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Prime Minister Trudeau wants to build a Canada that is stronger, fairer, and more equitable for everyone in 2021

By Siva Sivapragasam

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has sent out a call to all Canadians to build a Canada that is stronger, fairer, and more equitable for everyone.

In his New Year message, the Prime Minister has expressed concern that a global pandemic has threatened the health, economy, and the very way of life. He has also demanded that the country should act to address racism, discrimination, and injustices.

"This year has been challenging for many of us. We have experienced a global pandemic that has threatened our health, our economy, and our very way of life. We have seen acts of senseless violence that have devastat-

*"In 2021, we will continue our fight against COVID-19 with a renewed sense of hope.
"I also express my gratitude to those working on the front lines of the pandemic, who put the interests of their neighbours, their communities, and their country ahead of their own every day" – Prime Minister*

ing impacts on our communities. And, we have heard heartbreaking stories and calls for justice from racialized Canadians and Indigenous peoples, demanding that we act now to address racism, discrimination, and injustices in our country", stated the Prime Minister in his new year message.

The Prime Minister has expressed hope that "We will continue our fight against COVID – 19 with a renewed

sense of hope and ensure that all Canadians will have free access to vaccines as soon as possible. We will also keep doing what it takes, for as long as it takes, to support people and businesses through the crisis. Businesses, entrepreneurs, workers, and all Canadians have shown incredible resilience and resolve throughout the many challenges they have faced this year."



Prime Minister Trudeau has emphasized in his message that the Pandemic has shown us what we can accomplish and overcome when we all work together toward shared goals and values.

Joe Biden becomes US President on January 20th with Kamala Harris Vice President

By Siva Sivapragasam

After the official confirmation of his election victory by the Electoral College, Joe Biden is all set to become the 46th US President on January 20th along with Kamala Harris of Tamil origin as Vice-President.

The inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States will mark the commencement of the four-year term of Joe Biden as President and Kamala Harris as Vice President. The ceremony will be held at the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

The event will be the 59th presidential inauguration. Biden will take the oath of office as President on that day, and Harris will take the oath of office as Vice President. The festivities of the inauguration are taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic and will be limited to prevent the spread of the vi-

*"In America, politicians don't take power - the people grant it to them. The flame of democracy was lit in this nation a long time ago. And we now know that nothing, not even a pandemic - or an abuse of power - can extinguish that flame."
– Joe Biden*

rus that causes COVID-19.

Biden's victory was the culmination of four years of struggle for Democrats and others who have resisted the current President Donald Trump's regime. Biden's victory was celebrated by an emotional outpouring coast to coast that ended with a victory party in Biden's hometown of Wilmington, Del. The election took four days to be resolved after the former vice president was projected to win a series of battleground states and was clinched by the state where he was born, Pennsylvania.

Contd. on page 7...



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CANADA NEWS 

Ontario Opening Specialized Care Centre in Greater Toronto Area

New spaces being created to provide quality care for long-term care residents



December 28, 2020

Long-Term Care

TORONTO — The Ontario government is opening a new Specialized Care Centre to provide care for long-term care residents in the Greater Toronto Area who must be temporarily relocated due to the challenging situation in their long-term care home.

The new Specialized Care Centre will operate as a temporary extension of Toronto Grace Health Centre to offer surge capacity for long-term care homes across the Greater Toronto Area that are managing a COVID-19 outbreak or experiencing other challenges in the home. These could include crowding, shortage of staff, lack of supplies, or other outbreaks in the long-term care home, such as influenza.

“We are grateful to the Specialized Care Centre Steering Committee for its work to quickly establish these new surge capacity spaces for our long-term care residents,” said Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care. “By working closely with all of our partners, we are committed to finding innovative solutions to help protect our loved ones as we continue our fight against the second wave of the virus.”

When fully complete, the climate/HVAC-controlled Specialized Care Centre will provide up to 90 fully furnished spaces for residents, with access to therapy rooms. Initially, the Specialized Care Centre will open with 30 spaces. The length of stay will vary for each resident, depending upon

individual needs, and the situation in the resident’s long-term care home.

“Today’s announcement will support further prevention and containment efforts to protect our most vulnerable,” said Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. “This Specialized Care Centre being announced today will support health system capacity to ensure that our loved ones have access to the quality care they need.”

“The Salvation Army Toronto Grace Health Centre is pleased to set up the Specialized Care Centre to assist long-term care homes in Toronto and the GTA to manage the challenges of COVID-19 in partnership with the University Health Network,” said Jake Tran, President and CEO, Toronto Grace Health Centre. “The Grace’s physicians, nurses, PSWs, therapists and staff have much experience and expertise in the care of seniors and are at the ready, to provide care to long-term care home residents who may need to be transferred temporarily to the Specialized Care Centre. Our role in helping establish the Specialized Care Centre for long-term care residents comes from the Salvation Army’s experience and deep mission of service to Ontarians in times of need.”

Ontario has invested nearly \$540 million announced earlier this fall to ramp up surveillance, increase infection prevention and control personnel, increase PPE supplies, and build a strong health care workforce at long-term care homes across the province.

Via news.ontario.ca

Ontario Confirms First Cases of COVID-19 UK Variant in Ontario

To Help Stop the Spread Ontario Entered Province-wide Shut Down Beginning Today

December 26, 2020

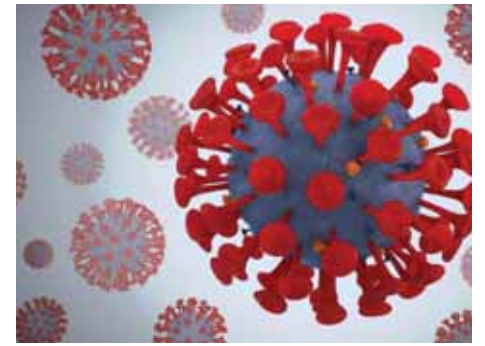
Health

TORONTO — Today, Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Ontario’s Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, announced the first two confirmed cases in Ontario of the COVID-19 variant first identified in the UK. This variant has now been detected in multiple countries beyond the UK, including Denmark, Belgium, Australia and the Netherlands. With inbound international travel, it is not unexpected to have identified the new variant in Ontario. Ontario is the first province to identify this variant thanks to the proactive work of the Public Health Ontario Laboratory.

The cases are a couple from Durham with no known travel history, exposure or high-risk contacts. Both individuals have been informed and are now in self-isolation as per public health protocols.

“This further reinforces the need for Ontarians to stay home as much as possible and continue to follow all public health advice, including the province-wide shut down measures beginning today,” said Dr. Yaffe. “Durham Region Health Department has conducted case and contact investigation and Ontario is working in collaboration with our federal counterparts at the Public Health Agency of Canada.”

Modelling and epidemiological studies suggest that the COVID-19 variant first identified in the UK can spread easier and faster, but there is no evidence that it is more likely



to cause severe illness. There is no evidence to suggest that the Health Canada-approved vaccines will be any less effective against the new variant.

Recognizing the potential increased risk that inbound international travelers may pose with this new variant, the province continues to call on the federal government to urgently partner with Ontario to implement testing at Toronto Pearson International Airport. Regardless of whether federal support is forthcoming, the Ontario government is prepared to act on its own to implement an airport testing program.

Effective December 26 at 12:01 a.m. Ontario has entered a province-wide shut down. These time-limited measures will help slow the transmission of COVID-19, limit mobility, preserve health system capacity, and save lives.

The Ministry of Health continues to be in constant contact with the Public Health Agency of Canada and other jurisdictions to monitor the developing situation and ensure coordinated, effective and shared efforts to protect and safeguard the public.

Via news.ontario.ca

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well-wishers a happy festive season:

January 1: New Year, 2021

January 14: Thai Pongal, Makara Sankranti, Magh



United Nation's New Year's Message Let's Make Peace Among Ourselves as urged by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in 2021

By Harrish Thirukumar

On December 28, 2020, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, delivered a New Year's Message for 2021. This message is particularly important in a context where global societies including ours here in Ontario and Canada have greatly suffered due to the pains inflicted by the COVID-19 or coronavirus pandemic. Since the disease became designated a global health pandemic in March 2020, we have all experienced significant changes in our daily lives as part of efforts to control this pandemic. This includes an array of public health guidelines and orders issued by various health-care systems and authorities. This includes physical distancing with people not part of your immediate household and staying home as much as possible. In light of this and other dilemmas that have occurred or continued on throughout 2020 including racial injustice, the UN Secretary General had this to say as a means of instilling a sense of hope and optimism for this upcoming new year:

"Dear Friends,

2020 has been a year of trials, tragedies, and tears. COVID-19 upended our lives and plunged the world into suffering and grief. So many loved ones have been lost and the pandemic rages on, creating new waves of sickness and death.

Poverty, inequality, and hunger are rising. Jobs are disappearing and debts are mounting. Children are struggling. Violence in the home is increasing, and insecurity is everywhere.

But a New Year lies ahead. And with it, we see rays of hope: People extending a helping hand to neighbors and strangers; Frontline workers giv-

ing their all; Scientists developing vaccines in record time; Countries making new commitments to prevent climate catastrophe. If we work together in unity and solidarity, these rays of hope can reach around the world.

That's the lesson of this most difficult year.

Both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic are crises that can only be addressed by everyone together, as part of a transition to an inclusive and sustainable future. The central ambition of the United Nations for 2021 is to build a global coalition for carbon neutrality-net zero emissions-by 2050.

Every government, city, business, and individual can play a part in achieving this vision. Together, let's make peace among ourselves and with nature, tackle the climate crisis, stop the spread of COVID-19, and make 2021 a year of healing. Healing from the impact of a deadly virus. Healing broken economies and societies. Healing divisions. And starting to heal the planet.

That must be our New Year's Resolution for 2021. I wish you all a happy and peaceful New Year, from the United Nations."

With 2021 now upon us, let's come together to make a collective voice for ourselves here in Ontario and make peace among ourselves and take the time to heal from the numerous tragedies or difficulties that we may have each experienced with a truly turbulent year that has been 2020. Whether it is as simple as helping our neighbours during a time of a pandemic and isolation or being a worker on the frontlines of our economy, let us exercise practical ways we can contribute to peace in 2021.

Canada Historic Milestones

January 1, 1947

Under Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, the Canadian Citizenship Act becomes law. Now all residents can have Canadian citizenship, whether they were born in Canada or elsewhere.



We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us

- Edward Morgan Forster - (1 January 1879 - 7 June 1970) English writer



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Ontario Thanks Essential Workers for Going Above and Beyond During COVID-19

December 24, 2020

Office of the Premier

TORONTO — Today, Premier Doug Ford and Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, issued the following statement recognizing the tremendous efforts and sacrifices made by all essential workers during the COVID-19 outbreak in Ontario:

“The people of Ontario have faced many extraordinary challenges since COVID-19 swept across the province this past March. We want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your courage, compassion and generosity. On behalf of everyone in the province and the Ontario government we would like to thank the heroes who go to work each day to keep our essential services and businesses available during the COVID-19 outbreak.

From the doctors, nurses, personal support workers, home care workers and pharmacists who are caring and providing for our sick; to the police, firefighters and paramedics who are keeping us safe; to the farmers, food processors, truck drivers and grocery store staff who are keeping food on our tables — thank you!

To those who are keeping our lights on, keeping our water clean and safe, and to those keeping our buses and trains operating — thank you!

From the early days of the pandemic, Ontario’s essential workers have been at the forefront of our response, working day and night and spending countless hours away from their families and loved ones to keep us safe, while putting themselves at risk. You make us proud.

As we continue to fight the second wave, we need to remain vigilant. Hospitalizations have increased by 74 per cent over the past four weeks, with an 80 per cent increase in ICU admissions, putting the scheduling of routine and non-urgent surgeries at risk. The situation in our hospitals is serious and a reflection of the growing spread of COVID-19 in our communities. We need to halt the virus in its tracks to protect our loved ones, our vulnerable, our communities, and the essential workers whose dedication and sacrifice has never waived.

