everywhere in this planet.”

One of the inmates who attended

the PEP sums it all up, “To see everyone at peace in prison would shock the world. If you can find peace in prison, then surely it would motivate the world to find peace out there.”

Endorsements and many more comments can be found in the tprf website given below.

How to start a PEP

Starting a PEP is quite easy. One can visit the website of the The Prem Rawat Foundation (TPRF) and find information at <https://www.tprf.org/programs/peace-education-program/>. There one can find also many videos, quotations, etc. These help a person to be very familiar with PEP.

There is also a link there about starting a PEP program, <https://www.tprf.org/programs/peace-education-start/> wherein the procedure to obtain the license to offer PEP is described.

www.tprf.org

Sury Suryanarayanan, an engineer by profession, with a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering from the University of British Columbia, was a research engineer in the field of communications before delving deeply into peace efforts.

He has been involved in the field of peace for more than 4 decades. Having learnt the way of experiential peace, he had been actively involved in supporting the work of peace and peace education mainly for The Prem Rawat Foundation, the Words of Peace Global, and its erstwhile organisations. He has been researching and facilitating Peace Education Program in more than 40 countries.





Special Feature



BY THULASI MUTTULINGAM

HUMANS OF NORTHERN SRI LANKA

“Humans of Northern Sri Lanka” is a Facebook Community page by Thulasi Muttulingam, a journalist based in the North of Sri Lanka. To follow the updates, “Like” the page at: www.facebook.com/pages/Humans-of-Northern-Sri-Lanka

ANIMAL CRUELTY - THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Scenes of an elephant calf frantically trying to revive its mother - as the mother lies keeled over, dead. Seven elephants dead and counting - International news last year. Great work Sri Lanka.

Because this news caused a national as well as international uproar, a committee has been appointed to ‘look into’ the matter. Otherwise, such news - if it gets out at all - is all in a day’s work for us Sri Lankans.

We’ll shrug our shoulders, roll our eyes at the animal rights activists demanding action, and move on. Or else we’ll stay in our ivory towers in cities and cast stones upon the poor villagers pitted by the State, against elephants in their habitats - conveniently forgetting our own histories as to how our cities were formed.

The human-elephant conflict is nothing new - yet management of it is not something that the State through successive government regimes has given any thought to.

Destroy forests, fill up water holes, put people in there, then act surprised they are in conflict with the animals in the region. Rinse and repeat.

Animal welfare laws
Whatever happened to our proposed amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ordinance dating back to 1907? It was gaining a lot of traction from animal welfarists earlier this year, but has now gone quiet. Looks like the State is sleeping on it - as usual.

That a law was enacted in 1907 (by the British, not us) to prevent cruelty to animals is worthy of note - but that we Sri Lankans continue to operate with that law without amendments up to 2019 is absolutely shameful. Shows how much we hold animals in esteem despite vaunting the values of our ‘Buddhist nation’ at every opportunity. Among other things, the law does not take into account the welfare of wild animals, only domestic ones with owners to take care of them. Even so - it set some impressive precedents we are yet to follow.

The British set the princely sum of Rs.100 as a fine for animal cruelty in 1907 - which remains the same in 2019. In 1907, that sum would probably have been a year’s worth of salary for an average wage earner. Now it doesn’t have the purchasing power of even a single meal. Yet, despite pushing for reforms for years, the Sri Lankan State has yet to pass any.

We compare extremely badly in this regard with our South Asian neighbours, including Pakistan and Bangladesh who have passed several reforms to their pre-existing British legislation, to bring their countries into the 21st century. What is wrong with us? As with everything else, we will ignore the progress across the rest of the world while patting ourselves on the back because a Sri Lankan Buddhist king thousands of years ago, apparently was the first ever in the world to pass laws against animal cruelty and to demarcate protected wildlife reserves. That was thousands of years ago. What about now?

Now, there is just a lot of hand wringing and passing of the buck - if the recurrent issue ever floats as ‘news’ to the top. Otherwise it’s buried to spill over like Meethotamulla’s garbage mountains.

There is little to no transparency cur-

rently over how animals are treated by the State, in Sri Lanka. As such, we will get inklings of news only when unpaid animal welfarists get wind of it and highlight it - as happened with the elephant massacres recently. It has been reported by a leading newspaper that the State Minister for Wildlife, Ranjith Aluvihare had reprimanded wildlife officials for not informing him about the matter. He had apparently rushed to the scene of elephant deaths only after media reports and had been visibly shaken when he stumbled upon the scene of the grieving elephant calf refusing to leave its mother’s body - it had to be tranquilized by the wildlife officials before it could be separated from its mother’s carcass - and the carcass sent for testing to determine what had happened to it. The unofficial reports thus far opine that the animals were poisoned, although official reports on the matter are still pending (as at this time of writing). Even if the poisoning were to be proved, what then? What mechanisms do we have in place to stop this repetitive tragedy that we hear about regularly?

Manufactured Human -Elephant conflict

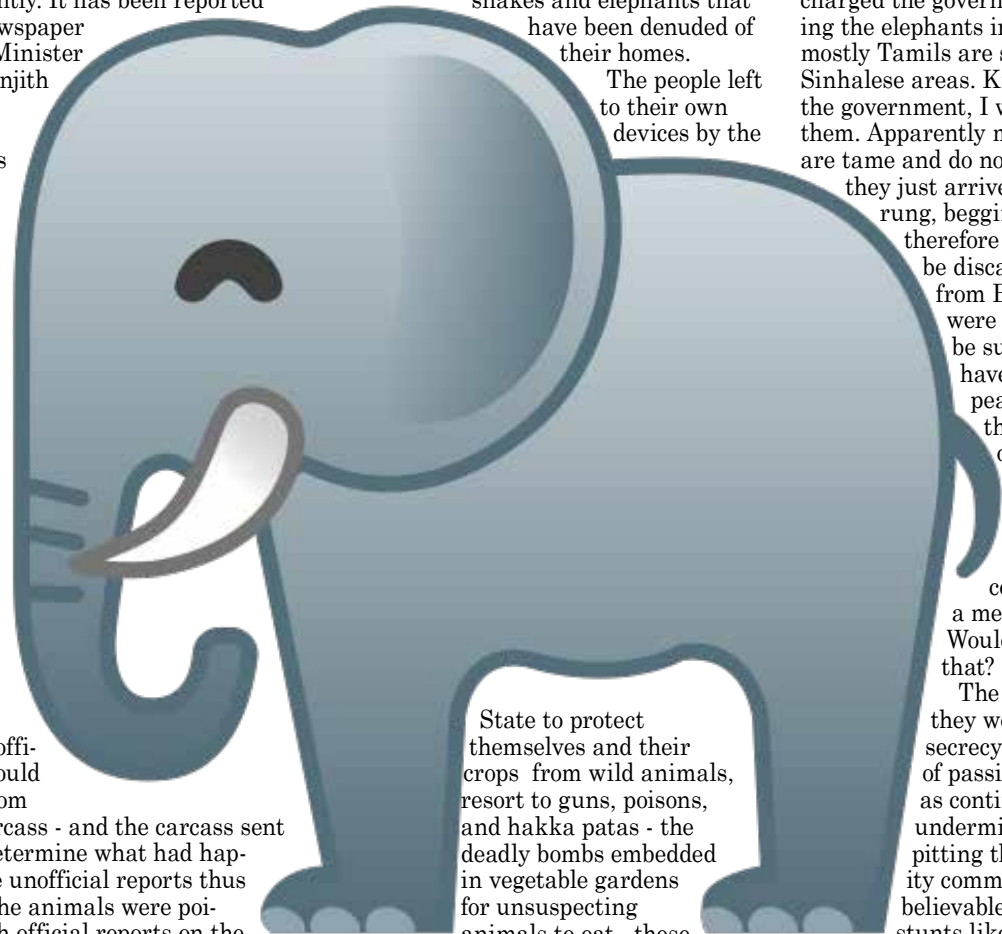
The wildlife officials have been reprimanded in front of media for not informing the Ministry about the matter - but then again, this is all in a day’s work for their department - not really anything out of the ordinary, given the number of elephants that are killed each year. Nor has the Ministry been engaged in actively curbing the problem except for a few token efforts year on year.

According to another news report, 293 elephants have already been killed in the nine months of this year thus far. 319 were killed in 2018, with similar numbers, showing an increasing trend over the years, over previous years. When the British first came to Sri Lanka, we apparently had 12,000 elephants and two million humans living in the country. We now have 6000 elephants and 20 million humans. The elephants are paying for human folly, and everyone looks the other way except for the occasional hand wringing.

So why is this happening? We are still primarily an agrarian society - as we should be if we don’t want to depend for our food on other countries - and the State’s policy to deal with expanding populations is to cut swathes of forests - then leave people to their own devices in once wild areas. I have visited these areas

- the poorest of the poor, sustaining the rest of the country with their agricultural produce live in them amidst primitive conditions of no running water, electricity or telephones, amidst leopards, bears, snakes and elephants that have been denuded of their homes.

The people left to their own devices by the



State to protect themselves and their crops from wild animals, resort to guns, poisons, and hakka patas - the deadly bombs embedded in vegetable gardens for unsuspecting animals to eat - these

bombs will explode in their mouths, slowly consigning them to a painful death. They don’t die immediately. They take a few days to die of starvation as their mouths have been blown out. We wouldn’t want to look at this - these poor animals’ bloodied, mutilated faces - we wouldn’t publish them in our media to preserve your sensibilities - but we allow it to go on year on year without repercussion.

And even if there are repercussions, all it would mean is that a poor subsistence farmer would be fined or imprisoned - which won’t do anything to curb the problem at the root. People are not killing these animals for sport - they are killing them for survival - of themselves as well as their crops. Fences would be the easy short- term answer - but the poorest of the poor subsistence farmers living in thatch huts themselves do not have the wherewithal to put those up - and the government despite talking about how much it is spending on electric fences spends negligible amounts in only certain areas as tokenism. As for long term answers, that’s population control - of ourselves - not the animals.

Selective outrage

This recent incident occurred in the Central province which is a Sinhala majority area. I am not very familiar with it or what happens over there but I have visited similar agrarian settlements in the North - where I saw people grappling with elephants on a daily basis. Not all of these settlements were new, some of them were ancient - they had not newly deprived

animals of their habitat - yet they were grappling too. According to several subsistence farmers in the North, elephants have started appearing in places where there never were elephants before. They charged the government with transporting the elephants into their midst where mostly Tamils are settled, over from Sinhalese areas. Knowing the habits of the government, I wouldn’t put it past them. Apparently many of these elephants are tame and do not try to attack people - they just arrive when temple bells are rung, begging to be fed. The people therefore theorize these might be discarded elderly elephants from Buddhist Temples who were used to bell ringing to be summoned for feeding. I have heard this charge repeatedly from farmers in the Northern Province of Mannar where a human -elephant conflict not known previously, is explosively building. This tale of course could be discarded as a mere ‘conspiracy theory’. Would our State really do that?

The short answer is - yes, they would. Given the State’s secrecy and standard habit of passing the buck, as well as continuous mechanisms to undermine minorities while pitting them against the majority community, it’s certainly believable they might be pulling stunts like these.

Had these incidents happened in a Tamil area - and they do, I have seen it happen - we’d be treated to outcries of Tamil barbarianism now, were the news to get out - as it did with the leopard incident last year. Since it happened in Sinhalese areas, there is remarkable quiet from the easily excitable masses - no outcries of barbarianism apart from those made by dedicated animal lovers.