We know that people are making tremendous sacrifices, especially during this holiday season, but there is a light at the end of this very long tunnel. We are hopeful. This week



we achieved another major milestone in our three-phase vaccine implementation plan by rolling out 90,000 Pfizer-BioNTech doses to 19 hospital sites across the province. In addition, Health Canada just approved the new Moderna vaccine for use in Canada and we expect to receive 53,000 doses by the end of the month.

We are making steady progress, but there is still a long way to go. Until the vaccines are widely available, please remember we all must continue to follow public health advice and measures in order to protect our

health system and our heroic essential workers.

Although the holidays are different this year, please take some quality time to celebrate safely with those you live with. And of course, reach out and celebrate virtually with everyone else. Please stay home as much as possible and together we will eradicate this virus. Please know that your actions matter and will help to keep our province safe and healthy.

Merry Christmas, and happy holidays.”

Via news.ontario.ca

Ontario Releases Ethical Framework for COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Framework will guide vaccine prioritization in future phases of the province’s implementation plan

December 30, 2020

Health

TORONTO — The Ontario government has released an Ethical Framework for COVID-19 vaccine distribution which was developed in partnership with the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force to guide further vaccine prioritization and distribution across the province. The province continues to vaccinate vulnerable populations and those who care for them through Phase One of its three-phase implementation plan as additional vaccines become available.

Details were provided today by COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force members Dr. Dirk Huyer, Ontario’s Chief Coroner and Coordinator, Provincial Outbreak Response, and Dr. Maxwell Smith, bioethicist and assistant professor at Western University.

“This ethical framework is a clear demonstration of our commitment to Ontarians to be transparent,” said General Rick Hillier (retired), Chair of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force. “We know that people are eager to get vaccinated and this framework helps ensure that we do it in an ethical, effective and compassionate way.”

Phase One of Ontario’s three-phase vaccine implementation plan began on December 15, 2020 at two hospital sites, and increased to 17 additional

sites the following week, with the delivery of 90,000 Pfizer-BioNTech doses. With Health Canada’s recent approval of Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccine, the province can expect about 50,000 additional doses before the end of the month.

“One of the most important aims of the COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force since its beginning has been to ensure that the most promising vaccines are distributed to Ontarians safely, fairly and as quickly as possible,” said Dr. Huyer. “Our Ethical Framework will support the prioritization of vaccines in a way that enhances confidence and trust in Ontario’s COVID-19 immunization program.”

The Ethical Framework includes the following principles to guide COVID-19 vaccine distribution:

Minimize harms and maximize benefits, to reduce overall illness and death related to COVID-19, protect those at greatest risk of serious illness and death due to biological, social, geographical and occupational factors, protect critical infrastructure, and promote social and economic well-being;

Equity in the distribution of vaccines without bias or discrimination, to reduce disparities in illness and death related to COVID-19, and ensuring benefits for groups experiencing greater burdens from the COVID-19 pandemic;

Fairness, to ensure that every



individual within equally prioritized groups has the same opportunity to be vaccinated, and to ensure inclusive, consistent processes that are tailored to unique needs of Ontario’s many and varied communities when making decisions about vaccine prioritization;

Transparency, to ensure the principles and rationale, decision-making processes and plans for COVID-19 prioritization are clear, understandable and communicated to the public;

Legitimacy, making decisions based on the best available scientific evidence, shared values and input from affected parties including those historically underrepresented, to ensure decisions have the intended impact, and to include participation of affected parties in the creation and review of decisions and decision-making processes; and

Public trust, to ensure decisions

and decision-making processes are informed by these principles to advance confidence and trust in Ontario’s COVID-19 immunization program.

“The COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force developed this framework to ensure that its feedback and recommendations are consistently guided by fundamentally important ethical values like equity, fairness and transparency,” said Dr. Smith. “We are continuing to ensure that diverse perspectives are captured in our feedback and recommendations, so that all Ontarians who want to get vaccinated against this deadly virus are accounted for. Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases and are our best defense to help us get back to our normal lives.”

While the Health Canada approval and rollout of two vaccines represent progress in the fight against COVID-19, Ontarians are reminded that staying home and following public health guidelines is currently the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. This includes limiting trips outside the home except for essential purposes, practicing physical distancing of at least two meters when going out, wearing a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge or when it is mandatory to do so, and washing your hands frequently and thoroughly.

Via news.ontario.ca



Ontario Announces Province-wide Shutdown to Stop Spread of COVID-19 and Save Lives

Government Providing Grants of up to \$20,000 to Small Businesses Impacted by New Public Health Measures

December 21, 2020

Office of the Premier

TORONTO — As COVID-19 cases continue to rise at an alarming rate, the Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts, is imposing a Province-wide Shutdown. Additional restrictions will be put into place and reinforce that Ontarians should stay at home as much as possible to minimize transmission of the virus and prevent hospitals from becoming overwhelmed. The Province-wide Shutdown will go into effect as of Saturday, December 26, 2020, at 12:01 a.m.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, and Dr. Naveed Mohammad, President and CEO, William Osler Health System.

“The number of daily cases continue to rise putting our hospitals and long-term care homes at risk,” said Premier Ford. “We need to stop the spread of this deadly virus. That’s why, on the advice of Dr. Williams and other health experts, we are taking the difficult but necessary decision to shut down the province and ask people to stay home. Nothing is more important right now than the health and safety of all Ontarians.”

In response to these exceptional circumstances, the Province-wide Shutdown would put in place time-limited public health and workplace safety measures similar to those in other jurisdictions. It would help stop the trend of high COVID-19 transmission in communities, preserve health system capacity, safeguard vulnerable populations and those who care for them, and save lives. Measures include, but are not limited to:

Restricting indoor organized public events and social gatherings, except with members of the same household (the people you live with). Individuals who live alone may consider having exclusive close contact with one other household.

Prohibiting in-person shopping in most retail settings - curbside pickup and delivery can continue. Discount and big box retailers selling groceries will be limited to 25 per cent capacity for in-store shopping. Supermarkets, grocery stores and similar stores that primarily sell food, as well as pharmacies, will continue to operate at 50 per cent capacity for in-store shopping.

Restricting indoor access to shopping malls - patrons may only go to a designated indoor pickup area (by appointment only), essential retail stores that are permitted to be open (e.g. pharmacy, grocery store), or, subject to physical distancing and face covering requirements, to the food court for takeout purchases. Shopping malls may also establish outdoor designated pickup areas.

Prohibiting indoor and outdoor dining. Restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments will be permitted to operate by take out, drive-through, and delivery only.

On the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, all Ontarians are advised to stay home as much as possible with

trips outside the home limited to necessities such as food, medication, medical appointments, or supporting vulnerable community members. Employers in all industries should make every effort to allow employees to work from home.

The current COVID-19 Response Framework will be paused when the Province-wide Shutdown comes into effect. The impacts of these time-limited measures will be evaluated throughout the 14 days in Northern Ontario and 28 days in Southern Ontario to determine if it is safe to lift any restrictions or if they need to be extended. The Chief Medical Officer of Health will assess and apply lessons learned thus far to the COVID-19 Response Framework to ensure appropriate and effective measures are in place to protect the health of Ontarians and enable economic recovery after the Province-wide Shutdown ends. This will include an assessment of how a revised approach for the safe reopening of retail may be operationalized, according to the latest available evidence.

“This was not an easy decision before the holidays, but we have reached a tipping point,” said Minister Elliott. “We continue to see sharp increases in hospitalizations and occupancy in intensive care units is reaching concerning levels. Urgent action must be taken to prevent our health care system from becoming overwhelmed. By implementing a Province-wide Shutdown, we can work to stop the virus in its tracks, safeguard hospital capacity, and save lives.”

The government is also providing \$12.5 million to implement a High Priority Communities Strategy to contain the virus in high-risk communities. The strategy will take a tailored, community-based approach to fund community agencies in 15 priority communities in the York, Peel, Durham, Ottawa, and Toronto regions. The funding will also allow for the hiring of community ambassadors to make people aware of available services and assistance, for coordination of increased testing opportunities and for the arrangement of wraparound supports for those who are COVID-positive. Additional funding of \$42 million will also be available to establish isolation centers.

The province will work with our local municipal partners to establish new isolation centres to help those who may need to isolate following testing.

“We continue to see the number of cases in the province grow and the trends in public health indicators worsen. Additional measures are needed province-wide in order to interrupt this concerning growth,” said Dr. Williams. “We must work together to enable everyone to follow these new and time-limited restrictions and protect our health system and our communities.”

The government is working to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in workplaces by supporting essential businesses in doing whatever is necessary to keep workers safe. The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development is leading a multi-ministry COVID-19 Safety Team. The team will partner with local authorities to carry out additional enforcement blitzes in sectors where they



are needed most.

New School Protocols

While transmission in schools remains low, all publicly funded and private elementary and secondary schools are to move to teacher-led remote learning when students return from the winter break on January 4, 2021. This action is being taken in support of the Government’s broader efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Schools located in the following Public Health Unit regions can resume in-person instruction on January 11, 2021 for both elementary and secondary students:

The District of Algoma Health Unit
North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit

Northwestern Health Unit
Porcupine Health Unit
Sudbury and District Health Unit
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
Timiskaming Health Unit

For schools in all other Public Health Unit regions, elementary school students are planned to be able to return to in-person learning on January 11, 2021, and secondary school students will continue learning remotely until January 25, 2021, at which point they may resume in-person learning. During this period, child care centers, authorized recreational and skill building programs and home-based child care services will remain open. From January 4-8, 2021, when elementary students move to remote learning, before and after school programs will be closed and emergency child care for health care and frontline workers will be provided. As part of the government’s efforts to protect the most vulnerable, boards will be required to make provisions for continued in-person support for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning for whom remote learning is challenging.

“While our schools are not a source of rising community transmission, we can play an important part of the solution to save lives from COVID-19,” said Minister Lecce. “During this period, students will pivot to teacher-led online learning, with child care provided for our frontline workers. We are taking proactive and preventative action to protect schools following the holiday break to ensure kids can continue in-class learning — something we believe is so important — for the remainder of the year.”

The New Ontario Small Business Support Grant

The government recognizes that small businesses impacted by these necessary public health measures will require additional support so they can continue serving their communities and employing people in Ontario once the COVID-19

pandemic is over. That is why the government is announcing the new Ontario Small Business Support Grant, which will provide a minimum of \$10,000 and up to \$20,000 to eligible small business owners to help navigate this challenging period.

“Ontario’s business owners have shown remarkable resolve and ingenuity throughout the pandemic. They know better than anyone what they need to come through this very difficult time, so they can continue to serve and employ people in their communities,” said Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance. “The new Ontario Small Business Support Grant will provide significant financial support to eligible small business owners in addition to the other supports made available to our small business community.”

Small businesses required to close or restrict services under the Province-wide Shutdown will be able to apply for this one-time grant. Each small business will be able to use the support in whatever way makes the most sense for their individual business.

For example, some businesses will need support paying employee wages or rent, while others will need support maintaining their inventory.

Eligible small businesses include those that:

Are required to close or significantly restrict services subject to the Province-wide Shutdown effective 12:01 a.m. on December 26, 2020;

Have less than 100 employees at the enterprise level; and

Have experienced a minimum of 20 per cent revenue decline in April 2020 compared to April 2019.

Starting at \$10,000 for all eligible businesses, the grant will provide businesses with dollar for dollar funding to a maximum of \$20,000 to help cover decreased revenue expected as a result of the Province-wide shut down. The business must demonstrate they experienced a revenue decline of at least 20 per cent when comparing monthly revenue in April 2019 and April 2020. This time period was selected because it reflects the impact of the public health measures in spring 2020, and as such provides a representation of the possible impact of these latest measures on small businesses.

Essential businesses that are allowed to remain open will not be eligible for this grant. More information about the Ontario Small Business Support Grant is available here. Further details, including how to apply, will be announced in January 2021.