And then the news, just like the elephants, will die a slow death without repercussions - until the next mass deaths make it to the news. No lessons learnt. No mechanisms implemented. No future tragedies prevented. Because that’s how we roll. We extoll ourselves as a great society by resting on laurels of historical precedence, either real or imagined; the first nation to have a woman premier, the first nation to have protected wildlife, a Buddhist nation dedicated to animal welfare... but we won’t do anything ourselves to maintain the legacy we so proudly claim.

In this land of Buddhism, animals weep.

Mahatma Gandhi’s quote on what constitutes a great nation is fairly well known:

“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged in the way it treats its animals.” We don’t exemplify anything of the kind.

Then again, another great man recently said something which we do exemplify. *Sir David Attenborough* - “Humans are a plague on earth.”

NAVA WILSON  **LLP**
BARRISTERS AND SOLICITORS

We Wish Monsoon Journal Readers
A Happy New Year!

THE BIGGER THE
DREAM
THE MORE
IMPORTANT YOUR
TEAM



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Special Feature

UCMAS Mental Math International Competition - Cambodia

By: Sumi Suthan

Representing Canada and participating in an international math competition is a dream come true for a young child. A group of 13 young children who learn Universal Concept of Mental Arithmetic System (UCMAS) at the TUSGU Educational Services participated at the UCMAS Mental Math International Competition on December 7th, 2019 at Phnom Penh, Cambodia. All 13 of these students won trophies at the competition and made their teachers, parents and the country proud.

More than 5000 students from over 50 countries participated in the international competition. Students had to solve 200 questions in 8 minutes! It was a historic moment for Canadian students. Canadian students have proven that they can travel overseas and win math competitions against the best from other

countries.

Nitisha Pakeerathan (age 8) from TUSGU Educational Services, Scarborough became Canada's very first Grand Champion in the 24-year competition history! In addition to her, Preethi Suthakaran (11), Aarav Sivakumar (8), Aditya Bhavani (12), Abhinav Bhavani (8), Kalki Sathiyanthira (9), Aeiron Sivashankar (9), Akilash Premathasan (10), Akkshaya Premathasan (6), Harani Premathasan (14), Laxana Premathasan (12), Nilaa Pratheepan (9), and Richard Ly (10) won higher trophies in their respective categories.

Preethi Suthakaran has been given an achievement award by the Urumpirai People Association at this year's Christmas event.

Photo Courtesy: E-Kuruvi & Tamil Mirror



M & M Twins,

one of the largest importers of ethnic foods celebrates 40 years of operations in Canada



By Siva Sivapragasam

M&M Twins Limited which is one of the largest importers and wholesalers of ethnic foods will be celebrating its 40 years of operations in Canada this year.

Established in 1980, the company has been a major influence in introducing ethnic foods into the Canadian market. From humble beginnings in 1980 M&M Twins Limited began operations from a garage in Toronto, Ontario. The twins, Mohan and Mahesh started the company as a small import operation focusing on Sri Lankan grocery products.

“Our initial import volume was very small, amounting to approximately two to three containers each year. The idea was to cater to the growing Sri Lankan community that was not being serviced by local Canadian grocery chains.”, says M & M Founder & CEO Mohan Perera.

M&M Twins Limited understood that in addition to the Sri Lankan community, other South Asian communities were rapidly growing and were not being serviced by the large grocery chains. With this in mind, M&M Twins Limited increased its product lines and began importing products from India, Pakistan,

Chile, and Thailand, in addition to Sri Lanka.

With the right strategy, and sheer hard work, M&M Twins Limited rapidly grew from a modest garage start-up and moved into its first warehouse in 1989 and later moved into a larger warehouse in 1994.

Currently, M&M Twins Limited has national distribution in Canada. In the past it had the honour of being appointed as the sole agent of Kraft Australia for processed cheese and of Nestle PLC for coconut milk products.

Although M&M Twins Limited started as a small operation, it has grown and now distributes over 200 products from over 10 countries with an annual import volume of over 50 containers. Among the current products imported include basmati, red rice, specialty rice, canned mackerel, coconut products, canned cheese, Ceylon tea, Ceylon spices, jams, jellies, chutneys, sauces, pickles, biscuits, fruit cordials and nectars.

Celebrating its 40 years of operations in Canada, the Company thanks its customers, dealers, partners and well-wishers for their loyal support while wishing them a happy and prosperous 2020 New Year.



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ROHIT

Joined as an international student and took a position as a Senior IT Consultant. He is now a DevOps Engineer. *Earns a 6 figure income.*



EMMANUEL

Worked on multiple projects with IBM and CIBC at the same time immediately after graduation. *Earns a 6 figure income.*



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ELIXIR OF Life

By: Kumar Punithavel

Elixir of life is a potion that gives a person eternal youth. Just imagine how rich you would be if you could discover such a potion! But I am sure none of us is going to live forever. Even the greatest dance will have to come to an end. I thought it would be great if we could share our notes we may be able to find something of that nature! There is no chance of bribing an extra breath to extend our time of demise.

We are not allowed any luggage allowance on our final journey. So let's give up our miserliness and start spending. If you want to put it more politically correct let's say let us not be frugal. Spend for what you must spend. Try to be as happy as you can in the remaining time available. Try and be philanthropic as possible within means.

Don't worry for anything By now you would have learnt the lesson that worry cannot stop what is to happen. When we were young we wondered what we will be. Now for certain we know what we will be very soon. Don't you worry about what will happen to the wealth you have earned. Use it when you can. Recently I wanted to undertake a very long walk, and when I asked my elder sibling for advice I got the best advice possible and I do not regret to have followed the advice. I was told very soon I may need a walker to walk to the attached bath room, and hence do the walk I desire when I can. Being a Hindu even if you are a millionaire only a penny is placed near the mouth to make you open it to feed the morsel of puffed rice after you die. So why worry about amassing more wealth, why not spend what you have?

Do not worry too much about your children. They will take their own devious path in life, like you had yours. Even in your wildest dream you would not have known your life would unfold like this. Kahlil Gibran said it well in his book 'The Prophet' as follows.

***Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of
Life's longing for itself.***

***They come through you but not from
you,***

***And though they are with you yet they
belong not to you.***

***You may give them your love but not
your thoughts,***

For they have their own thoughts.

***You may house their bodies but not
their souls,***

***For their souls dwell in the house of
tomorrow,***

***which you cannot visit, not even in your
dreams.***

***You may strive to be like them,
but seek not to make them like you.***

***For life goes not backward nor carries
with yesterday***

If you have reached three score years, stop chasing after wealth. Even by accident do not get into stock market. Your health is more important than your wealth. Even if you had more than a thousand acres of paddy field, you can eat only a plate of rice. Even if you had a ten thousand square feet mansion you only need a eight by eight feet bed to sleep on. Being content is the secret of happiness. As Lord Buddha taught 'desire is the cause of disappointment'. So get rid of desires that cause you grief.

You cannot change any one. It is a futile to try and change others. Trying to do so will waste your valuable scarce time and spoil your health too. Realizing this, create your own environment favourably and live healthy and happy within it. The environment plays an important part in your life. My mother used to say: you are what your friends are. Every day you spend happily will make your life better. Realize happiness is the foundation of good health and it depends greatly on whom you associate with.

When you are energetic your sicknesses will cure faster. If you are active you will live longer. Any body part you do not use will be confiscated from you. Active person tend to be healthy.

If you have a clear conscious, healthy active life style, good food containing all the good vitamins and bright sunlight around, you will ensure a few extra decades.

Above all whatever that happens around you ensure to be good. Your partner, children and friends and the village at large determine your environment. They are the ambrosia for longevity!

About two thousand years ago, when Sangam era poet Piciranthaiar who ended his life seated facing north fasting on the grave side of his dear friend Kooperum Cholan was asked how come he looks so young in spite of his old age he gave the secret in a poem as follows.

***"யாண்டுபல வாக, நரையில் ஆகுதல்
யாங்கு ஆகியர்?" என வினவுதிர் ஆயின்,
மாண்டஎன் மனைவியோடு, மக்களும் நிரம்பினர்
யான்கண் டனையர்என் இளையரும், வேந்தனும்
அல்லவை செய்யான், காக்க; அதன்தலை
ஆன்றுஅவிந்து அடங்கிய கொள்கைச்
சான்றோர் பலர் யான் வாழும் ஊரே.***

***'If you question me in spite my old age
How come my hair sans gray?'
My diseased virtuous wife and children
are very bright***

***Younger siblings and self too think
alike, King too***

***Protects without evil, beyond that
In my hamlet dwells many virtuous
learned***

Righteous with control on their senses

About two thousand years ago our great poet has pointed the effect others surrounding us. So my friends have positive thinking good friends around you.



Mechanics of Management



- piercecountycd.org

By: J.A. Rajah

Resources, means and action plan as well as time and place are the five factors which are to be considered and cleared before taking an action. It will help in the effective performance of any type of action. Before taking an action, it is wise to consider in depth, the objective, the obstacles, as well as the benefits or reactions on completion.

In order to decide how best a particular job may be done, it is wise to tap the expertise of a person who knows it inside-out. Japanese are world leaders in industry because they thoroughly study a project before successfully

implementing it. No wonder Japan leads the world in industry. It is a good policy to plan one successful project to lead to another, just as we use one elephant to capture another. Even more urgent than rewarding friends is the need for making friends with your enemies. The weak should free themselves from continuous alarms, by entering into alliance with the strong. A decision should follow due deliberation, but once a decision is made, delay in implementation and dilatoriness in execution are positively wrong.

Valluvar appears to be in agreement with Peter Drucker, the world's expert in

management on the subject of decision making. Things which may be done at leisure could be implemented slowly and deliberately but things requiring prompt action, should not be put-off even for a moment. Wherever the way is clear, to act immediately is right; where it is not so - it is better to deliberate and arrive at the best method for implementation. An unfinished work and unended enmity are like smouldering sparks in embers which can rise to overwhelm the perfunctory man.