Businesses that are impacted by the Province-wide Shut down will also be eligible for the property tax and energy cost rebates. In November, the government launched a program to provide rebates to offset fixed costs such as property tax and energy bills for businesses that are required to shut down or significantly restrict services due to provincial public health measures. These rebates will continue to be available for businesses impacted by the Province-wide Shut down and earlier restrictions. Business can apply for the rebates here.

Via news.ontario.ca

The Quit to Win! Challenge: To quit smoking and enjoy the benefits

Registration at quitchallenge.ca until February 8, 2021

MONTREAL, Jan. 04, 2021 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- The new year marks the return of the Challenge with its positive and motivating formula to support Quebec smokers who want to quit. By signing up, participants commit to not smoking for 6 weeks, from February 8 to March 21, 2021, a realistic first goal that comes with many benefits. Registration is open at quitchallenge.ca.

Quitting is winning!

In addition to the prevention of many health problems such as certain cancers and heart and lung diseases, quitting smoking is also associated with a host of other benefits. The new advertising concept uses humour to highlight some of the pros of butting out, such as no longer freezing outside, not seeing your money go up in smoke, and not running out of breath going up the stairs. Things ex-smokers won't miss, no matter their age!

"In Quebec, smokers still make up 17% with this proportion reaching 21% among ages 18-34, so the fight against smoking remains without a doubt one of our priorities. Because of the high prevalence rates of smoking among young adults, this age group represents a priority target of the 2020-2025 Tobacco-Free Quebec Strategy. But the good news is that the Challenge relies on a proven approach to help Quebecers break free of this addiction that jeopardizes their health and well-being," shares Mr. Christian Dubé, Minister of Health and Social Services.



Support for better chances of success

Quitting smoking is difficult and often takes several attempts. In 2020, 60% of participants surveyed reported that they had already tried quitting 3 times or more. "The idea is to keep trying and learn from past experiences. And to increase the chances of success, it's important to not hesitate to ask for help, whether to prepare to quit or get support during the initiative. Developing a personalized game plan, consulting your doctor or pharmacist, and taking advantage of the support provided by the Quit to Win! Challenge are examples of winning strate-

gies to succeed," states Dr. Christiane Laberge, the campaign's spokesperson.

By signing up, participants have access to free tools and resources before, during and after the Challenge, such as useful tips and a personal profile at quitchallenge.ca, an inspiring Facebook community, encouragement emails, and a link to the I QUIT NOW helpline at 1-866-527-7383 and other national services.

To get motivated, future ex-smokers can think not only of all the benefits that come with quitting but also of the chance to win one of the many prizes offered, including a luxury stay at Station touristique Duchesnay (a \$1,500

value), a \$250 gift card, courtesy of Jean Coutu, and \$1,000 in cash (prize reserved for ages 18-24).

Register at quitchallenge.ca before February 8, 2021.

About the Quit to Win! Challenge

The Quit to Win! Challenge is a province-wide campaign that provides free support to smokers who want to quit through a collective challenge. Created in 2000 by Capsana, the Challenge is carried out in partnership with several public and private organizations, including the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Quebec's Directions régionales de santé publique, the Canadian Cancer Society, and the Jean Coutu Group. To find out more, visit quitchallenge.ca.

About Capsana

Capsana is a social enterprise owned by the ÉPIC Foundation, which is associated with the Montreal Heart Institute, and the Fondation PSI. Its mission is to help individuals take an active role in their health. To find out more, visit capsana.ca.

Source:

quitchallenge.ca | facebook.com/defitabac
capsana.ca | @equipeCapsana

Joe Biden becomes US President on Jan 20th with Kamala Harris Vice President

Contd. from page 1...

Kamala Harris will be the first South Asian American of Tamil descent and first female Vice President in history. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered "heartiest congratulations" to Harris, whose mother immigrated to the United States from India, for inspiring "immense pride" for Indian Americans. It is also a notable coincidence that her Domestic Policy Advisor Rohini Kosoglu is also a South Asian of Tamil origin from Sri Lanka.

Biden and Harris have a heavy burden to unite a divided nation of the recent past. The new President Joe Biden is already ready for that when he stated recently "Unite and Heal. I have long talked about the battle for the soul of America. We must restore the soul of America."

VIJAY THANIGASALAM

MPP for Scarborough-Rouge Park



January 14th, 2020

Greetings from MPP Vijay Thanigasalam

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I would like to extend my Thai Pongal wishes to you and your loved ones. I wish you a year of happiness, luck and great prosperity.

Though we may not be able to gather in person during this festive time, I hope you get to enjoy the day with sweets and Pongal while welcoming peace and prosperity in your home.

Happy Thai Pongal and Tamil New Year!

Sincerely,

Vijay Thanigasalam
Member of Provincial Parliament
Scarborough - Rouge Park





WORLD NEWS

Thousands Flock to India's Taj Mahal Despite Coronavirus Fears



By Reuters

December 30, 2020 10:40 AM

AGRA, INDIA - India has raised the number of visitors it will allow into the Taj Mahal monument to 15,000 per day despite warnings from health officials that overcrowding at tourist sites could lead to a rise in coronavirus cases.

The 17th-century mausoleum, one of India's most popular tourist destinations, was shut in March after the government imposed a lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

When it reopened in September, visitors were initially only allowed back under strict restrictions but local officials said numbers had swelled in recent weeks, pushing them to increase the cap on tourists from 10,000 per day.

"The limit has been increased to 15,000 tickets per day so that every tourist can get the ticket and admire the monument," government archaeologist Vasant Kumar Swarnkar said.

On Wednesday, thousands of tour-

ists, many without masks, flocked to the white marble monument, crowding around a ticket window. Families also strolled through the gardens surrounding the Taj Mahal.

Federal health officials warned on Tuesday that over-crowding at tourist spots could lead to another spike in coronavirus cases, with concern over the new, more infectious strain from Britain that has been detected in India.

India has recorded the world's second-highest number of coronavirus cases after the United States and nearly 148,500 people have died. But daily cases have hit a six-month low after a peak of around 98,000 in September.

For tourists like Pawan Gaur, who travelled to Agra from the western state of Rajasthan, visiting the Taj Mahal was a way of relaxing after what he said was a difficult year.

"People were bored of staying home during the pandemic," he said.

Via voanews.com

Statement on Decision of Millennium Challenge Corporation Board

COLOMBO, December 17, 2020: On December 15, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) board decided to discontinue the proposed Rs. 89 billion MCC development assistance grant to Sri Lanka due to lack of partner country engagement.

The Rs. 89 billion approved for Sri Lanka will be made available to other eligible partner countries in need of grant funding to pursue their economic development priorities, reduce poverty, and grow their economies.

Country ownership, transparency, and accountability for grant results

are fundamental to MCC's development model. MCC has successfully partnered with nearly 30 countries worldwide on 38 grant agreements, totaling nearly \$13.5 billion. These grants have lifted millions of people from poverty by catalyzing local and domestic investment.

The United States remains a friend and partner to Sri Lanka and will continue to assist Sri Lanka in responding to COVID and building its economy.

Via lk.usembassy.gov

India Conducts Trial Run of Coronavirus Vaccination Drive



By Anjana Pasricha

December 29, 2020 09:28 AM

NEW DELHI - India has conducted a two-day trial run for a mass coronavirus vaccination drive expected to begin in January. As the world's second worst-hit country witnesses a huge decline in daily new infections, there are hopes that immunizations will protect it from a second wave.

In the drive that took place in the states of Punjab, Assam, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, in four corners of the vast country, authorities tested everything from the cold chain infrastructure and delivery systems to storage platforms on Monday and Tuesday.

Vaccination booths connected to cold chain points were set up in hospitals and health centers in the four states. Vaccinators were instructed on how to store and administer the shots while health workers acted as dummy beneficiaries during what was dubbed a "mock run."

India's immunization drive is expected to begin shortly after it grants authorization for a vaccine. The drug regulator is considering three vaccines - AstraZeneca's, Pfizer/BioNTech's and one developed by a domestic company, Bharat Biotech, for emergency approval.

The AstraZeneca vaccine is expected to get the green light, according to Adar Poonawalla, chief executive of the Serum Institute of India. The company began manufacturing the vaccine in India months ago in expectation that it will be successful in preventing COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

"The emergency use authorization by the U.K. drug regulator for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine against COVID-19 is expected by December end or first week of January. In India too, we are hoping for regulatory approval for the vaccine in a few days," Poonawalla told reporters Monday.

The expectation of an early rollout is bringing a glimmer of hope in a country where an inadequate health system has struggled to cope with the pandemic.

"We can see the nightmare dissipating. Any reliable vaccine is good enough; they will help life limp back to normalcy," says prominent virologist T. Jacob John. "It is especially important for senior citizens, who are most at risk of suffering from severe complications if they get COVID-19."

Poonawalla has said most of the supply of the 50 million doses that his company has stockpiled in recent months will be distributed within the country. The company, which is the world's largest vaccine producer, says it expects to ramp up manufacturing to 100 million doses a month by March.

India has set a target of vaccinating 300 million people over the next eight months, targeting front-line health care workers and senior citizens.

Health authorities have said they will focus on vaccinating a "critical mass" of people to break the chain of transmission of COVID-19 that has infected more than 10.2 million people in the country and claimed 148,000 lives. On Tuesday, the country reported nearly 16,500 new infections -- the lowest tally in more than six months.

"India saw one gigantic wave unlike other countries that have witnessed second and third waves," says virologist John. "The pandemic here is like a mountain; it was a slow, six-month climb to the peak that came in September. Now we are witnessing a slow decline to the valley which we will reach in March," says John. "Hopefully, we will not see another wave."

A government-appointed committee of experts had said in October that the pandemic will have run its course by February.

Via voanews.com

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As COVID-19 Numbers Drop, Indian Capital Savors a Sense of Normalcy

By Anjana Pasricha

December 21, 2020 11:16 AM

NEW DELHI - At a recently opened café in New Delhi's biggest park, older visitors pick up a coffee and walk to an isolated spot, while younger ones dine on site, optimistic that the outdoor location makes it safe amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's been a long time and me and my wife decided that it's time to venture out once in a while," said Ranjan Khanna, 62, who owns an advertising company in the Indian capital, as he sips his coffee. "Nice sunny day, and it's been a very nice experience."

India, which recently recorded more than 10 million cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, has the second-highest number of cases in the world, behind only the U.S. Yet despite the somber milestone, the country has seen a dramatic dip in daily new infections, which are down to less than one-third of their peak in September, when the daily count topped 95,000.

The decrease in cases has brought a measure of confidence in mega cities like New Delhi, which have been ravaged by the coronavirus. Customers are back in markets, there are long lines outside metro stations and traffic is humming on the streets, giving hope to a recession-hit economy whose main driver is domestic consumers.

"When I was not stepping out at all, I was more scared," says Yahvi Dug-

gal, a college student who is dining at the café with a friend. "But now since I am going to work, and meeting friends and family, it is getting better."

That is good news for the café, which opened inside the sprawling park in November, when the Indian capital was witnessing a third wave of infections. While the hospitality industry has taken a huge hit, the café's outdoor location is helping to attract customers.

"The response was something not expected. We were out of stock on the very first evening itself before the closing hours," says Uday Malhotra, head of operations at Fabcafe. "That gave us lot of confidence seeing that people are venturing out in the midst of the pandemic."

Even though most businesses are still waiting for an increase in customers, they are hoping the worst is over in a country where a stringent lockdown earlier in the year decimated the economy — it is expected to shrink by about 9% this year.

At a sporting goods store in one of Delhi's most popular markets, less than a dozen customers walk in instead of the 50 it used to see before the pandemic, but it is an improvement from three months ago.

"The good thing is people are still playing carrom. People are still playing badminton. Gymming surged to an extent which we had not imagined, people were buying 100 kgs of dumbbells and setting up their gyms,"



A cafe inside Delhi's biggest park, Sunder Nursery, attracts customers as falling infections encourage people to venture out. (Anjana Pasricha/VOA)

says Bhavana Gupta, co-owner of the Gupta Sports House. "But since the grounds are not open, so equipment for football, cricket all these team sports took a hit."

News that a vaccine may be rolled out early next year is also ushering in hope.