*“Porul karuvi kalam vinayidanodu aiyinthum,
Irul theera ennich cheyal”*

(Kural: 671-680)



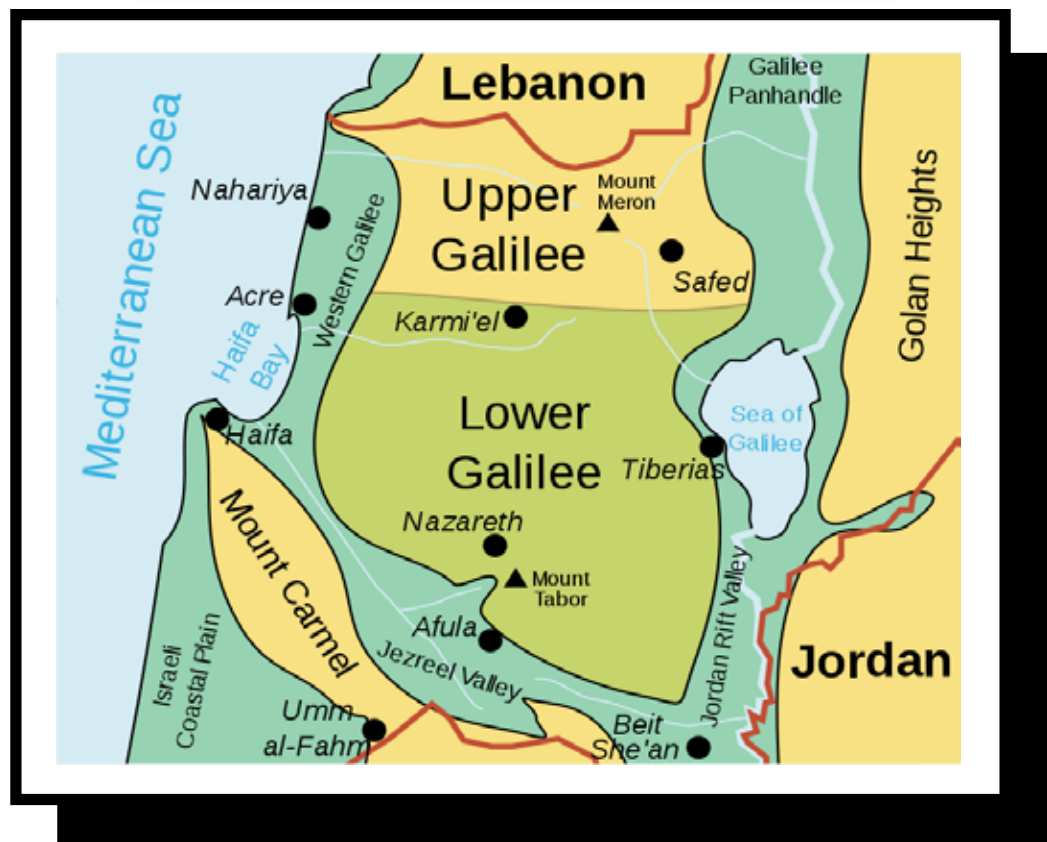
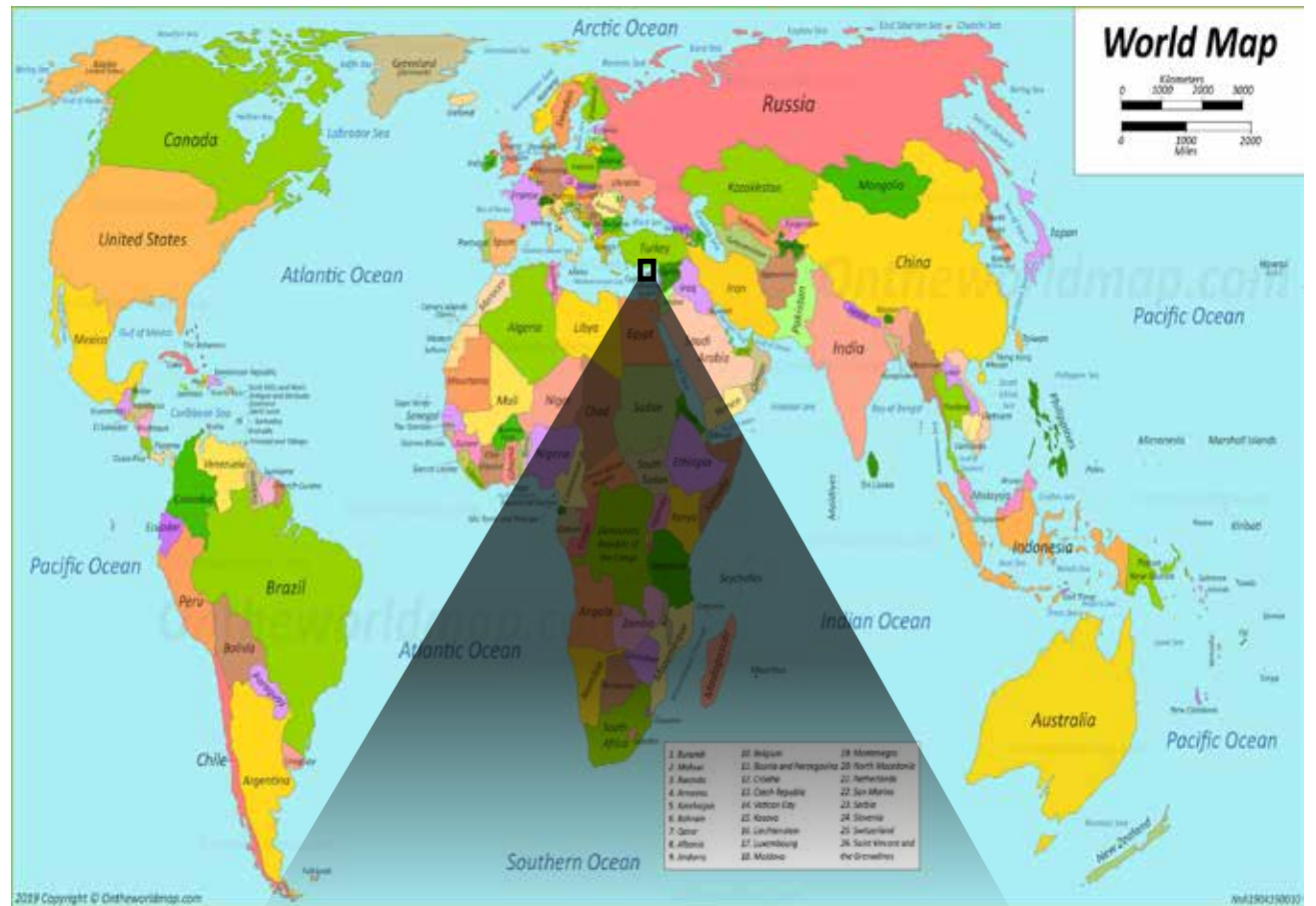
Valluvar's Views



The STRANGER BY THE SEA

By: J. A. Rajah

The Sea of Galilee is really at the centre of the world. If you have a look at the map of the world you will realise the importance of the location. It is from the shores of this sea coast that Jesus preached his sermons and expressed his messages and thoughts, nearly 2000 years ago. His life-giving words have spread to almost all parts of the world and have made spectacular impact on the lives of millions of human lives and are still continuing with this wonderful life-changing-enhancing task. People who did not know about God was given a foretaste of God's blessings and providence by Jesus. The following verses (by Austin Miles) beautifully and sweetly expresses the words and deeds of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



Strangers to God

Strangers to God His words and His love were gathered by blue Galilee,
 To listen with joy to words from the lips of the stranger who sat by the sea.
 They came and they were blest, He gave the weary rest,
 He made the blinded eyes to see, He fed the hungry soul,
 And made the wounded whole, by the waters of blue Galilee
 They sat at his feet, and looked in his face,
 Content in his presence to be,
 For no one before had cared for their souls,
 Like the saviour who sat by the sea.
 Their souls were athirst and drank at the fount,
 Of waters life-giving and free,
 Their strength was renewed, their hope was revived,
 By the stranger who sat by the sea.



Special Feature

2020 A Heartfelt Resolution

This year, 2020, what if we could pool our resources, our understandings, our clarities, to make it a better world for everyone.

Year after year we tend to reflect on external things we want to change, making assumptions that if things were different, we would be happier. But the happiness we seek won't be found on the outside—it exists within us.
In a very special New Year's Day message, Prem encourages us to make a new kind of resolution, not just for ourselves based on external happiness, but for a better world and a better future—a resolution that comes from the heart.

First of all, I'd like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. I know a lot of people are going to be making resolutions—and everybody already has an idea of what they would like the next year to be! And anything is possible—but most importantly, the most important thing that's possible is for you to be fulfilled in this New Year, for you to be actually, be happy!

And not because of one thing or the other thing or something that happens or doesn't happen—but to be happy from the source, the source that you are—and understanding that source that you are. Understanding the source that you are of joy for yourself. Understanding the source you are of clarity for yourself, of understanding for yourself. And these are the things that we

forget.

And we—it's easy to sit down and go, "Yeah, Happy New Year"—and wish somebody a Happy New Year. But what do we know of happiness? What do we know of what happiness really means? What do we know of where the happiness truly resides—that it resides in our hearts, that it resides in us—that that's the happiness we want.

And so many times, we look to the outside circumstances. We look to the outside things—that if they could change, then we could be happy. But that has nothing to do with what true happiness is.

True happiness comes from inside of you. And it has something to do with who you are and your understanding—and your effort and your commitment towards that beautiful you that already

we're not ever going to be even related to them.

All those generations, to leave them a world that is a beautiful world. That there is a clarity and an understanding about that beautiful, beautiful, beautiful nature that already is here! And it just is begging that we take care of it, somehow.

To come together and truly put an end to these wars that we keep fighting. And these resolutions, you know—of course, we can make external resolutions, but the resolutions that need to be made are the resolutions that truly come from your heart!

That, "Yes, I want peace in my world. I want peace in my life; I want peace in my world. I want joy in my life; I want joy in my world! And I want something good to happen."



exists inside of you.

So, yeah, and we would all love to change our outside situations, perhaps—and maybe our happiness, we would like to have it be dependent on that. But the true happiness is not dependent on those things.

This year that is coming, the 2020, what if we could pool our resources, our understandings, our clarities, to make it a better world for everyone—not just ourselves, but for everyone. And of course, to be able to do that, that begins with us, with each one of us.

So, we have to bring that commitment towards us—and then bring that commitment towards this world, to make a better world, a better future for our offspring, for our children, for, you know, all those who are going to come who we don't even know—and maybe


Not speculation of what is bad or what is terrible or "How can this be" and "How can this be" and "We're doing this wrong" and "We're doing this wrong." I know, as human beings, we have done a lot of things wrong. And, of course, we have done a lot of things that are right, too—because we can focus on the good that we can do.

And that's what has to happen. Then, by focusing on that good, maybe some good will come in this world. And maybe that can be our resolution for the next year, for this coming year, 2020—that we can bring joy and peace and love and understanding and kindness to all those who are around us.

So I, again, wish you a very, very Happy New Year.

- Prem Rawat


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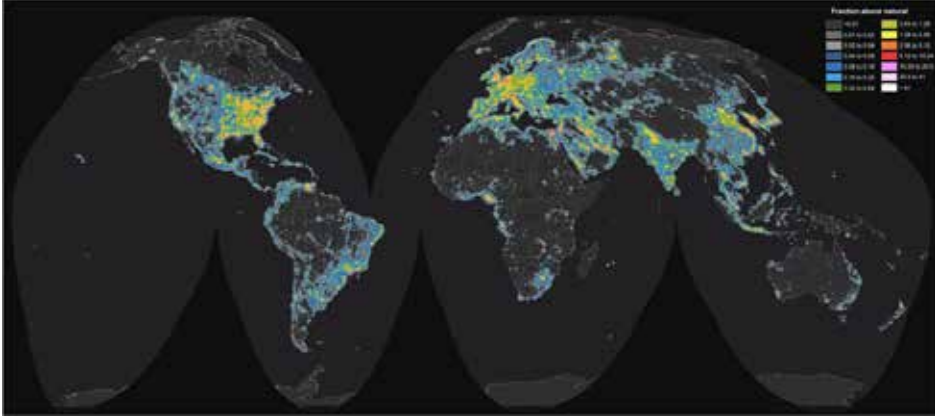
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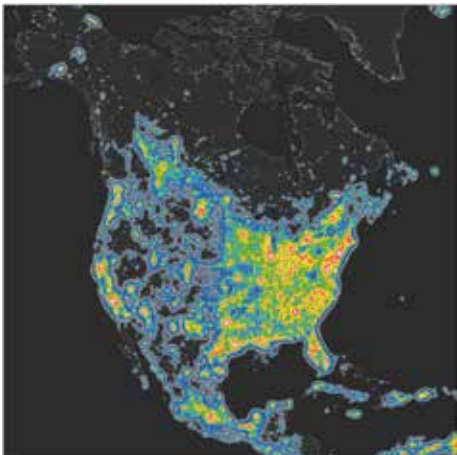
NOCTURNAL LIGHT POLLUTION AND HEALTH IMPACTS

Human and Environmental Effects of LED Lighting

By: *Uthayan Thurairajah*



The natural environment quality based on interrelationships among water, air, and land. The energy conservation in public and private buildings and the environmental issues impacting residents' health. The artificial light at night is essential for our current way of life. The improper or excessive use of artificial lighting has endless negative impacts on environmental quality, human health, and energy conservation. The light pollution from improper lighting use is harmful. In the absence of standards or guidelines, the lighting design practice does not adequately consider all environmental and energy impacts of lighting. The internationally-recognized best practices need to be used for its mitigation.