"I personally feel may be in January at any stage or any week, we can be in a position to give the first COVID vaccine shot to the people of India," Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said Sunday.

In the city of 20 million, some residents are optimistic that the pandemic may be waning.

"When you hear of vaccine coming and numbers dipping, you think it is

going to happen, maybe in six months or so," says Sonam Ashok Kumar, a Delhi resident.

But with the city once again on the move, there are fresh warnings from virologists to maintain "COVID behavior," such as wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, especially amid growing concerns over a new strain of the coronavirus reported to have spread rapidly in Britain.

While the pandemic continues to cast a shadow, people are clinging to a measure of hope.

"The scare is very much there, but life has to go on," says Khanna, as he takes a walk in the park on a crisp winter morning.

Via voanews.com

Sri Lankan Central Bank projects 3.9% economic contraction due to impact of COVID

Colombo, Jan 4: The Central Bank of Sri Lanka on Monday projected an economic contraction of 3.9 per cent for the financial year 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Central Bank Governor W D Lakshman presented the bank's roadmap for economic recovery in 2021 in a virtual meeting with journalists on Monday.

"With observed developments in the fourth quarter of 2020, we expect the economy to record an annual contraction of around 3.9 per cent. The Central Bank is of the view that continued support through monetary and fiscal interventions is essential to provide adequate impetus to the economy amidst the challenging domestic and global macroeconomic conditions," said Lakshman.

"Therefore, the Central Bank will continue the prevailing accommodative monetary policy stance in 2021 to ensure the envisaged recovery of economic activity," he said.

Sri Lanka, which is heavily dependent on its tourism sector, recorded a huge number of job losses and business closures in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak. The virus has



so far claimed 213 lives, along with 44,774 confirmed infections in the island nation.

The Central Bank has ensured liquidity in the market with a number of accommodative monetary measures, leading to the country recording growth of 1.5 per cent in the third quarter of 2020.

The second quarter had seen a sharp contraction, a period which coincided with a protracted lockdown from mid-March.



The IMF and the World Bank had forecasted over 4 per cent contraction of Sri Lanka's economy in 2020.

"Growth-conducive policy measures introduced in 2020, we believe, would take a while to be effectively transmitted to the real economy. To catch up with the lost momentum and to sustainably realign itself with the envisaged high growth path, the economy would need some time," Lakshman said.

"The Central Bank will continue to

remain vigilant but is confident that inflation will remain within the targeted range of 4 to 6 per cent over the medium-term", the governor said.

The Central Bank has imposed strict import restrictions to maintain its currency reserves. This, analysts say, has eased pressure on the Sri Lankan Rupee against the US dollar.

Experts expect currency swap with India and a syndicated loan from China to support the business sector and carry out welfare schemes. - PTI



Recession, Confrontation with China Challenge India

By Anjana Pasricha

December 29, 2020 08:31 AM

NEW DELHI - India this year confronted its most serious economic and security challenges in decades as the COVID-19 pandemic plunged the country into a recession and a military standoff with China along their unresolved Himalayan borders derailed relations with its powerful neighbor.

One of the world's strictest lockdowns imposed in March when it had just a few hundred cases did not stop the virus from wreaking havoc when the country began opening up. By the end of the year it was the second-worst hit nation, counting nearly 10 million cases.

But as millions lost jobs and hundreds of small businesses shut down, analysts warned that the economic scars inflicted by the pandemic ran deeper than the health crisis.

The first signals of widespread distress came in April, when India witnessed an unprecedented exodus of migrant labor stranded without jobs in cities, many walking hundreds of kilometers as all transport was abruptly shut down.

"Nowhere else in the world you saw millions and millions of people trudging to their villages on empty stomachs and without money," said economist Arun Kumar in New Delhi. "The tragedy was that the unorganized sector was the hardest hit by the lockdown because many of these people have very little capital to survive a long shutdown."

India has been the worst hit among major economies because nearly 90% of its workforce is sustained by the country's vast informal sector. The economy is forecast to shrink by some 9% this year, its worst recession in four decades.

The Center for Monitoring Indian Economy estimated that some 120 million jobs were lost from April to June. While many came back as the government began easing restrictions to kickstart the economy, millions were still struggling to find work or restore livelihoods at the end of the year.

Among those fighting for survival were tens of thousands of street vendors who saw their business decimated by the pandemic.

Ranga Shalivan restarted his two small roadside stalls selling a popular Indian savory and sweet dumpling in July in the southern city of Hyderabad. For months he saw few customers, but he has seen some revival in recent weeks.

"It's slightly better now, but I am still making only about half the money that I used to. It has been very hard," he said.

The government has announced two stimulus packages, but Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told industry leaders that no amount of government intervention would be enough to deal with the crisis triggered by the pandemic.

But by the end of the year declining numbers of new COVID-19 infections and hopes of rolling out a vaccine within weeks offered hope that the worst may be over as India gets a grip on the health emergency.

"There are signs of revival, but it must be sustained," said Sitharaman.

Economist Kumar, however, warned that significant revival will be a long haul for the world's second most populous country.

"Employment is down, investment is down, consumer confidence is down and government resources are meager. Even in 2021 we will not recover back to the position in 2019."

As the government grappled with



the pandemic, India stared at another crisis on its borders with China in the northern state of Ladakh, where it said in May that Chinese troops had intruded into its side of the unmarked border.

In June, a bloody clash killed 20 Indian soldiers and led to a standoff that shows no signs of a resolution despite multiple rounds of negotiations.

Thousands of troops from both countries are now posted on icy Himalayan ridges in subzero temperatures. It is the biggest military deployment by the two rivals in decades.

"The relationship, very frankly, this year has been very significantly damaged," Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said, speaking at a virtual conference with Australia's Lowy Institute earlier this month.

"We are today probably at the most difficult phase of our relationship with China, certainly in the last 30 to 40 years, you could argue even more."

Analysts do not expect any early end to the crisis as both countries spar over their differing perceptions of the border.

"There is a belated recognition in India that China, not Pakistan, is our

only and biggest threat," said Bharat Karnad, a strategic affairs analyst at New Delhi's Center for Policy Research. He warned the situation could worsen.

"I think there are going to be more sustained hostilities on the China border next year in spring when the snows melt," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also faced some of his biggest domestic challenges since taking power six years ago. Following widespread protests in the aftermath of a new citizenship law that critics say discriminates against Muslims, the Indian capital was wracked by its worst communal riots in decades in February, killing more than 50 people. In December, tens of thousands of farmers angered by agriculture reforms that liberalize rules for sale of farm produce camped on the outskirts of New Delhi demanding the laws be scrapped over worries that their incomes will be hurt.

Analysts say while the pandemic tested nations worldwide, the challenges facing India could make the road to recovery longer and tougher.

Via voanews.com

The Next Governor of the Caribbean Island of Anguilla

The Monsoon News

The British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office announced on November 27, 2020, appointment of Dileeni Daniel-Selvaratnam as the new Governor of Anguilla in succession to Tim Foy OBE. Daniel-Selvaratnam will take up her appointment in

January 2021. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Ms. Daniel-Selvaratnam, a lawyer, has been the Director of Grenfell Tower Independent Public Inquiry at the Cabinet Office.

Anguilla, an internally self-governing overseas territory of the United Kingdom, has a unicameral legisla-



Map credit: Caribbean map by KMusser

DMK asks PM Modi to urge Sri Lanka to not scrap Provincial Councils

Chennai, Dec 31 (PTI) The DMK on Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to prevail upon Sri Lanka to give up its "proposal" to abolish the provincial councils as it went against the island nation's 13th Amendment to Constitution.

The amendment was an outcome of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, DMK Parliamentary Party leader T R Baalu said and added that the proposal, if carried forward, would put a question mark on the accord with India.

Baalu, who is also the party treasurer

er asked "why and how Indian government could be a mere spectator" if the island nation abolished the councils after assuring the Tamil people, devolution of more powers, even beyond what was contemplated under the 13th amendment, he said.

The DMK leader requested Modi to prevail upon Lanka to not go ahead with the plan to abolish the councils.

Modi should make it clear to the neighbour that the proposal, if implemented, would adversely affect Indo-Lanka ties, Baalu said. - PTI

and the Executive Council is appointed by the Governor from among the elected members of the House of Assembly.

Anguilla, the most northerly of the Leeward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. It lies 12 miles north of the St. Martin/Sint Maarten - an island with two nations and two names, French in the north and Dutch in the south that has the international airport.

The Anguilla Ferry System (public ferry) offers a daytime service between Marigot (French St. Martin) and Blowing Point in Anguilla. The ferry runs every day in 45-minute intervals.

Anguilla's official currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar, though U.S. dollars are accepted everywhere; the exchange rate is set permanently at roughly 2.70 EC to \$1.

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BY THULASI MUTTULINGAM

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RECOGNIZING LABOUR OF LOVE

Recently I've been putting a lot of effort into sourcing books for my students to read. So much to consider;

- has to be interesting for them as adults learning English.
- has to be at levels they can grasp.
- has to be good enough to keep them motivated and learning.
- has to be culturally appropriate.
- if possible should improve their general knowledge too.

And then something struck me. Despite my father being the English Teacher, I had always credited my mother with being the one who got me into the habit of reading. With a cane. Get-

ting a six year old more interested in going out to play with her friends to stay in and read had to be enforced via cane.

No, don't cane your kids. I don't recommend it. Nevertheless I did become an engrossed bookworm over the years.

In later years, she would try to cane me to stop during exam time.

I even remember my brother just 3 years older warning me not to get into reading as she was trying to force me into it: "Don't do it Thulasi, first she'll cane you to start reading, then she'll cane you to stop periodically."

Despite the trauma attached to that way of enforcement, I had attributed my love of books

which I am thankful for, to her.

It's only now as I go about sourcing the books for my students with so much attention and care - I realise I always had a steady supply of age appropriate books catering to my interests as well as introducing new ones through all my growing years - and only one person was responsible for it. My father <3.

Sometimes the person who puts in the labour of love without making a ruckus about it can fail to be recognized.

NARCISSISM AND CULTURES

Narcissism exists in individuals which is bad enough - but have you noticed it exists collectively in cultures as well?

Any ideas on why that might have come to be?

Having travelled a fair bit, I've noticed that there are cultures that are enabling and supportive, as well as cultures that are disabling and punitive. Haven't figured out what caused groups of people to amass punitive, disabling cultures though. Are there any studies on it?

I think I come from one such punitive culture myself and always wondered why. Why enforce cultural mechanisms of tearing peo-

ple down instead of building them up? What's the gain? Yes, I know there are wonderful, enabling people in our culture too but I sure wouldn't call them the norm.

Recently watching cancel culture take off in the West and wondering what the motivation is? People gleefully tearing down each other to the extent of making victims lose livelihoods and reputations for mere differences of opinion - and the people doing it seem to think they are mighty cool?

The narcissistic viciousness is obvious - but why so many people would bandwagon on it is not so obvious to me.

What is the collective social gain they see? From conservative culturists yes.

Fascinated by the new phenomenon where the people invoking cancel culture claim to be against bigotry in all forms. They have bandwaggoned on worthy causes like 'black lives matter' or LGBT and are busy smearing others who are not even anti- those positions, just have certain reservations like indiscriminate access for whichever man claiming to be trans in women's safe spaces such as DV shelters. Even THAT is bigotry and women cautioning the need for some protocol deserve to lose their jobs and reputations over it apparently.

OPINIONS OF YOUTH AND GENERATIONS

I grew up in a culture where youths had no rights to their own opinions.

Couldn't even ask questions.

A recurring occurrence to be told "Shut your mouth, you don't know anything" by supposedly wise elders, who claimed to know everything. They were just too weary to explain it to me.

I was 30 before I felt able to form opinions on my own and not second guess myself at every turn - despite the elders telling me I was wrong anyway.

I am 39 now, born in 1981, just about made the cut-off point to be called a millennial. I did hear a lot about 'stupid millennials' too, mainly by the baby boomer generation - weren't they called boomers by the generations before them who thought they had it easy? Now though Gen Y and Z who have come after me have developed a habit of saying "OK boomer" for anyone older who criticizes them.

My problem in all this?

I think I got the short end of the stick at both ends.

I grew up with elders who thought I was stupid for being a younger person and coming right after me are youths who think I am stupid for being an older person.

I'm sandwiched between know-it-all generations. Unfair.

I want my turn to yell at "kids these days" too. Who passed the mantle?

RELATIONSHIPS AND BRIDGES

I put up with bad relationships for a long time continually giving them the benefit of the doubt (seriously, rebooting on that now. When people show you who they are the first time, pay attention).

Eventually though, when it becomes clear they are abusive and nothing else - I burn bridges permanently.

Been doing a lot of bridge burning of late. I am pretty sure I don't want those people back in my life. In the process though, I hadn't re-

alised I was attempting to leave my limping, wounded selves of past eras as well. Can't burn bridges there, not advisable. Can't even pull up the drawbridge and forget.

Came across this quote just now by Joan Didion. Makes a lot of sense:

"I think we are well-advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be, whether we find them attractive company or not. Otherwise they turn up unannounced and sur-

prise us, come hammering on the mind's door at 4 a.m. of a bad night and demand to know who deserted them, who betrayed them, who is going to make amends. We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget. We forget the loves and the betrayals alike, forget what we whispered and what we screamed, forget who we were ... It is a good idea, then, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about."

ON "MISSING THE BUS"

Falling through the cracks is nothing new to me
But from up there,
people would peep in
And instead of helping up
would shower deadwood in
I lived in a world
which shared Bill Gates saying you don't
get second chances if you failed in youth, as
motivation mantras

People gleefully pointed out
I had "missed the bus"
Took me 10 years to realise
There is a bus out every half hour
So I'm on the bus now
Making as much as I can of the journey
The destination doesn't matter, I don't know
where I'm going
Neither do you



HEALTH & WELLNESS

SHN SUPPORTER MICHELLE LEE GIVES BACK BY DONATING THROUGH LIFE INSURANCE

When Michelle Lee started thinking about how she could give back to the hospitals that cared for her family over the last 20 years, she decided to include Scarborough Health Network (SHN) in her life insurance policy.

Living and growing up in Scarborough, Birchmount hospital (previously Scarborough Grace) was their family hospital. She recalls the many hours she spent there when her dad suffered health problems, reflecting on the compassion and support of the staff.

"The hospital is amazing, the staff were absolutely wonderful and the doctor caring for my dad truly went above and beyond," Michelle tells us.

"She kept my dad alive for as long as she could, giving us extra time with him. She was so dedicated to my father's care that she would even respond when she wasn't working." Michelle and her family became close with all of the staff caring for her dad, and team members from every shift came to know them and ask them how they were doing.

This connection to Scarborough and SHN prompted Michelle to add the hospitals to her life insurance policy. She was familiar with the process of adding a non-profit as a beneficiary of her life insurance policy, and

through her life insurance agent she started the process of ensuring SHN was on her policy.

"It makes a lot of sense to give this way because it's not just a one-time fixed donation," Michelle says.

"Not only does it act as a bit of a tax shelter for me, but more importantly it means in the end SHN will receive a lot more than the actual amount of insurance I've taken out." Michelle believes it's important to give back because helping others is near and dear to her heart. "I truly believe donations are not just about money. The more you give the more you get, and giving makes us happier and more fulfilled."

Michelle encourages other to give back to causes they care about, whether it's donat-



ing, volunteering or helping in any way they can. Especially around the holidays when the spirit of giving is in the air, and when people may need a little extra help to celebrate.

If you would like to learn more about how you can make a legacy gift to SHN, visit our Legacy Giving page or reach out to Verna Chen, Associate Vice President, Donor Engagement at VChen@shn.ca or (416)438-2911 extension 6040.

Learn about the benefits of making a gift of securities before the end of 2020

There are many ways to make a legacy gift in support of SHN Foundation, including gifts of life insurance like Michelle, or through gifts of securities.

Donating appreciated securities is simple, cost-effective and the most tax-efficient way to make a charitable gift today or through your estate. You can donate bonds, mutual funds, exchange-traded funds

(ETFs), and shares that are listed on stock exchanges.

A gift of securities can also be made as a current gift with the tax receipt used to offset net income tax in the current year or carry forward. It can also be made as a bequest in your Will and the receipt will be issued to your estate.

To learn more, visit our Gift of Securities page.

First COVID-19 vaccine doses provided in Scarborough



Scarborough Health Network (SHN) has received its first shipment of the COVID-19 vaccine, and began administering doses today. This is an exciting moment for our community and gives us hope for a healthier future.

Following a successful pilot of the process at University Hospital Network and The Ottawa

Hospital, SHN was included in a list of 17 health care organizations that would carry out the first of the province's three-phase vaccine implementation plan.

"SHN has put in a lot of hard work and preparation to get us to this point, and it is with great joy and pride that we are now able to begin distributing the some of the first doses of the vaccine in Ontario. Scarborough has been severely impacted by this pandemic and our ICUs are seeing more COVID-19

patients every day. Our priority is to do everything we can to keep our community safe" said Elizabeth Buller, President and CEO of SHN.

Today's vaccines are being given to frontline workers from long-term care and retirement facilities across Scarborough. The first recipient was Vernet

Dehaney, a personal support worker (PSW) who has been with Scarborough's Kennedy Lodge long-term care home for 31 years. During the pandemic, Vernet has worked on Kennedy Lodge's Main South unit, improving the lives of those she has cared for. Her vaccination was provided by SHN's Dr. Elan Ambalavanar, an Emergency department physician.

The vaccine was administered at SHN's Centenary hospital, which has been set up as Scarborough's first COVID-19 vaccine clinic. Vaccination is an important step to a post-pandemic future with efficacy rates of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines at 95 per cent effectiveness.

"We must remain diligent in the next weeks and months to keep our family, friends and neighbours safe. We must continue following public health guidelines until everyone who wants a vaccine, especially out most vulnerable, are vaccinated." said Ms. Buller.

Working with our community to increase access to COVID-19 testing

With the cold, blustering winds that the Canadian winters bring, the last thing most of us want to do is be waiting outside in long lines. With the lockdowns and restrictions in place throughout Scarborough and Toronto, long lines at the grocery store are imminent – but for the residents of Scarborough, waiting in a cold line to get a COVID-19 test wasn't an option for the Scarborough Health Network. That's where the University of Toronto Scarborough and the Centre for Immigrant and Community Services stepped up.

Scarborough Health Network (SHN) is proud to be partnering with the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) and the Centre for Immigrant and Community Services (CICS) to provide new, indoor facilities for COVID-19 testing throughout the winter. This will ensure the Scarborough community will not need to wait outside during those cold winter months. Both UTSC and CICS are placing the community's needs at the forefront by providing their spaces, demonstrating the dedication, commitment and strength of Scarborough. For more information on the new indoor assessment centres visit <https://www.shn.ca/covid19-assess/>.

"We're proud to partner with SHN to help expand COVID-19 testing in Scarborough. Our community has been hard hit by the pandemic, and as anchor institutions in the eastern GTA, it's imperative that we work together to utilize our resources to help get through this difficult time for our community and region." - Andrew Arifuzzaman, Chief Administrative Officer, U of T Scarborough.



5 QUESTIONS WITH... AJITH VARGHESE, MANAGER, SPIRITUAL & RELIGIOUS CARE AT SHN

To celebrate the holiday season, we sat down with Ajith Varghese, manager of spiritual and religious care at SHN, to tell us about the importance of these services at our hospitals and in the Scarborough community.

Ajith started off at SHN as an intern more than 10 years ago, and made his way to a full-time staff member and now into management of the department. In addition to serving as the manager here at SHN, he is also a certified clinical spiritual care educator and supervisor and adjunct faculty at the Toronto School of Theology with the University of Toronto.

1. December is a month of celebrations for many in our Scarborough community. How do you recommend people celebrate their religious and spiritual holidays this year while staying safe?

The message of all the holidays at this time is sharing. This year I would encourage everyone to reach out to others – you neighbours, friends and family, to remain connected this holiday season. You can do that through virtual channels and social media platforms, or even by making a home-cooked meal to leave on your neighbour's front porch.

I encourage you to find new ways to express and celebrate your love for life and each other over the holidays. Release your own creativity and have fun making this year's holidays a unique and memorable experience for all. Above all, let us keep an attitude of gratitude, joy and hope! While we may not be able to see all of our friends or family, try and get creative and create new traditions that keep everyone safe, healthy and happy.

2. SHN offers a variety of spiritual and religious care services. Why do you think it's so important to have these services available to our patients and their families?

It's so important because Scarborough is a both a multi-cultural and multi-faith community. We provide spiritual care that is sensitive and respectful to the diversity of our community, and are heavily invested in providing a holistic experience of care to both our staff and the entire Scarborough population.

Spiritual care not only addresses people's religious needs, but also their health as it pertains to the mind, body and soul. It's especially important when people are in crisis or when they're faced with a difficult illness or prognosis.

When we're faced with a difficult situation, faith or what gives us meaning or purpose in life becomes essential because it helps us to continue the meaning-making process amidst the current situation. Spiritual care facilitates this meaning-making process for our hospital community through various spiritual, clinical and psycho-social interventions.

During a particularly difficult year dealing with COVID-19, spiritual care is playing a vital role in the wellness of our frontline team members who have been battling this virus since day one. We have increased the number of one-to-one sessions with our staff members, and are providing active care and resources to ensure they are taking care of their body, mind and soul.

3. Scarborough is one of the most diverse and vibrant communities in Canada. How does this diversity come into play when it comes to religious and spiritual care at our hospitals?

I believe that Scarborough is the world, and the world is in Scarborough. It is essential that we meet the emotional and psycho-spiritual



needs of a global community. All of our spiritual care practitioners are trained to work with people of all faiths and no faith at all. Although our practitioners have their own personal beliefs and cultural backgrounds, they are trained to care for each and every individual. Our practitioners speak multiple different languages to cater to our community, and more importantly they are representative of the different cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds that make up Scarborough.

SHN is also a teaching hospital for clinical spiritual care affiliated with University of Toronto, so we take great pride and care in teaching our next generation of spiritual care practitioners how to provide support in a culturally diverse acute care setting.

4. This year has been extremely difficult for many in our Scarborough community. What advice do you have for those who may be feeling disconnected from their faith or others this holiday season?

I would encourage those who are feeling disconnected to tune into their local faith channel, whether it's on television, the radio or streaming online or on social media channels – there are so many resources out there.

The holidays can be especially difficult if you have experienced the loss of a loved one. Many of our community members have experienced loss due to COVID-19, and many more were unable to travel for funerals or to say final goodbyes. I encourage anyone experiencing grief and loss to light a candle or make a favourite dish in honour of loved ones who are unable to be with you this year. Hang up a virtual or physical "memory stocking," where you and others can write down treasured memories or pictures of holidays past.

Finally, if people are feeling alone it is crucial that they reach out to someone – a family member, friend, colleague or our team here at SHN. We can be reached at spiritualcare@shn.ca if anyone needs someone to talk to this holiday season.

5. Scarborough's diversity is undoubtedly one of its greatest assets. What do you love most about Scarborough and our residents?

I myself have lived in Scarborough for more than 10 years, and have been working at SHN for almost that same amount of time. To me, Scarborough represents diversity, inclusivity and unity, and proves that those of different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs can live together in harmony while supporting one another.

I'm incredibly proud to work at SHN and excited to be part of the outstanding work we

do each day. We truly practice what we preach, and over my tenure with SHN I have seen the changes and transitions the hospitals and community have been through. I look forward to what the future holds, and I wish everyone a happy holiday season!

We are incredibly grateful to have dedicated team members like Ajith caring for our diverse and vibrant Scarborough community. If you would like to learn more about spiritual and religious care at SHN, please visit SHN.ca/spiritual-religious-care/.