Light Pollution

Light pollution refers to the improper or excessive use of artificial light. Specific types of light pollution include:

- ♥ **Glare:** a luminaire is delivering a large portion of the light into one's eyes instead of the intended purpose, creating risky conditions by tentatively blinding the user. Glare may occur when a designer extends the distance between luminaires — the higher lighting angle to cover a larger area.

- ♥ **Excessive illumination:** Excessive lighting for a specific situation includes the use of light when it is not needed, and the use of light that is brighter than required for an application.

- ♥ **Light trespass:** Light trespass results from a light fixture directing light across property lines, or in other areas where it is not intended or necessary.

- ♥ **Clutter:** Lighting clutter results from bright, confusing, and excessive groupings of light sources.

- ♥ **Sky glow:** The combination of poorly-directed lighting and excessive illumination create up-light, which illuminates the night sky above its natural levels.

Impacts of Light Pollution

The light pollution has several negative impacts on the environment, energy consumption, and human health and safety:

Energy Waste: Directing it where it

is not needed or using too many lights wastes money and energy and leads to needless carbon emissions to the environment. The International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) concludes that at least 30 percent of all outdoor lighting is wasted in the U.S. alone, mostly by non-shield luminaires. It cost up to 3.3 billion dollars and the release of 21 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Energy is also lost through the installation and operation of inefficient luminaires.

Air Quality: a nitrate radical (NO_x) compound which is destroyed by sunlight, build up in the night sky every night, compensating nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and ozone (O₃), and cleansing the air. NOAA research has found that light pollution destroys this nitrate radical, reducing the nighttime purification, and leaving high concentrations of pollutants in the atmosphere, which worsens smog the next day.

Wildlife & Ecosystem Health: All living organisms depend on natural cycles of day and night for sleep, reproduction, nourishment, and security from predators. Light pollution destroys nocturnal wildlife and can disrupt other animal's abilities to sleep, reproduce, migrate, and hide from predators.

Night Sky: As the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) argues, access to the night sky has been humankind's most common and universal heritage, inspiring "philosophy, science, religion, art, and literature." It has been a vital navigation tool for millennia. Light pollution destroys our ability to access and enjoy the natural nighttime environment.

Human Health: Like most life, human beings are governed by the natural day-night cycle (circadian rhythm). Artificial light in the blue-white spectrum most commonly found in LED and fluorescent lighting disrupts the production of melatonin, a hormone that has anti-



oxidant properties. Melatonin induces sleep, boosts the immune system, lowers cholesterol, and helps the functioning of the thyroid, pancreas, ovaries, testes, and adrenal glands. The American Medical Association has written that artificial light at night can negatively affect hu-



Uthayan Thurairajah, Ph.D., RSE, LC, P.Eng., FEC, is a Project Manager at WSP with over twenty years of experience in Electrical Engineering and Lighting field, and he also holds a Lecturer position at Ryerson University & professor at Centennial. Uthayan is a member of several Canadian and international professional association including Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) and Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR). He has worked on multi-disciplinary lighting and electrical projects for various clients. He researches the subject of light and 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 of lighting design & health. He is passionate about integrating science and health into the lighting design.

man health by increasing risks for obesity, depression, mood disorders, diabetes, reproductive problems, sleep disorders, and breast cancer.

Safety: The bright outdoor lighting may enhance our perception of safety; numerous scientific studies have failed to find a link between outdoor lighting and decreased crime. Poorly-designed lighting can increase crime by making victims and property more comfortable to see and enabling crimes such as vandalism and graffiti. The American Medical Association (AMA) notes that "glare from the roadway and artificial lighting sources can create unsafe driving conditions, especially for older drivers."

Environmental Impacts of LED Lighting



The outdoor lighting using LED presents both challenges and environmental benefits. LEDs use significantly less energy than conventional lighting technologies. The LED leads to lower operating costs and fewer greenhouse gas emissions from energy generation as well as longer lifespans, reliability, and fewer maintenance costs. Moreover, LEDs can be dimmed to lower levels as per the requirement. Finally, the low energy dissipation of LED lights can be paired with built-in renewable power sources, further reducing emissions from energy use.

Growing researches suggest Some LED



lighting is designed to operate at higher color temperatures, can have negative impacts on environmental and community health. As the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) summarizes: "Outdoor lighting with high blue light content is more likely to add to light pollution because it has a significantly more extensive geographic range. Blue-rich white light is also known to enhance glare and jeopardize human vision, notably in the aging eye. Blue-rich white lights create potential road safety problems for motorists and pedestrians. Blue light at night negatively affects wildlife and reproduction and behavior.

The Blue-rich LEDs are more efficient at converting energy to light than warm-

er LEDs; the IDA advises that "every attempt should be made to diminish or eliminate blue light exposure after dark."

- ♥ Always choose full cut-off luminaires that emit no light upward.

- ♥ Use "warm-white" or filtered LEDs (CCT < 3,000 K; S/P ratio < 1.2) to minimize blue light emissions.

- ♥ Utilize adaptive lighting controls such as dimmers, timers, and motion sensors to match illumination to traffic loads and ambient lighting conditions.

- ♥ Avoid the temptation to over-light because of the increased luminous efficiency and color temperature of LEDs.

Mitigation of Light Pollution

The best practices for mitigating light pollution include:

- ♥ Luminaires need to be on when needed.

- ♥ Luminaires need to illuminate the target area only.

- ♥ Luminaires need not be brighter than needed.

- ♥ Luminaires need to minimize blue light emissions.

- ♥ Luminaires need to be full-cutoff, directing 100% of the light below horizontal.

- ♥ Luminaires need to utilize the most energy-efficient source.

- ♥ Luminaires need to be adaptable and flexible to respond to changing needs.

- ♥ Luminaires on the interior of buildings should not illuminate the outdoors.

The effects of light pollution can persist as far as 120 miles from the source, regional coordination and cooperation are needed to adequately mitigate the impacts of light pollution on a single community.

Environmental Assessment Process

All the projects we design, construct, and operate in a way that minimizes adverse environmental effects. Some organizations or authorities recommend the project's environmental checklist to provide an adequate basis for weighing the environmental impacts against the benefits of any proposed project. Some of the Light pollution mitigation measures including The Lighting Zone classification, Photometric calculation, luminaire classification, lighting control system, and more. Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) by the Illuminating Engineering Society and International Dark-Sky Association (IES/IDA) recognized best practices for the mitigation of the impacts of light pollution.



MANAGING YOUR MONEY

Identifying your comfort level with investment risk

Separating facts and feelings to create the right portfolio for you

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

Does the fluctuating value of your investment portfolio cause you great discomfort? Are you confident the value of your investment will be sufficient when you need it? These are but a few questions you may want to consider as you look towards your financial future. Investing for the future can be a tricky business as there are so many things to consider — and who better understands the amount of investment risk you are comfortable with than you? But with so many different types of investment products, different asset classes, different industries and countries, determining the right strategy becomes a daunting task. Taking the time to make the right decisions is imperative, as this will determine the manner in which your investment portfolio is constructed. For instance if you are uncomfortable with investment risk, an appropriate investment portfolio would be comprised mainly of the more stable fixed income type investments. The fo-

vestment experiences or investment knowledge many investors feel they benefit from having the opportunity to further discuss certain points or have a professional expand on some of the questions. Although the questions are vital, the discussion around them is just as important as you develop solutions on how best to achieve an investment goal. Another approach is to complete a questionnaire on your own. There are some who see this as an advantage as they would otherwise feel a sense of urgency to complete the questionnaire without having ample time to reflect on a question or consult with other family members.

The downside is if you are an inexperienced investor with limited investment knowledge then you may have questions. Should you choose this latter approach, it is highly recommended that you seek answers before proceeding. The type of questions that appear on the questionnaire are both factual



cus is on capital preservation and income generation. As equities are added to a portfolio the potential for a higher rate of return increases, but so too does the volatility of your investment.

One of the best tools to assist you through the process of identifying how comfortable you are with investment risk is our investment questionnaire to get you thinking about how much potential investment risk you are prepared to assume. Answers in the questionnaire help us to create a framework that we use to construct a sound, well-diversified strategy for you. Completing the questionnaire with your Consultant tends to be the best approach. Regardless of your own personal in-

and feeling based. Fact based questions are used to gauge the period of time you are expecting to be invested and the length of time you expect to be withdrawing your assets. If your investment time frame is less than four years, you really should not be invested in any asset riskier than a T-Bill. That is because market volatility can be quite severe in the short term and an investment portfolio requires sufficient time to recover from that short term volatility.

Comprehensive

Some experts believe that if you have a long investment time horizon — beyond ten years — you should invest in a more aggressive portfolio. The

logic stems from historical trends that have shown over the long term you will benefit from a higher rate of return because you will have ample time to recover from short term volatility. While this may be true, the fact remains that a lengthy time frame will not change the way you feel in the short term when the markets go through a severe decline. That is why the feeling based questions make up such a large portion of a questionnaire. The purpose of these questions is twofold. First, they serve as a tool to prepare you for what

you should expect. Second, they focus on your logic and emotions specifically designed to identify a consistent pattern of how you perceive investment risk and what you are capable of realistically withstanding. Often risk is measured by your ability to withstand investment losses. This is such an important indicator because it does not matter if you are a conservative investor or an aggressive investor, it takes time for an investment strategy to work. The biggest mistake you can make is to overstate your comfort level with risk, as this is often a precursor to abandoning your investment strategy at the first sign of market volatility. Choose the right strategy from the

start and stick with it. Over the long term you will be rewarded.

Perhaps you completed a questionnaire some time ago but are uncomfortable with how the market is behaving. This is not an uncommon reaction to the market volatility that has been prevalent in recent years. As a result of this volatility many investors now have a far better understanding of what to expect from their investment and what they are comfortable with. It is human nature to assume more risk when things are moving along quite well. The late 90s were a prime example where investment markets were steadily moving upwards and more investors were willing to assume greater risk by investing in a more aggressive portfolio. This was because the concept of risk seemed so far removed. Now that we are coming out of a bear market, many investors have had time to reflect on what investment risk means to them. Situations such as these certainly warrant a review of your investment goals as well as the completion of a new investment questionnaire. For new investors, it is highly recommended that you take adequate time to complete an investment questionnaire. If you have been invested for some time but are uncomfortable with the behavior of the markets there is no time like the present to work through a questionnaire and realign your investment portfolio with your investment goals. Many valuable lessons have been learned through experience and many investors have come to learn they are actually more risk averse than they once thought.

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, please contact me.



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Can someone still apply for credit under Consumer Proposal?

Applying for credit under a consumer proposal is relatively straightforward. You can reestablish your credit during your proposal you don't have to wait till discharge. But yes, it is invariably by a secured credit card it's not so bad you can start off with a small limit initially just to build up some time with some new credit. This article explains how to apply for new credit under your consumer proposal.

When you file a consumer proposal, you might not have to hand over all your credit cards to the trustee. Trustees have differing views on this.

Some are okay if you have a credit card with a zero balance on it, and if you are not using it at the time of filing, and while waiting for approval of your consumer proposal, they may allow you to keep it.