Giving Tuesday 2020 raises \$15,754 for Scarborough Health Network



On Tuesday, December 1st the entire philanthropic community celebrated Giving Tuesday. After the Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales, Giving Tuesday is a global movement dedicated to giving back and supporting causes you care about – causes like health care in Scarborough.

This year, the community came together to support SHN and gave back in a big way. SHN Foundation raised an incredible \$15,754 through this year's Giving Tuesday campaign. This support will help our hospitals and team members to continue providing exceptional care to the patients and families of Scarborough, particularly as we battle the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We are tremendously grateful to each and every person who donated and chose to support health care in Scarborough.

If you would like to make your holiday gift, please visit SHNFoundation.ca/donate.



SPECIAL FEATURE

TAMIL TRADITIONAL

By: Kumar Punithavel

January is acknowledged as the Tamil heritage month in Canada, and I thought it would be fitting to document some of the traditional games that had been played by Tamil children for thousands of years, but now going out of vogue.

In the modern world people tend to think that the children in villages where Bill Gates and Steve Jobs have not visited yet must be having a very dull life, for lack of electronics. But one should remember the electronics have yet to reach the adolescence. I do not know much about the rest of the world, but I do have an insight experience in the Tamil nation, and thought I document and share it, lest we forget for ever. Here I have given fourteen such fun activities we enjoyed in the past.

The uniqueness of these games is that the equipment is improvised by the players, and no corporate manufacturer had to come in. They may not be glittering but certainly entertaining.

1. Pillaiar Panthu



This is a team game. The only two equipment needed are, a brick and ball. The Brick is placed near a wall and a line is drawn in front of it. Players of the teams will take turns alternatively to knock down the brick. Then team of the player that knock the stone block will stand in a circle and hand over the ball to one among them, while the other team will face the opposite direction. The members of the team that has the ball will pretend as if each of them has it with them. Next, they will try to touch the other team player with the ball. Time is initially fixed for each game and toss will decide who throws first. When ever a player is touched by the ball will be out of the game. The team that has the greatest number of players at the end is the winner.

2. Pallankulli



Mostly played by young teenage lasses among themselves in their homes. On a board with fourteen round holes in all, and using tamarind seeds as pawns, played until all pawns are out of

the board. Very entertaining, and played for long hours. It also gives fine motor skills to the fingers and mathematical skill to the brain of the person. Beyond all other benefits it gives socializing skills to the players.

3. Koli



Koli: In English we call it marble. During holidays children on village streets and open space under large Banyan trees play Koli game with marbles. If one hits the opponent's marble, he gets to keep the loser's marble. There are many variations of the koli game, and very famous among children. During season every child's pocket will be dangling with marbles.

4. Kichu Kichu thambalam



The goal of the game is to locate the hidden stick. It is more commonly played in sandy terrain like sea side and desert land called palai terrain. This game is played by three or more players. A player is selected as seeker. The other player holds the tiny stick between the thumb and little finger and move within the sand hump and hides it while moving along and coming out the other edge.

The seeker needs to observe the movement of the hand and face of the player who hides the stick. If he fails the person who hid the stick gets a point, on the other hand if he locates the stick, he gets a point and chance to hide the stick himself. The game continues until one gets ten points. The players sing the song below loud while hiding the stick, thus the name:

*Kichu Kichu thambalam,
Kiyya Kiyya thambalam,
Maachu Maachu thambalam,
Maya Maya thambalam.*

5. Pambaram

Pambaram or top in time gone by was very famous among children. The game is begun by a person turning the top by a twine (Saatai). A pair



or even many could join in a game. Initially a circle is drawn in the ground and next all children will twist their tops and throw it down. Next the player will take the top in the hand twist it into the circle to hit the top inside the circle and get it out. Some times the top gets broken. It is important to select sturdy tops which can withstand the shock. The game is so popular and has many variations too.

6. Aadu Pulli Aatam



This is more popular among ladies who play at home to spend the time. It is a board game easily improvised by drawing it on the floor of the house verandah! It can be played between two persons or two groups. As the name suggests the tiger hunting the lambs is the game. Pawns can be anything from seeds to stones. One side will have three tigers and the other have fifteen lambs. The tigers will hunt the lambs while the lambs will try to corner the Tigers. This a game of strategy liked by all.

7. Thaayam



This too is a strategic move game where either two or four people get involved. Each player will carry four pawns and the first person to reach the centre of the board and get back to the starting point will be the winner. Frequently sea shells are used as pawns and had been played from the time of epic Mahabharata. Though this may look easy it is a very intricate game of strategy.

8. Kenthiaatam

This is a very common game among young lasses, and at times boys too played on the village roads and back garden of houses. Very much akin to wests hopscotch. Initially eight squares attached to one another are drawn on the ground. Players will drop the Kaai (dice) on the first square and

SPECIAL FEATURE



GAMES.....



hop over and complete hopping to the last square and return without touching the line. It is so popular and inexpensive that every child rich or poor would have played this game in their youth.

9. Kannamuchi



A very popular game among small children around the world. It is still played even to this day. There are many versions of this game too. One person is kept eyes closed counting up to a certain number while the rest runs into the house or elsewhere and hide.

10. Kittupullu



Kittipullu: This is a very popular out door game, for which the equipment is improvised easily. One needs two sticks. First called Gilli which is about four inches. The second a long stick about three feet. A circle of about a yard diameter and a small hole in the centre of the circle drawn. The players are divided as two teams. One team goes as fielders to catch the gilli. First player places the gilli on the hole lifts it quickly high in the air and hits with the rod. If he misses it, he gets another chance. And the game goes on.

11. Sadugudu

This game is also called as Kabadi kabadi: This a very popular game among teenagers. It being a highly body contact sport mostly played segregated by gender. The players are divided into two teams and played. Individual players take turns crossing onto the other team's side, chanting loud 'Sdugudu



Sdugudu' non-stop. Points are scored by tagging as many opponents as possible without being caught or taking a breath before returning to one's home territory.

12. Killithattu



This is an extremely popular game among adolescents. It is believed this game was originated from the experience of farmers getting rid of parrots that comes to graze the grains of the field. It was declared as a national sport of Tamil Elyom. In various cities where the Ceylon Tamils have taken refuge are still conducting tournaments of this game. When they had it in Toronto there were many teams participated in it with enthusiasm.

13. Pattam parakuthal



Pattam parakuthal or Flying kites had been among Tamils done for a very long time in the past. Being a small Island and even in South India where Tamils had been living thousands of years has sea in three sides. It is also the land of monsoon winds, which makes it a pleasant experience. There are tournaments and other completions where one will try to put down his opponents by cutting it down on the air. It is not only drones but

kites too could provide immense pleasure, and the cost of making one is easy and inexpensive.

14. Neechal (Swimming)



When we talk about swimming in Canada, we think of the chlorinated swimming pools. But where I came from I did not have such luxury. However, the Tamil nation is developed in arid tropical land both in South India and North Ceylon. The rainfall happens during the monsoon. The great Tamil kings of the past built many small reservoirs referred to as village tanks, and also anicuts across streams and rivers. Incidentally the word anicut is originated from the Tamil word Anaikaddu. Children get hours of play, a pass time which they immensely enjoyed. The Palk Straight a waterway separating the two sections of Tamil nation is 40 miles at the narrowest whereas the English Channel at the narrowest is 20 miles. During my youth in the nineteen fifties Navrathnasamy a Tamil swimmer crossed the Palk straight swimming for the first time.

There are many more games and activities which was popular among the Tamil people, but guess this would give a glimpse how life was then. Yes, they did have a wonderful happy youth without the electronics, socialising and exercising too.





What will humanity be like in the Future?



In this podcast interview which is included in a four-part television documentary,

Prem Rawat reminds us that we have no limitation for happiness in our lives. Each of us has a compass inside pointing us to ourselves. There is enjoyment to be had and there is a quest for each person to be fulfilled. We are each awaiting our opportunity for our cup to be filled.

We can neither move further or closer to peace as the peace lies inside of us. What we must do is to understand that all war begins within a human being. Without inner conflict outer conflict doesn't happen. We act without having an understanding of ourselves which escalates the conflict. The end of war begins with knowing our true selves.

Few people want to change, yet change is necessary for us to be who we are today. We need to understand the humanness within the human being. That humanity will not change, although the behavior of humans can always change. The desire to be alive never waivers. The pure fundamentals such as the desire to be content are unchanging. The very things that should bring us together often separate us.

Technology is rapidly overtaking the world. Once upon a time, everyone rode horses. Then suddenly there were cars which gradually took over as the main form of transportation. Technology is meant to make our lives easier, but actually

We can neither move further or closer to peace as the peace lies inside of us. What we must do is to understand that all war begins within a human being. Without inner conflict outer conflict doesn't happen. We act without having an understanding of ourselves which escalates the conflict. The end of war begins with knowing our true selves.

brings more work.

We want technology to make our lives easier, but we seldom stop and ask ourselves if it is accomplishing that goal. A human being can do amazing things because of our creativity. However sometimes we fail to ask the simple question of who am I. Despite being at the top of the food chain, we must preserve the humanity of the human being.

Prem Rawat speaks on how technology can create a pseudo-infinite reality. Our true power lies in kindness, peace, and humanity. At first technology is being developed to perform menial tasks. Whatever direction we go we need to remember who we are and our vulnerabilities. No technology can look inside of ourselves or bring us peace. Peace is and should be the fundamental quest, nothing else will fill the void.

Our technology can take us to Mars but that doesn't change the state of humanity. We will end up trying to turn Mars into Earth and will destroy Mars itself in the process. We have no appreciation for what we already have. Human

beings have this hammer called technology and they want to try it out on everything.

All the fruits and vegetables at the supermarket have been touched by human technology. We have used it on literally everything without considering the consequences. If we do not change we will destroy what we cherish on this Earth.

Each of us has both good and bad inside of us. We get to choose which we will be in each instance. The more good we do the more used to being good we become. On the other hand, the more bad we do the easier it becomes to do bad.

Take for example the overwhelming problem of food waste. The Earth gives more than enough to take care of all of us but because of greed and ignorance many go hungry.

These technologies should help us to grow as human beings and promote our higher selves.

We have to learn to save ourselves instead of waiting for systems and governments to act. There is always hope that we wake up and realize the power is in our hands. When

people have inner peace they stop fighting and the conflict evaporates. There are growing pains in technology's growth and unintended consequences.

Happiness is a subjective experience and difficult to measure. Knowing yourself is the crucial element. Being prosperous means having a sense of purpose, having gratitude, and not caring what others think. While technology has promised us to have more time, it often makes us less happy. Technology cannot bring us love and we need love and kindness. We need to understand what technology can and cannot do for us. Technology cannot replace our humanity.

We are constantly searching for our betterment. If you do not understand who you are it will be uncomfortable and lost. Despite all of our challenges and our reliance on technology, we still have the opportunity to change. We change technology more than it has fundamentally changed us. We still have the same needs and fears. These are the things that make us human.

We need to strive to remain human in the face of chaos. We need to be able to spark a light in the darkest of times. Our foundations must be strong. It is important to have the courage to be truly human and not to lose ourselves in hardship.

Prem Rawat

www.timelesstoday.com



COVID-19, ITS IMPACT AND THE VACCINES

1. INTRODUCTION

History displays a number of pandemics such as plagues, smallpox, measles, cholera, influenza, Ebola, AIDS (Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome), SARS (Severe Acute respiratory syndrome-2003), MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome-2012) and now the COVID-19 which is caused by coronavirus. Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface. Although coronaviruses existed in mammals and birds from time immemorial, human coronaviruses were first identified only in the mid-1960s. Genetically the COVID-19 virus and that of SARS are related to each other but the diseases caused by them are quite different. The coronavirus disease COVID-19 in humans was first recognized in late December 2019 and named by WHO on February 2020 as COVID-19: CO stands for Corona, VI for Virus and D for Disease, and the number 19, the year of discovery 2019. The health experts and virologists consider that, this novel coronavirus strain probably originated in bats or pangolins, which are also eaten in China.