Now keep in mind even if this is your situation, there is nothing to stop your card issuer from canceling your card, even if it is in perfect standing.

There is a decent chance they will find out about your consumer proposal (via a soft inquiry on your personal credit history) and for many card issuers, that'll do it. Your card will be



toast.

Also, please understand if this card you are hanging on to was issued by a credit card issuer who is already being affected by your consumer proposal (for example you have two credit cards from this bank, or a personal line of credit as well as a credit card) the chances of them canceling this "clean" card is pretty

much 100%.

When you file your consumer proposal, you'll wait forty-five (45) days after you file to find out if your creditors accept your proposal as offered. Most of the time, properly constructed consumer proposals are accepted the first time. If not, the debtor works with the trustee and the creditors to come up with a re-

vised offer that suits all parties.

Once the terms of your consumer proposal have been accepted and approved in court, in this view you are free to turn your attention to rebuilding your credit score with new credit cards too.

In case of you have credit or debt issues visit www.gtacredit.com or call 416-489-2000.

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- Are you struggling to pay your Rent, Mortgage or Car Payment?
- Are your financial difficulties the cause of your Marriage or Health Problems?
- Do you think your Credit Rating is in jeopardy forever?
- Are you afraid of Losing your car, house, RRSP, Stocks or any other assets?
- Do you have Court Orders against you?
- Are you having any trouble with Government (CRA) about personal tax or any other tax issues?



If your answered "Yes" to any of the above questions then you should contact us for a Private & Confidential meeting with one of our Govt. Registered Counsellor

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North York, ON, M3J 3K6

Mississauga
110-93 Dundas Street E.
Mississauga, ON, L5A 1W7

Brampton
201-7990 Kennedy Rd. South,
Brampton, Ontario, L6W 0B3



by ASGC in Mississauga

Another fabulous workshop for the High school students and parents was conducted by the Association of Sri Lankan Graduates of Canada (ASGC) in partnership with the Peel District School Board (PDSB) on November 30th, 2019 in Mississauga. The workshop took place at Mississauga Secondary School attended by 150 high school students and over 90 parents. Nel Ketharanathan, President of ASGC welcomed the large gathering of students, parents, workshop presenters and moderators. He mentioned that the workshop is a forum for the students to meet the young energetic professionals to seek the right advice and follow the right career path for a better future. Greetings were offered by Peter Joshua, Director of Education, PDSB and Pradeep Rajah, Principal, Mississauga SS, PDSB.

Nishan Duraiappah, Chief of Police, Peel Regional Police was the key note speaker and he gave an inspirational speech describing how he selected his career path going through the post-secondary higher education in Canada.

Finally Suhumar Nadarajah, secretary of ASGC thanked Nala Moorthy for coordinating the event on behalf of the Peel District School Board and ASGC executive committee members for their support. Everyone present at the workshop appreciated the panelist and moderators for their wonderful service. Nala Moorthy presented appreciation Mugs with the Peel Board logo to all of them.

(Photos and write up by Dr. K. Theivendirarajah ASGC executive)

HIGHLIGHTS OF CAREER GUIDANCE WORKSHOP FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS





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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 Mandalia and Rajini Nathan are both food enthusiasts from England. Niranjini, who lives in London, has a degree in Human Biology and is a trained chef. She makes it her business to know everything about what she eats, from nutritional value to source producers. Follow her food obsession on Instagram @ninjaeatsfood.

Rajini, lives in Toronto and has a background in psychology. Her speciality is in Tamil food from around the world, catch up on her meal ideas on Instagram @tamil_food.

Ven Pongal (Savory rice)



Ingredients:

- ✓ ½ cup yellow moong dhal (paasi paruppu)
- ✓ ½ cup uncooked rice (arisi) parboiled is recommended
- ✓ ¼ tsp whole black pepper (milagu)
- ✓ ¼ tsp cumin seeds (seeragam)
- ✓ ½ tsp of pepper and cumin powder (optional)
- ✓ 2 dry red chillies (varai milagai)
- ✓ 3-4 curry leaves (karivepilai)
- ✓ 2 tsp cashew nuts (munthiri)
- ✓ 1 small ladle (50 ml) of ghee (nei)
- ✓ Pinch of asafoetida (perungaayam)
- ✓ Salt to taste

Method:

Dry roast the moong dhal, cool and soak in water along with the rice for 30 mins. In a pressure cooker or pan, add the washed rice and lentils and the black pepper, along with the salt with 3 cups of water (you may need more water on the stove depending on the weather, your vessel and the amount of heat being used)

For a pressure cooker, allow 5-7 whistles. On the stove top cook until both the lentils and rice are cooked to a mushy consistency.

In a separate pan add the ghee and heat. First fry the cashew nuts in the ghee until brown. Switch the heat off and add the chillies, cumin seeds and asafoetida. If using the pepper and cumin powder, add this too along with the curry leaves and pour over the cooked rice. Combine well and serve hot.

Try making this recipe this month and

Hashtag #monsoonjournal on Instagram and send us your pics, comments and feedback. Spread the love (and recipe!) :)

Sakkarai pongal in 2017, Paayaasam in 2018, Sundal in 2019 and for 2020 we bring you ven pongal; combined these dishes would give you quite the perfect meal to celebrate Tamil Heritage month in Canada.

Ven Pongal is a one pot dish combining lentils and rice that can be made on the stove top, a pressure cooker or an instant pot and is perfect for winter weather to keep away colds and coughs.



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URUMPIRAI PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION Celebrates Christmas Night 2019

By: Sumi Suthan

Urumpirai People's Association celebrated the 5th Annual Christmas party "OORODU ORAVADUVOM" with a well-audience. It was held on December 21st at the Metropolitan Centre. Urumpirai People's Association thanked everyone who attended the event and the youth, teachers, parents, and volunteers for the tremendous hard work they put in to make the event a success. Mr. Manivannan Ganesh is the main organizer and president of the Urumpirai People's Association. Special thanks to Mr. Easan Krishna (Sun Life Financial), Mr. Sivakumar Sivalingaraja, Mr. Niranjan Thiyagarajah, and Mrs. Mathana Soori. Our special

guest was Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Member of Parliament of Scarborough-Rough Park), and other special guests were Mr & Mrs. Nelson Gunanayagam Hon (Former, Urumpirai Town Council Chairman), Mr & Mrs. Amuthalingam Thuraisingam, Mr & Mrs. Srinathan Nadarajah. For the First time to surprise guests, Santa clause rode a bicycle and was dancing with everyone. Mr. Gary Anandasangaree gave us special speech and awards to four people. Mr. Sothilingam Kandiah got a "Social guardian" award, Mr. Ganesh Sinnathampi got a "Vidya Gurumani" award, Mr. Ratnam Kathiramalainathan got a "Araneri Puravalar" award, and Ms. Preethi Suthakaran got a

"Young Achievement award".

Our Event coordinator Mr. Easan Krishna gave a welcome speech about Urumpirai people association and people. Many performances happened. Especially the "Agni" Music band was fabulous! Tamil Thai Vaalthu and Canadian National anthem sung by Urumpirai "Isai Kuyil" Ms. Kavisha Vykunthan, and "Urumpaiyoor geetham" sung by Mr. Soma Sachithanatham (Secretary, Tamil and Saiva spiritual society). The welcome dance performed by Ms. Sruthi Rajesh from Sanskruthi Dance School. The Kaala Kalaalayas dance group did a very well performance. A special speech by Mrs. Mathana Soori (President, Urumpirai

Schools OSA – Canada) and Thank you speech by Mrs. Gnanasakthi Satkunasingam. Everyone enjoyed the delicious dinner, met each other and left with happy moments.

A Special thanks to "Analai Express", "Tamil Mirror" and "E-Kuruvi" because for taking beautiful Video and Photography. Urumpirai People's Association expressed their appreciation and thanks to the dignitaries who attended the Christmas Night and supported the Urumpirai People. They also thanked the all sponsors who provided adequate support to make the Christmas Night a huge success.

Photo Courtesy: E-Kuruvi & Tamil Mirror





SRI LANKAN ACCOUNTANTS ASSOCIATION OF CANADA (SAAC) CHARTERED GALA 2019

Sri Lankan Accountants Association of Canada celebrated its 17th annual dinner dance on Saturday

December 7, 2019 at the Scarborough Convention Centre in Scarborough with a packed audience of around 375 guests. There were several programs organized to entertain the guests.

During the event the sponsors were recognized with mementos by the board members of SAAC.

The Sri Lankan Accountants' Association of Canada is an organization made up of accounting professionals of Sri Lankan origin or descent.

Some of the photos from the event can be seen here.



President Ratna Muralitharan



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OUR NONAGENARIAN GURU



Sinnathamby Thamotheerampillai

(January 23, 1925 - 22 December, 2019) First Headmaster of Tamil stream, D.S. Senanayake College, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka.

By K. Thirukumaran

Thamotheerampillai sir as far as I recall was the only teacher we had during our times wearing traditional attire in the Tamil medium everyday.

Anyone of that period associated with DS and hearing the name Thamotheerampillai sir knows he only brings his care for students and the soft-spoken manner along with the traditional vetti and national he wore. He is often seen riding a bicycle to school in the scorching sun and the white clothes sparkling like his charisma that we all cherish to this day. Our parents were delighted that this upstart Colombo school nestled amidst the charms of the old colonial row and all that has this guru, traditional in appearance and aliviation, is spearheading their children into the future.

Conversing with DS students in 2013 in a video that is being widely circulated on social media in the aftermath of the loss, Thamotheerampillai sir begins by saying he prays the almighty now too for everyone's well being.

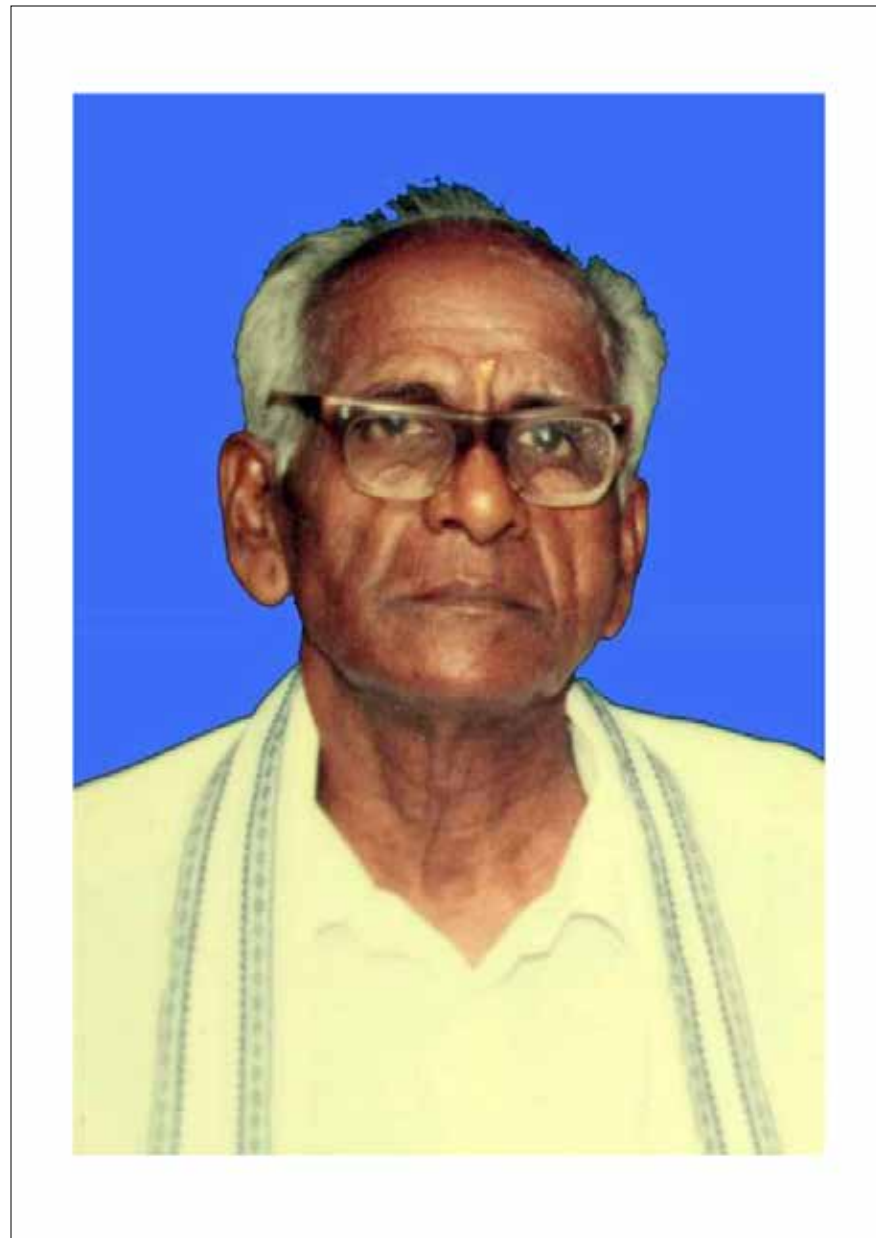
On with displaying his unforgettable and endearing style of speaking to students, Thamotheerampillai sir exemplifies that solemn happenings around the long life of a guru like he never ends the nobility of teaching with age.

"Students wherever I have taught respect and welcome me. Former students spot and greet but many a times each other not recognizable as the course of years passby" he says.

"Sometimes seeing me in the bus these students be like, Agh Sir!!! And then only I enquire who this beloved is," says a profoundly grinning Thamotheerampillai sir.

"Even those with whom we encounter frequently there are times of not remembering", he juxtaposes.

Since retirement in 1993 from Urumpirai Hindu College in the North, Thamotheerampillai sir taught at the Ramakrishna Mission Sunday School till 2012. Since getting ailment from knee pain etc he is been home bound. Mission Swami and others regularly visit him to give good wishes along with advise



for healing his joint pains, he says jovially, while expressing his faithful belief that divine power will not let him suffer too much. In this midst Thamotheerampillai sir is still helping Ramakrishna Mission work by proof reading for grammatical errors and such for their print publication called, "Ara Neri Amutham", Ambrosia of Principled Truth!

Thamotheerampillai sir, born on 23 January, 1925 - joined DS as the first Tamil stream principal in 1967 as a 42 year old and in his early 50s he decided to go to ancestral village of Urumpirai in Jaffna, teach and retire there. I believe it may have been in the year 1990 when my fa-

ther met him at the Chavakachcheri market in the North while on a short trip there from Colombo. Sir told my father that he was there to buy "Vithai Nellu", meaning paddy used to sprout and plant paddy crops in the field. However Thamotheerampillai sir passed away in Colombo, on 22nd of December, 2019 at the age of 94.

Life has many twists and turns, being born 23 years before Britain leaves Ceylon and living nearly a hundred years would have given him a long enduring vision for our well-being.

From birth to twenty three long years thru youthful times is suffi-

cient for someone to hold on a certain inspiration for their entire life time.

He brings onto display it in this brief video and Thamotheerampillai sir conveys the hopes and fears of a generation like his would have while instilling a go forward attitude with satisfaction and happiness in his message to students.

May he be remembered for all that he and this DS community did for us along with our parents of this same generation.

I always felt that DS offered us something very unique, that those from Colombo boys' schools such as Royals or Thomians for example didn't have. That is though those schools have century worth of histories behind them they fell short.

That it was the giant helping hands such as Thamotheerampillai sir, a founding member of the teaching staff at DS and also to a good part our parents plus of course along with the leader our principal RIT Alles sir was able to build a landmark school on par with other major schools of the country.

Not just another school, but nothing else was probably ever built in the post 1948 Sri Lanka with the same spirit!

I believe in these heated times around the world about "country" and thereby "serving the masses," steered apart and stood while setting precedent is DS.

Rising as a community that is with grassroots effort, literarily through many "Shramadanas" was DS from 1967 to say 1982-1985 perhaps, and this idea was best known via the DS motto as, "Country before self!"

Thamotheerampillai sir is a pioneering founding teacher, first head of Tamil medium of this great endeavor called DS lead by RIT Alles sir and Thamotheerampillai sir becomes one of the historical pillars of the piety promises on what DS arose those days!

In tributes, DS students of Thamotheerampillai sir's era bow to sir calling him a "True gentleman" and a "True icon of DSS".

Heartfelt condolences to sir's family and students grieving this tremendous loss.



2019 – A Year in Review

Exclusive to The Monsoon Journal

by Raymond Rajabalan



Just like every year, last year too had its share of political set backs, natural disasters and Horrific tragedies across the world. Here is a record of the notable International Events that happened during last year.

January 6, 2019

King Muhammad V announces his abdication, after serving two years of his five-year term. This is the first time in modern history that Malaysia's constitutional leader has stepped down.

January 14, 2019

Pawel Adamowicz, the Mayor of the Polish city of Gdansk and a well-known critic of his country's right-wing government, dies one day after he is stabbed by a man who rushed on stage during an open-air charity event.

January 15, 2019

Alex Cifuentes, a former personal aide to Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, testifies that the drug kingpin once paid a \$100 million bribe to former Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto.

January 15, 2019

UK Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal is defeated 202-432.

January 15, 2019

At least 21 people are killed in a suspected terror attack at a hotel complex in Nairobi, Kenya.

January 16, 2019

UK's Prime Minister Theresa May survives a vote of no-confidence in the House of Commons. Lawmakers vote 325-306 in favor of the government remaining in power.

January 18, 2019

One hundred thirty-seven people are killed in the Mexican State of Hidalgo after a ruptured gasoline pipeline explodes.

January 23, 2019

National Assembly President Juan Guaido swears himself in as interim president of Venezuela amid anti-government protests.

January 25, 2019

At least 249 people are killed following the collapse of a dam at an iron mine in Brumadinho, Brazil.

January 27, 2019

Two bombs explode in a Roman Catholic cathedral in the Philippines, killing at least 23 people and leaving approximately 100 wounded. The first device detonates inside the cathedral, and the second one targets nearby soldiers who rushed to help the victims of the first explosion.

February 20, 2019

At least 67 people are killed and 40 injured after a fire tears through apartment buildings and chemical warehouses in a historic part of the Bangladesh capital Dhaka, according to Mohammed Nurul Islam, a senior official with the Home Affairs Ministry.

March 10, 2019

Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 crashes after taking off from Addis Ababa on its way to Nairobi, Kenya, killing all 157 people on board. The disaster was the second such crash of a Boeing 737 Max 8 jet in less than six months, and raised fears about the model's automated software.



Boeing 737 Max 8 jet

March 15, 2019

More than 1,000 people are killed across southern Africa when Cyclone Idai makes landfall in Mozambique, bringing huge amounts of rain.

March 15, 2019

Fifty-one people are killed when a gunman opens fire on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. On March 21, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announces that all military-style semi-automatic weapons, assault rifles and high-capacity magazines will be banned in New Zealand.



Al Noor Mosque, Christ Church

March 16, 2019

At least 113 people are killed in eastern Indonesia as a result of flash flooding and a landslide.

March 21, 2019

A powerful explosion at a chemical plant in China's Jiangsu province kills at least 78 people and severely injures more than 90 others.

March 21, 2019

An overcrowded ferry capsizes in the Tigris River near Mosul, a major city in Iraq killing approximately 100 people, officials say.

March 29, 2019

Theresa May's Brexit deal is defeated in Parliament for a third time, 286-344.

April 18, 2019

Journalist Lyra McKee is shot and killed by the New IRA while reporting on rioting in the Northern Ireland city of Londonderry.

April 15, 2019

A massive fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris burns large parts of the 850 year-old church.



Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris

April 21, 2019

A series of bomb attacks kill at least 257 people in Sri Lankan churches and hotels. An intelligence memo warning of a possible attack had circulated 10 days earlier, raising questions about whether more preventative measures could have been taken.



Interior of the Bombed Church of St. Sebastian Church Negombo, Sri Lanka

April 21, 2019

Comedian and television star Volodymyr Zelensky is elected president of Ukraine.

May 24, 2019

Theresa May announces she will step down as leader of the Conservative Party on June 7.

June 16, 2019

Organizers estimate that two million people hit the streets in Hong Kong to protest a controversial China extradition bill. "The crowd called for the extradition bill to be withdrawn permanently, and many also wanted Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam to step down over her handling of the incident. The bill is withdrawn on September 4.



Protest rally in the streets of Hong Kong

June 30 - Trump meets North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the Korean Demilitarized Zone, becoming the first sitting US president to enter North Korea.



US President Trump meets North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un

July 18, 2019

A suspected arson attack on an animation studio in Kyoto, Japan kills at least 33 people.

July 23, 2019

Boris Johnson is elected leader of Britain's Conservative Party.

July 24, 2019

Theresa May resigns as prime minister of UK.

July 24, 2019

Queen Elizabeth invites Johnson to form a government.

August 1, 2019

Women in Saudi Arabia are granted the right to obtain passports and travel independently.

August 11, 2019

During the 10th consecutive weekend of protests in Hong Kong, police fire tear gas in areas across the city, including into the Kwai Fong train station filled with protestors.

August 17, 2019

A suicide bomber kills at least 80 people at a wedding in Afghanistan. ISIS claims responsibility.

August 22, 2019

South Korea announces it is scrapping its military intelligence-sharing agreement with Japan.

August 28, 2019

Queen Elizabeth approves Johnson's request to suspend UK parliament from mid-September, shortening the time available to lawmakers to block a no-deal Brexit.

September 1, 2019

Hurricane Dorian strengthens to a Category 5 hurricane and makes landfall in the Bahamas. At least 61 people are killed.

September 3, 2019

Conservatives lose their majority in British Parliament.

September 5, 2019

A suicide car bombing kills 10, including one US soldier, in Kabul, Afghanistan at a checkpoint near NATO headquarters and the US embassy.

September 9, 2019



John Bercow, Speaker of the House of Commons, British Parliament announces he will step down by October 31.

September 18, 2019

Photographs of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau surface, showing him in brown face around the year 2001. Additional images emerge of separate incidents, and he admits he does not know how many times he has worn black or brown face. He apologizes.

October 9, 2019

Turkey launches a military offensive into northeastern Syria just days after Trump's administration announced that US troops would leave the border area. Erdogan's "Operation Peace Spring" is an effort to drive away Kurdish forces from the border and use the area to resettle around two million Syrian refugees.

October 12, 2019

Typhoon Hagibis makes landfall in Japan, killing at least 74 people.

October 21, 2019

Protests begin in Bolivia, with angry crowds accusing authorities of fraud in the presidential election.

October 21, 2019

Canadian Prime minister Justin Trudeau wins second term in hard fought election.



Justin Trudeau elected Canada's Prime Minister for a second term

October 22, 2019

Northern Ireland's restrictive abortion and same-sex marriage laws come to an end, after the region failed to restore its power-sharing executive that collapsed more than 1,000 days ago.