The degree and nature of harm caused by this virus varies greatly in different age groups and people with simultaneous presence of two or more diseases or medical conditions. The virus can cause an acute lung injury and respiratory distress syndrome that ultimately causes pulmonary failure leading to mortality. The virus is transmitted mostly through contact with respiratory droplets from infected persons. Hence, it is important to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (6 ft) away from infected persons. The main symptoms of this disease are dry cough, fever, and difficulty in breathing. Older people and those with chronic medical problems like high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, cardiac issues, asthma are more prone to develop this disease.

COVID-19 infections around the globe as on December 20, 2020 reached about ... million and death about one million whereas in Canada the number is ... and respectively. From the time it has been declared as pandemic by the WHO in March 2020 to date the only concrete preventive measures to control the spread of the disease are frequent washing of hands with soap, wearing masks, physical distancing and quarantine or self isolation. There were attempts globally to rapidly develop a vaccine which has resulted in production of vaccines in the shortest possible time in the history.

2. COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT

COVID-19 has had a severe negative impact on human health and the world economy caused by lockdowns. The lockdown restrictions are likely to have significant effects on the mental health and emotional experiences of the people. Indeed, a study of mental health suggests that anxiety, depression and panic all increased during

this period. At the same time, lockdown, has given families across the world a new lease of familial bonding that was otherwise hard to come by. For the first time, many parents and kids, even grandparents are all under the same roof, round-the-clock. And this enforced togetherness can deepen relationships for years to come. Use of WhatsApp, Viber and Zoom have increased immensely. Family zoom meetings are being held with members from different continents on a regular basis. Senior associations are carrying on with their normal activities via zoom at a higher frequency. While the family relationship improved on many occasions, it worsened in few instances as shown by boom in divorce rates and increase in mental health problems.

Furthermore, lockdown also resulted in pollution reduction due to limited

social and economic activities. Lockdown caused reduced transport activities which led to less energy consumption and lower oil demand. COVID-19 became the opportunity for the earth to build a clear blue sky and reduce emissions in the air, but it was ephemeral. However, the period of lockdown across the world, created a sense of optimism among the people towards a clean and better environment. Before COVID-19, the world suffered from a high level of urban air pollution especially in the form of CO₂, SO₂, and NO₂. The positive effect of lockdown is to decrease the CO₂ emission substantially. Coronavirus lockdown has helped the environment to bounce back. Observation of various rivers, especially in densely populated areas has revealed that water quality has improved substantially. This is mainly due to shutting down of industries following the lockdowns and the slowdown of discharge of industrial effluents in the rivers. Though, these impacts are impermanent they prove that it is possible to bring about changes to the environment through man-made interventions. Animals were moving around in places close to populated cities during the pandemic. Deer, peacocks, monkeys, elephants, birds, dolphins, etc. are the best examples during lockdown who came out in notice much more frequently and greater in number. Human

interference on the movement of birds, especially the migratory birds have decreased. Where the fishing activities have stopped dolphins are coming closer to the shore.

3. THE COVID VACCINES:

Ten common questions and answers on corona vaccines, based on interviews by David Agus, a Professor of Medicine, at the University of Southern California.

Question 1: Are vaccines available for treating coronavirus and what is the best one?

Three pharmaceutical companies, namely AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna have developed the CORONA-19 vaccines. Pfizer vaccine is already being administered in the US, the other two are expected to receive approval before end of December 31, 2020. The AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines are

people with other medical conditions. People with serious allergies should consult their family physicians before taking the vaccines.

Question 5: Is it safe for people with suppressed immune system to take this vaccine?

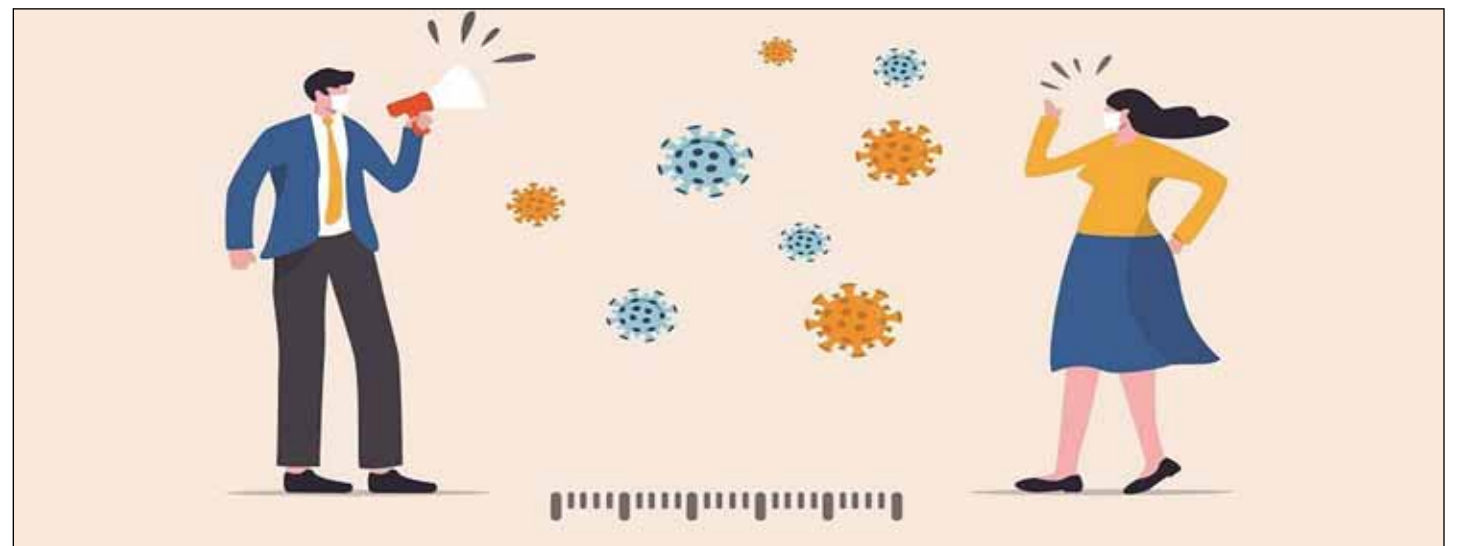
YES! Because there is no live virus in this. It is safe for people with cancer, and auto immune diseases.

Question 6: Is this vaccine safe for children?

WE DON'T KNOW YET! Normally clinical trials are done first in the adults and if it is safe then it is done in pregnant women and children. We are reaching the stage to do the trials in pregnant women and children.

Question 7: What are the normal side effects and how long do they last?

Most people get side effects which is good as this is a sign that the immune system reacting to the vaccines. Common symptoms are pain in the



95 % effective, whereas Moderna is 70 % effective. They are all great, remarkably safe and it is best that you take anyone that is offered first since immunity begins from the day you take the vaccine.

Question 2: Can the people who have taken the vaccine travel, roam around freely with no mask, and do all things they did before pre-covid-19?

NO! Though the vaccine will dramatically reduce the chances of infections and eliminate the chances of being hospitalized still it is better to take precaution and safeguard ourselves till the virus infection numbers come down. A small percentage may get running nose or a little cold and they can spread the virus. Hence it is critical to wear masks at all times and follow the situation till probably the summer of 2021.

Question 3: Do people who had Covid-19 and developed immunity need to take the vaccines?

YES! There are no tests for neutralizing antibodies. The antibodies you have are general. So, everyone who prior had the virus also needs to get this vaccine.

Question 4: Can people with allergies and on different medications take these vaccines?

Although there have been allergic reactions in some people with these vaccines, there is no interaction with medications. It is very beneficial for

arm in the injection site, fever, chills, fatigue, all of which disappear in 24 to 48 hours. It is critical for everyone to be aware of these facts. Tylenol is a remarkable antidote for these side effects.

Question 8: How long after getting the vaccine we know we are protected? How long will the protection last?

It is one week after the second shot, which is 21 days after the first shot except for Moderna for which the second shot is after 28 days. Depending on the vaccines one will have immunity after 3 or 4 weeks. The current estimate is that the immunity will last 6 months to one year or may be a little longer.

Question 9: Is there chance after getting the vaccine whether we could be asymptomatic and transmit the virus?

NO, with AstraZeneca vaccine, but with the other two vaccines we do not know as this has not been tested. Thus, it is critical for us to wear the masks even after vaccination.

Question 10: How much we must pay for the vaccine?

\$0. The government will meet all the costs.

Disclaimer - These are the personal views of the author, not intended to replace medical advice and only intended for information purposes



COVID -19 PANDEMIC YEAR 2020

Year 2020 will go down in history as one of the dreariest year of the 21st century. The COVID-19 pandemic with a wide spreading virus had caused untold misery and suffering to a large population of the world resulting in 1.7 million deaths all over the globe. The countries most affected are the U.S.A, UK, India, Russia and Brazil. Towards the end of 2020 nearly 3,600 people died every day in the United States alone, more than those who died in 9/11, which is considered to be the worst tragedy in the United States' recent history, and to date the United States has a total death count from COVID-19 of 300,000. At the same time, thousands of patients who are victims to this virus have been saved in hospitals all around the world, hence we owe gratitude to the doctors, nurses, and many other front line workers for their valuable services. Continuous on and off lockdowns, isolations, and curfews throughout the ongoing 9 month pandemic in 2020 have caused a large disruption in people's lifestyles, including the closure of amenities like restaurants, bars, sporting events, etc. This containment was in efforts to curb the spread of the disease by keeping people indoors and preventing travel both in and out of the country. The travel and related industries such as hotels, resorts, and airlines have been heavily affected by these restrictions. Moreover, the world economies have been on a downward trend with small businesses adversely affected, resulting in loss of jobs, low morale, and overall loss of happiness. The education sector has been greatly disrupted with children being out of school for extended amounts of time and teachers having to come up with unconventional methods, such as virtual or online teaching, that are not the most effective methods. This extends to higher education including colleges and universities, especially with the teaching of science and technology, as practical learning is not possible under these circumstances, which may have a bigger impact in their future professional and research pathways. The hope is that this unstable situation will be resolved in 2021.

By Kanagasabai Theivendirarajah Ph.D. (London)

Containment has been the only option for stopping the spread of COVID-19 in communities, however towards the end of 2020, a new solution has perhaps arrived with vaccinations being approved by various government regulators all over the world. In this respect, credit must be given to the outgoing president of the United States, Donald Trump, for encouraging big Pharma companies within the U.S to find suitable vaccines to combat this menacing disease. Boris Johnson, the prime minister of the UK, announced that his government was the first to approve a COVID-19 vaccine produced by Pfizer and BioNtech, for vaccinating his citizens against the virus in the early days of December. On December 10, 2020 the United Kingdom began immunisation throughout the country. When the UK announced their immunisation program, the Russian government also started their vaccination program in Moscow with a different vaccine, Sputnik V, which was developed in Russia.

Pfizer's vaccine is an mRNA vaccine, where when it is injected in the body, the cells will translate the mRNA using its protein synthesizing apparatus to produce COVID-19 proteins, which in turn will trigger an immune response to create antibodies to combat the COVID-19 proteins. This will protect people from future COVID-19 viral infections. Compared to the Pfizer vaccine, the Sputnik V vaccine is an adenovirus based platform that uses a modified common cold virus to trigger the body's immune system to produce antibodies against the COVID-19 virus.

Towards the end of December, the U.S government approved the use of Moderna's vaccine. This vaccine is similar to Pfizer's vaccine in that it is also an mRNA vaccine. However, the storage of Moderna's vaccine is more feasible as it needs to be kept at -17 degrees Celsius as compared to Pfizer's which must be kept at -70 degrees Celsius. Canada has now approved the use of Moderna's vaccine and began the inoculation programme after the Christ-



mas holidays. Canada and the U.S.A are using Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines and have started long term immunization programs to combat this terrible epidemic. We should admire and praise the many scientists, researchers and pharma workers for producing

covid-19 vaccines in such a short amount of time, specifically taking less than a year, as normally it takes many years to produce a vaccine.