October 26, 2019

At least 67 people have been killed and more than 200 injured in protests in Ethiopia over the last few days as Nobel peace prize winner Aby Ahamed's backers and critics clash.

October 28, 2019

At least 42 people are killed by a landslide in western Cameroon.

October 28, 2019

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera replaces his Cabinet following days of violent protests that paralyzed the country and led to the deaths of at least 20 people.

October 29, 2019

Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri announces that he will step down.

October 30, 2019

The United Nations releases a report saying that at least 29 people have died and another 14,000 have been displaced in Kenya due to floods and landslides from heavy rainfall.

October 31, 2019

At least 73 people are killed in a fire that engulfed a train in Pakistan, after a gas canister that passengers were using to prepare breakfast exploded.

October 31, 2019

ISIS releases an audio message confirming the death of leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and announcing its new leader is Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.

November 1, 2019

A law takes effect mandating the creation of an independent internet for Russia. The law, signed by Putin in May, establishes rules to create a national network that can operate independently from the rest of the world.

November 6, 2019

The United Nations releases a report saying that at least 17 people have died and another 370,000 have been displaced in Somalia due to floods from heavy rainfall.

November 8, 2019

Former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is released from prison.

November 10, 2019

Bolivian President Evo Morales resigns following accusations of election fraud.

November 12, 2019

At least 12 people are killed and 100 others injured when two trains collide in eastern Bangladesh.

November 15, 2019

Chilean Senate President Jaime Quintana announces that Chile's Congress has reached an agreement to reform the country's constitution in an effort to restore peace after weeks of violent protests that have led to the deaths of at least 20 people.

November 16, 2019

Former Defence secretary Gotabaya Rajapakse elected as President of Sri Lanka



New President Gotabaya Rajapakse

November 21, 2019

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three separate corruption investigations.

November 26, 2019

At least 46 people are killed and hundreds injured when an earthquake strikes Albania.

November 29, 2019

Following nearly two months of anti-government protests, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi's office releases a statement saying he will resign.

December 08, 2019

Hundreds of thousands of protest-

ers have filled the streets of Hong Kong in a mass show of support for an anti-government movement that shows no signs of flagging as it enters a seventh month.

December 10, 2019

ISIS has claimed responsibility for one of the deadliest attacks on Niger's military, which left 71 soldiers dead and 12 wounded.

December 10, 2019

Finland's Sanna Marin, 34, becomes the world's youngest prime minister.

December 11, 2019



Sanna Marin, Finland's Prime Minister

India Passes Controversial Citizenship Bill that Would Exclude Muslims

December 12, 2019



Protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Gauhati, India

Andrew Scheer steps down as leader of Federal Conservative party of Canada



Canadian Federal Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer

December 12, 2019

All 38 passengers on board the Chilean Air Force plane that went missing Monday, Dec 9th on its way to Antarctica are presumed dead, according to Chilean Defense Minister Alberto Espina. Speaking at a press conference, Espina said 32 members of the Chilean Air Force, three from the Chilean Army and three civilians were on the C-130 Hercules plane.



The C-130 Hercules plane is considered a workhorse of modern militaries around the globe

December 12, 2019

Russia's only aircraft carrier catches fire; 1 dead and 2 missing.

At least one person was killed after Russia's only aircraft carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov, caught fire during repair work in Russia's Arctic Sea port of Murmansk, according to Russian state news agencies. A further 10 people were injured and two are missing, Russian state news agency TASS reported.



The Admiral Kuznetsov is pictured in the northern Russian port of Murmansk in May 2018

December 13, 2019

The Conservatives win an overall majority in the UK general election and Boris Johnson the party leader becomes the Prime Minister.



British new Prime Minister Boris Johnson

December 13, 2019

U.S. House committee approves charges against Trump, setting stage for impeachment vote next week.

December 14, 2019

Sudan's ex-president Omar al-Bashir sentenced to two years in a social reform facility for corruption.

December 17, 2019

Ex-Pakistani President Musharraf sentenced to death for treason.

December 18, 2019

House of Representatives impeach US President Donald Trump.



US President Donald Trump

December 26, 2019

Many residents in the central Philippines have been left homeless by Typhoon Phanfone that has killed at least 16 people, leaving a trail of devastation through the centre of the country

December 28, 2019

Somalia suicide car bomb attack rocks capital, killing scores.

At least 79 people are dead and 149 more injured after a massive car bomb exploded at a busy intersection on the outskirts of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu.

Best Wishes for the Holidays and for Health & Happiness Throughout 2020



THE HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF CANADA

Richmond Hill Ganesha Temple



Compiled by *Kidambi Raj*

WHY DO WE WORSHIP KALASAM?

Kalagam is a brass, Copper or a mud pot filled with water. Kalagam symbolically represents creation. The water in the kalagam is also used during the consecration of temples and is known as Kumbabhishekham ai involves pouring water from several Kalasams.



Mango leaves are placed in the mouth of the pot and a coconut is placed over it. A red or white thread is tied around its neck and sometimes all around it in an intricate diamond-shaped pattern. Such a pot is known as Kalagam.

When the pot is filled with water or rice, it is called as Purnakumbham, representing the inert body which when filled with the divine life force gains the power to do all the wonderful things that makes life what it is. A kalagam is placed with due rituals on all important occasions like, the traditional house warming (*Grahapravesam*), wedding, daily worship etc.

It is placed near the entrance as a sign of welcome. It is also used in a traditional manner while receiving Holy personages. Why do we worship Kalagam? Before the creation came into being, Lord Vishnu was reclining on His snake-bed (*Aadishesha*) in the milky ocean. From His navel emerged a lotus from which appeared Lord Brahma, the creator, who thereafter created this world.

The water in the kalagam symbolizes the primordial water from which the entire creation emerged. It is the giver of life to all and has the potential of creating innumerable names and forms, the inert objects and the sentient beings and all that is auspicious in the world from the energy behind the universe.

The Coconut leaves represent creation. The thread around the pot represents the love that *binds* all in creation. Because of that Kalagam is considered auspicious and worshipped. The water from all the Holy rivers, the knowledge of all the Vedas and blessings of all the deities are invoked in the kalagam and its water is thereafter used for all the rituals, during the *abhishekham*.

The consecration (*Kumbhabhishekha*) of a temple is done in a grand manner with elaborate rituals including the pouring of one or more kalasams of holy water on top of the temple towers. When the asuras and devas churned the milky ocean, the Lord appeared bearing the pot of nectar, which blessed one and all with everlasting life.

Thus, the Kalagam also symbolizes immortality. Men of wisdom are full and complete as they identify with the infinite Truth (*Poornatvam*). They brim with joy and love and respect all that is auspicious. We greet them with a *purnakumbham* (full pot) acknowledging their greatness and as a sign of respectful and reverential welcome, with a *full heart*.

The Kalagam is very important for Pooja because of the special significance of a kalagam. The water kalagam symbolizes the presence of all Gods and Goddesses in the Pooja ceremony. The mouth of the Kalagam represents Lord Vishnu, its throat represents Lord Siva and the base represents Lord Brahma. The belly of the kalagam symbolizes the presence of Goddesses, representing the powers of Divine Mother. Thus, the water kalagam signifies the presence of all divine manifestations emanating from one single source, Almighty God. During the process of invocation, a devotee feels an inward awakening of spirit due to his/her focused attention to God. This act of invocation also means that first we will need to purify our hearts of all impurities (*Vasanas*) before we can invite God in our life.

WHAT IS PUJA?

The word Puja is derived from the Sanskrit word *puj* which means to honour or respect. By performing puja, we honour God and seek His/her blessings and guidance for living a purposeful life. Through puja, we hope to awaken ourselves to realize our true nature. Therefore, we can say that puja symbolizes communication between self and the Higher Self, God. The puja rituals are not the ends, but are only the means to facilitate our communication with God. Therefore, it is necessary that we do not perform these rituals blindly but understand them for their underlying meanings.

Puja is the most popular form of worship practiced in almost every Hindu household even today, either on a daily basis or during some important religious function or ceremony. A puja can be either a simple ritual worship or a very complicated one, depending upon the way it is performed.

Many interpretations can be given in Hinduism to the word *Puja*, which consists of two letters, namely, *pa* and *ja*. According to one interpretation, *pa* means *parayanam* or continuous repetition of the names of God and *ja* means *japa* or continuous mental recitation of

the names of God. According to this interpretation, puja is essentially a kind of Hindu worship in which both *parayanam* and *japam* are practiced by the devotees.

In a puja ceremony, the Hindus offer both flowers and water to the deity. Thus, from this point of view, *pu* means *pushpam* or flower and *ja* means *jal* or water. The letter *ja* can also mean simultaneously *japam*. So, in this context, puja becomes that form of Hindu worship, where flowers are offered to God along with the recitation of His names.

Lastly, puja has a spiritual dimension also. According to this interpretation, puja means that form of worship through which we give birth to or awaken the indwelling spirit in us. Here *pu* means *purusha*, meaning the eternal self and *ja* means *janma*, meaning, to give birth to or awaken.

According to the Hindu beliefs, during the puja ceremony, the deity, which is normally a static statue, becomes alive. This happens both at the external level and at internal level. The statue is brought to life externally through the chanting of mantras or special invocations, or specifically speaking, through the performance of *prana prathishta* or establishing of life breath. Similarly, the indwelling spirit is awakened through the devotee's sincerity, concentration, devotion and Divine grace, which is symbolically represented as *Prasad*, or the blessings from above.

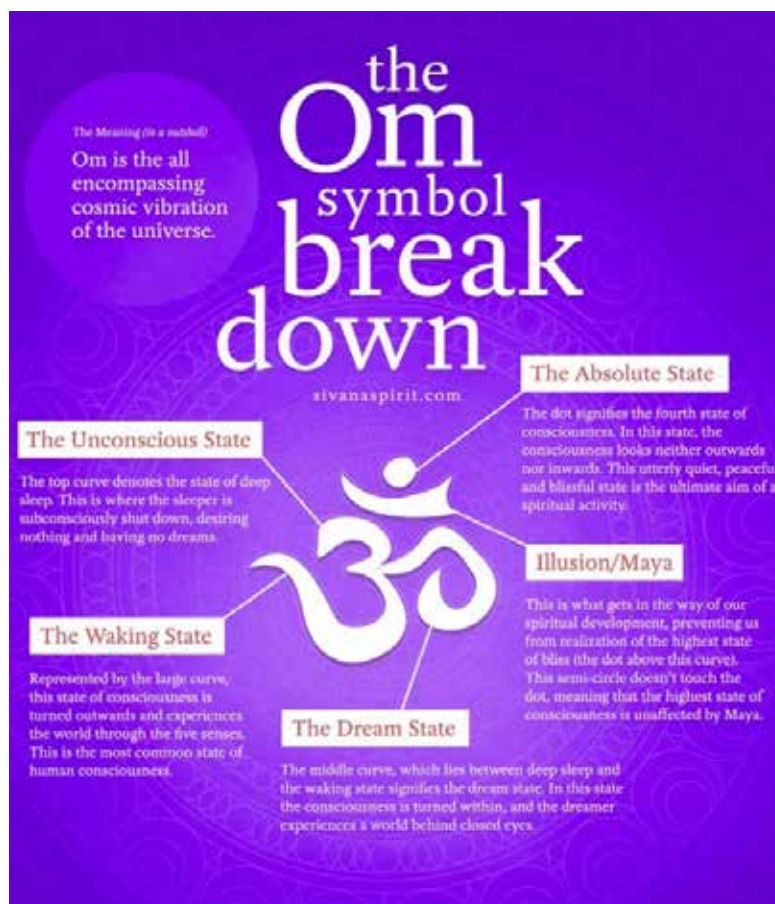
The puja rituals though important, are only the pointers in that direction. God accepts our puja if we offer it from the depth of our hearts, notwithstanding some inadvertent mistakes in doing some rituals. God does not need anything from us except our *love* and *devotion*. Lord Krishna has said in Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 9 Verse 26), *Whosoever offers me, with devotion, a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept, the pious offerings of the pure in heart.*

WHY DO WE CHANT OM?

According to Hindu mythology, before the world began, Brahma (the creator or absolute reality) was one, and He said, "I am one, but may I become many?" This thought created a vibration that settled into a sound. This sound was *OM*. From this vibration, everything in the universe sprang into existence.

When we chant OM, the vibration from that sound correlates to the original vibrations that were sounded in the universe when the world was created. The sound of OM is often called *Pranava*, or that which runs through the breath (*Prana*) and sustains life.

O is a diphthong and is usually spelled as *AU* in Sanskrit. A diphthong is the combination of two vowel sounds that make the sound of one vowel. Some refer it as *OM* and others as *AUM*, but the difference between them is merely in translation.



Om in Hinduism is a sacred syllable that is considered to be the greatest of all mantras. The syllable *om* is composed of the three sounds *a-u-m*, which represent several important *triads*: the three worlds of earth, atmosphere and heaven; thought, speech and action; the three *gunas* (qualities) of matter (goodness, passion and darkness); and the three sacred Vedic scriptures (Rigveda, Yajurveda and Samaveda). Thus, *om* mystically embodies the essence of the entire universe. It is uttered at the beginning and end of Hindu

prayers, chants and meditation and is also freely used in Buddhist and Jain rituals.

Om symbolically embodies the Divine energy or Shakti, and its three main characteristics: creation, preservation and liberation. Chanting Om regulates the blood flow to the different body parts. Thus, it helps in controlling blood pressure and symptoms of hypertension. When you disconnect from the outer world during chanting, your breathing, respiration and heart normalizes. Regular practice thus improves the working of your heart.

Aum actually consists of four syllables: *A, U, M* and the *silent syllable*.

The first syllable is *A*, and is pronounced as a prolonged *awe*. The sound starts at the back of your throat and you stretch it out. You will start feeling your solar plexus and chest vibrating.

The second syllable is *U*, pronounced as a prolonged *oo*, with the sound gradually rolling forward along your upper palate. You will feel the throat vibrate.

The third syllable is *M*, pronounced as a prolonged *mmm*, with your front teeth gently touching. You will now start to feel the top of you vibrate.

The last syllable is the deep silence of the infinite. As intelligence rises from the deep silence, you have to merge your chant from the *M* to the deep silence.

WHY DO WE SAY "SHANTI" THRICE?

Shanti is repeated thrice since it is chanted for peace in the body, mind and spirit. It is chanted thrice also to make the past, present and future peaceful. When Shanti is chanted the first time, it purifies the body and relieves it from the sufferings, diseases and discomforts. The body is thus refreshed.

It is believed that *trivaram satyam*, meaning, that which is repeated thrice comes true. For emphasizing a point,

we repeat a thing thrice. For instance, in the court of law also, one who takes the witness stand raises his hand and says, "*I shall speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth*". We chant Shanti thrice to emphasize our intense desire for peace. Shanti means peace, we chant three times, since, all obstacles, problems and sorrows originate from three sources. So, in order for peace alone to prevail, Shanti is chanted thrice.

It is chanted aloud the first time, addressing the unseen forces. It is chanted softer the second time, directed to our immediate surroundings and those around, and softest the last time as it is addressed to oneself.

Swami Vimalanda Radhika Krishnakumar of Central Chinmaya Mission Trust in UK puts very nicely: *Shanthi*, meaning *peace* is a natural state of being.

Disturbances are created either by others or by us. For example, peace already exists in a place until someone makes noise. Therefore, peace underlies all our agitations. When agitations end, peace is naturally experienced since it was already there. Where there is peace, there is happiness. Therefore, everyone without exception desires peace in his/her life. However, peace within or without seems very hard to attain because it is covered by our own agitations. A rare few manage to remain peaceful within even in the midst of external agitation and troubles. So, to invoke peace, we chant prayers. By chanting prayers, troubles end and peace is experienced internally, irrespective of the external disturbances. All such prayers end by chanting *Shanti* thrice.

It is chanted *aloud the first time*, addressing the unseen forces. It is chanted *softer the second time*, directed to our immediate surroundings and those around and *softest the last time* as it is addressed to oneself.

WHY DO WE BLOW THE CONCH?

Conch is also known as *Shankh* in Sanskrit. Conch is the sacred emblem for Lord Vishnu.

When the conch is blown, primordial sound of *Om* emanates. The vibrations it produces purify the air and is believed to destroy the disease-causing germs in the atmosphere. When the *Conch* is blown, energy is emitted from it, which reduces the strength of distressing frequencies. The other important benefit is that it helps to develop good lung capacity.

Shank comes from the two Sanskrit words *Shum* which means something good and *Kham* meaning water. Hence the meaning of Shankam is conch holding the sacred water. It is also said word *Shankara* has been derived from *Shankha-kara* which means conch-blower (*Shankha* means conch and *Kara* means blower).

The blowing of a conch shell enhances the positive psychological vibrations such as courage, determination, hope, optimism, willpower and bliss can be felt by all people assembled and also by the blower.

During puja, it is used as a trumpet to blow away negative energy and break free from barriers and evil spirits.





Waterloo Region's Christmas celebration ends the year with a positive note

Waterloo: Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region celebrated its annual Christmas celebration on the 14th of December at the Christ Lutheran Church Hall in Waterloo. A large number of members and their family attended the event.

Addressing the gathering, the President Mrs. Yoga Arumugam emphasized the role of the association as a

catalyst that unites the cultural, social and religious diversity among the Tamil community in the Waterloo region and City of Guelph. She further stated 2019 was a mile stone when the association celebrated its 30th anniversary at Hotel Hilton in Cambridge.

She invited everyone for Tamil Heritage Month, Thai Pongal celebrations on the 14th of January 2020 at Forest

Heights Community Center, Kitchener.

Mr. Dennis Loyola, the Secretary welcomed all new members to the association. She thanked the parents of the students of the Waterloo community for taking part in the musical programs. Concluding the message she wished the gathering a merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

TCA presented awards to the members of Tamil sports teams including Cricket, Volleyball and Ko-Ko. Gifts were given to all kids who attended the celebration. The event ended up with Magic Show performance by JP Magic of Kitchener, Musical Chairs, Games, dinner and the arrival of Santa Claus.





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Tamil Heritage Month & Thai Pongal festival





Saturday, January 18. 5:30pm
Forest Heights Community Center, 1700 Queen's Blvd, Kitchener.
Sweet Pongal food served on a banana leaf, Music, Dance.
Tickets: Members - \$5.00, Non-member - \$10. Email: mail@tamilculturewaterloo.org



Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham (TCASD) Celebrates Annual Academic Awards 2019

Tamil Cultural and Academic Society of Durham (TCASD) celebrated their Annual Academic Awards on December 07th 2019 at OPG, Pickering, Ontario. It was a full-house event with 50 award recipients, their parents, well-wishers of TCASD and its members. TCASD has been celebrating the Academic Awards for the past seven

years in Durham, motivating and encouraging the children to participate in Academic competitions. TCASD recognized the TYLP – Tamil Youth Leadership program participants who completed the whole session for the year of 2019

Parents and members are very appreciative about the TCASD Academic

Competitions and Awards as these activities keep their children active and motivate them to achieve in their academics and community involvement. Such events have contributed to building positive self-esteem and determination among the Tamil youth.

TCASD had young children conduct the show as the masters of ceremonies

which also acted as an opportunity for them to practice their public speaking and leadership abilities.

TCASD appreciates and thanks all its supporters, volunteers and well-wishers while wishing them Happy New Year 2020!

(Seen here are some pictures of the event)



Santhiyaragam Golden Super Singer 2019

Contributed by
Saba Kurunathan

When they announced my name: Saba Kurunathan as the title winner of the Santhiyaragam Golden super singer for 2019, I could not believe for a moment though it was an obvious choice of the audience.

When I was driving back home I was thinking how I got involved in participating in the Santhiyaragam music contest. Santhiyaragam is a talent show. Unlike the other talent shows, this was initiated to bring out the hidden singing talent of the seniors over 55 years old in the Tamil community.

It was a noble idea of Indrani Nagenthiram, CEO of Villa Karuna Home for seniors. Villa Karuna Senior home was established in 2003 by Indrani Nagenthiram in Toronto. I was told that Santhiyaragam had been conducted successfully since 2016. Every year the number of participants increases as well as the talent. When I went for the first audition, I noticed that at least three music professionals participated in the event. One was a retired music teacher; the other two were talented singers who had participated in many public performances. There were a few

who had participated in the same program in previous years.

The first audition for the 2019 event began in early March 2019. The Santhiyaragam team visited most of the Tamil Seniors' Associations in Toronto, Mississauga and Brampton in search of people with the hidden singing talent and selected those who could be trained to participate in the contest. I was told that there were about 40 contestants who had applied. Some were eliminated at the first Audition. Some left voluntarily for several reasons. If I can remember correctly 24 people participated in the first round where we were asked to sing one devotional cinema song. This was followed by four rounds of elimination processes based on the performance of songs under different categories. The judges selected four contestants for the grand finale and an additional one from the wild card selection. Fortunately, I was one of the top four contestants.

The judges were well known music professionals led by Mr. Anton Felix, Mr. Anantham Philip Antony, Mr. Babu Jayakanthan, Dr. Varagunan Mahadevan, Mrs. Usha Kulendran, Mrs. Vijiyaluxmy Seenivasagam and New York Raja. Krithiga Chan-



Santhiyaragam Golden Super Singer event 2019, picture shows from left to right CEO Indrani Nagenthiram with title winner Mr. Kurunathan Saba, 1st runner up Mr. Sivarajah and 2nd runner up Mr. Yogarajah

drasekhar, a well-known vocal trainer also helped the participants. The judges helped train the participants to perfect their talents. They spent several hours of their valuable time for which the participants should be extremely grateful. Their judgment process was exemplary.

Santhiyaragam had a dedicated team to communicate and coordinate the process.

They were Para Veerkathiyar (2019 title winner), Kiruba Ganesh, Inthu Pararajasingham, Vasa Nathan and

Janani Jayasuthan.

This program helped me to bring out my hidden singing talent and fulfill my dream of singing. When I was young, my mother always told me that success is the result of hard work and perseverance.

I wish to share my sincere appreciation to Indrani Nagenthiram, CEO of Villa Karuna Seniors home and the Board of Directors for their commitment and wish that they continue this program in the future.

Wishing all our patients, friends and families

*A Happy New Year 2020
and Happy Thai Pongal*



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3	16	Brookside	DF-1	A	1626	2 or 3	\$508,990
	17	Edenwood	DF2	A	1791	2 or 3	\$519,990
	18	Edenwood	DF2	A	1791	2 or 3	\$519,990
9	50	Brookside	DF1	A	1626	2 or 3	\$512,990
	51	Edenwood	DF2	A	1791	2 or 3	\$523,990
	52	Edenwood	DF2	A	1791	2 or 3	\$523,990
	54	Brookside	DF1	A	1626	2 or 3	\$512,990
	55	Edenwood	DF2	A	1791	2 or 3	\$523,990



Wishing Everyone a **2020**

HAPPY & PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR



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**Best wishes for a
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