Astra Zeneca along with Oxford University in the UK are on the verge of producing their own vaccine which is an adenovirus based platform similar to Sputnik-V, and can be stored at 5 degrees Celsius in a normal refrigerator. Just after Christmas, many European nations have started vaccinating front line workers and elderly people with Pfizer's vaccine. Viruses do mutate and the discovery of a new variant of covid-19 in the U.K and South Africa has caused some concern, but the scientists believe that the vaccines will be still effective against the variants.

China and India, with the largest human populations, are also gearing towards immunization programs against Covid-19. China has already given more than 1 million health care workers and others who are at high risk of infection an experimental vaccine produced by Sino Pharm. Sino pharm uses inactivated corona viruses in their vaccine. The Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, has applied for an emergency use licence to produce the vaccine developed by Oxford University-AstraZeneca. Very soon India will start their covid-19 immunization program.

With these vaccinations and the eradication of COVID-19, 2021 will hopefully be a much brighter year, with life returning back to pre-pandemic times.

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Despite COVID-19 pandemic Toronto Tamil Chair fundraising campaign receives great momentum

In 2018, Canadian Tamil Congress and Tamil Chair Inc. signed an agreement with the University of Toronto to establish a Chair in Tamil Studies at its Scarborough Campus. Through a pledge of \$3.0 million, an endowment fund will be created for the benefit of the University of Toronto Scarborough in support of a Chair in Tamil Studies. The Tamil Chair is expected to bring number of benefits, including



Sruthi Balamurali

championing the memorialization, preserving Tamil heritage and culture, advancement of Tamil language research and education, focal point for Tamil scholars to find information, have discussions and hold conferences and help those who pursue Tamil higher studies. The creation of a Tamil Chair will be of historical significance in solidifying the enrichment of Tamil Studies and in advancing the continued use, growth and global recognition of the Tamil language.

Despite the pandemic, this historical campaign continues to receive overwhelming support. Toronto Tamil Chair team has been organizing a number of virtual events to raise money and propagate information about the initiative.

To date over 2,000 individuals, corporations and community groups have supported with their donations and pledges and \$2.25 million have been collected of the required \$3.0 million. Some of the noticeable online events include

live musical programs by Sruthi Balamurali, Sharmila Ganesh and Vithusayni Paramanathan.

Sruthi Balamurali is a renowned multi-instrumentalist, singer and Bharatanatyam

followers across her social media platforms and millions of views for her productions on YouTube. She made her debut in the Indian film music industry as a violinist through music composer D. Imman, for the hit film "Namma Veetu



Vithusayni Paramanathan

dancer who is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto, in the Double Degree – BBA (Management & Finance) and BSc (Statistics) program. Being trained in Carnatic music by her father

Pillai" in September 2019. She has been honoured with many awards including Best Instrumentalist at the Edison Awards 2020 -Chennai, India and Instrumental Superstar 2020 at the Superstar E-Awards - India. Sruthi has performed on

and P.Unnikrishnan, to name a few, and has been commended by all of them for her outstanding talents.

Sharmila Ganesh is a versatile South Indian playback singer. She debuted playback singing in Tamil movies with legends S.P.Balasubramaniam and Shankar Mahadevan, in Yuvan Shankar Raja and Deva's music. With more than 20 years of professional singing, Sharmila provides Carnatic lessons and vocal training and performs

multilingual shows in Canada and USA. Sharmila Ganesh is a computer science engineer by profession and continuing her singing career in Toronto for more than 6 years.

You've seen **Vithusayni Paramanathan** on AR Rahman's concert stage and heard her in Illayathalpathy Vijay's Bigil! She is the first Tamil Canadian Singer to be featured on an AR Rahman



Sharmila Ganesh

film score, after co-singing the song "Maathare". Vithusayni is trained in Carnatic, Hindustani, and Western Vocals from AR Rahman's KM Conservatory. She is the Co-Founder of Isai Empire Inc, a Toronto based production company; their most recent concert was D Imman Live in Toronto. As an independent artist, Vithusayni has released many Tamil and English original songs. She has even won the Best Debut Playback Singer at the Edison Awards 2020 in Chennai, India. Aside from Music, Vithusayni is a recent Criminology graduate from Western University. She continues to pursue her career and passion for music side by side.

"We are pleased with the overwhelming support to the establishment of Tamil Chair at the University of Toronto and expect to reach the fundraising target soon", says Sivan Ilango, Chair of the Toronto Tamil Chair Committee.



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\$2.25M

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\$3.0M

Goal

and guru T.N. Balamurali, Sruthi is well versed on Violin, Veena, Flute and Vocal, as well as Western Flute and Piano. She has earned a large international audience coming from various backgrounds, currently with over 250,000

numerous stages in Canada, United States and India, and has received multiple awards from several media and organizations. Sruthi has had the privilege of sharing the stage with numerous legendary artists such as Dr. KJ Yesudas, P.Susheela

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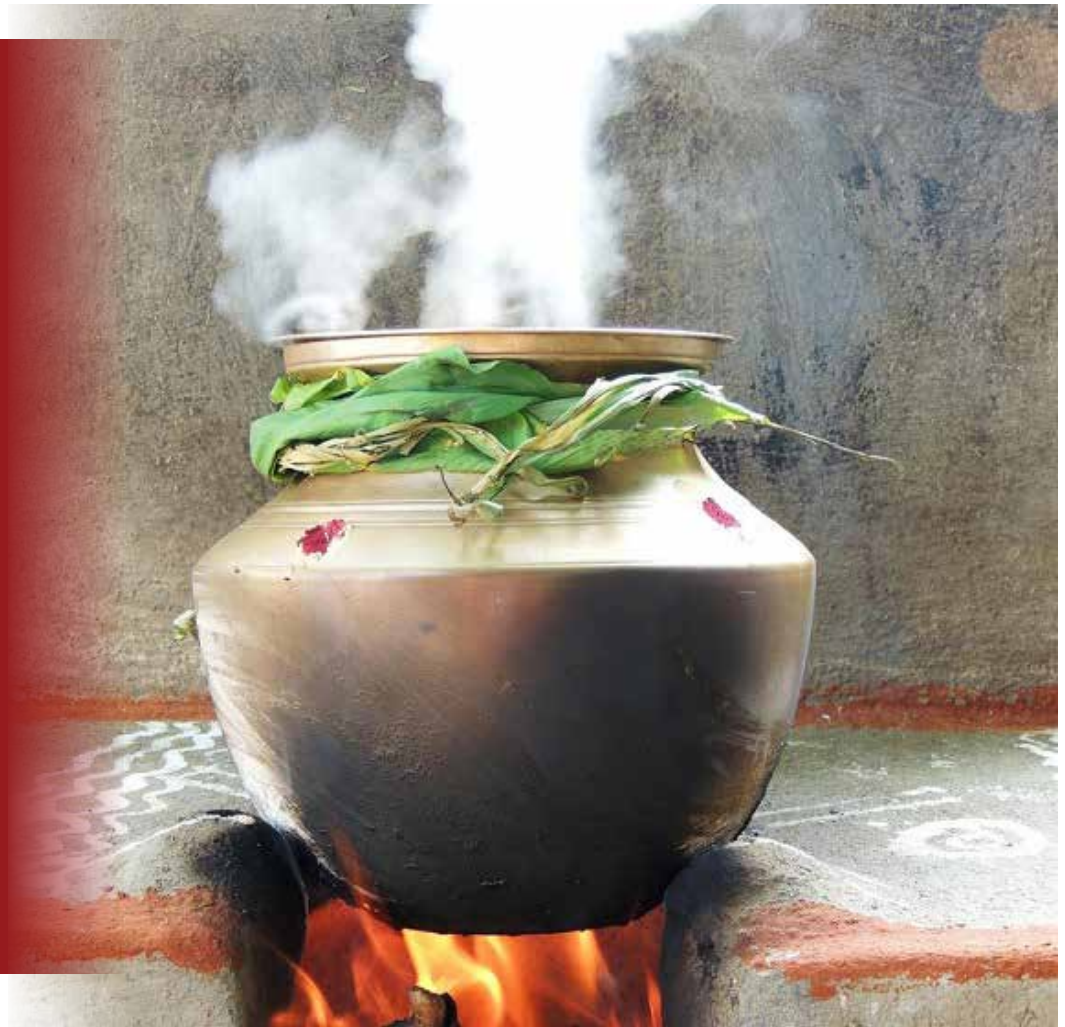
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SPECIAL FEATURE



LET BYGONES BE BYGONES

*May the New Year
usher a better
tomorrow*



Pongal

C. Kamalaharan

After the harrowing experience all of us underwent last year we welcome the New Year hoping for a happy and prosperous period ahead. While the Christians and the others celebrate New Year on the 1st of January the Tamils or rather the Hindus celebrate their New Year 'THAI' either on the 14th or 15th of January whichever may be when the day coincides with the Sun's journey northward referred to as 'Uttarayana-m'. The day is also of astrological significance as the Sun enters the 10th house



Ripen paddy crop

'Makaram' (Capricorn) from the 9th house 'Dhanu' (Sagittarius). Such a significant day is celebrated by Tamils as Thai Pongal day which is also referred to as Thamilar Thirunal.

Tamils consider Thai Pongal as the thanksgiving festival in gratitude to the Sun God for the bountiful harvest reaped for the year. Thanksgiving is not only for the Sun God but also for the farm animals. On this day early in the morning people prepare Pongal (boiled rice) in direct view of the sun outside their homes. A new earthenware clay pot decorated with mango leaves

around its neck filled with water is placed on an improvised oven using a tripod of three stone bricks or concrete slabs within a sanctified area. Milk mixed in water is boiled in the pot and when the spilling of the milk takes place enthusiastic children and the elders burst crackers while in the rural areas farmers shout in ecstasy 'Pongalo Pongal'. Immediately a handful of harvested rice is taken from the vessel and dropped into the pot. Later the remaining rice is let to slide into the pot from the vessel. When the rice is almost cooked ingredients like plums and cadju nuts are added to make the boiled rice tasty. A portion of the Pongal is served on a banana leaf with short eats as offerings to the Sun God. All the members of the family and visitors take turn circumambulate the sanctified area and prey in piety. Having done this the Pongal is taken inside the house and all of them settle down for the Pongal feast. This has been the usual practice of celebrating Pongal since time immemorial. Even now in rural villages this practice is followed. But in urban dwellings due to congested buildings Pongal is held in the kitchen using ever silver utensils. And children

born and bred in foreign countries unaware of the significance of the festival are of the view that Thai Pongal is merely boiled rice prepared in the kitchen using cutlery items.

Thai Pongal is one of the happiest occasion when people of all ages jointly participate and thoroughly enjoy. It is an occasion for family reunion and people living far apart make a bee line to be part of the celebration in their ancestral homes. Special train

and bus services are arranged for the conveniences of the commuters.

Year after year on New Year day people have been hoping for a bright future. Last year too it was so. Unfortunately everything turned topsy-turvy when the dangerous COVID Pandemic swarmed the whole world bringing the entire machinery to a grinding halt. People were placed on lockdown in their homes and all establishments remained shutdown causing all activities to slowdown. All public transports were stopped even air travel was suspended and public gatherings during weddings and funerals were drastically limited. Restaurants and canteens have been closed. Only pickup facilities are available.

Social gatherings of relatives and friends which had been in practice from time immemorial had been restricted. People feel lethargic owing to be on lockdown and the slowdown of all activities. This can't go on for ever. There is a strong possibility that the recently found vaccines which are being administered may reveal successful results. If that happens the corona virus will be eradicated and normal life will resume. The whole world will breath a shy of relief affirming the popular saying on Thai Pongal, 'Thai Piranthal Vazie Pirakkum' literally meaning the dawn of 'Thai' will pave the way for a bright future. Hopefully so.



Harvesting in Jaffna



SPECIAL FEATURE



Awwiyar

By: J. A. Rajah



Words of Wisdom

Inna ilamai varumai vanthakkal ,
Inna alavil inniyatha-innatha,
Narlilla pootha nanmalarum polume,
Arlilla mangaikk kalagu.
- Moothurai:

The wealth that is gained during late in life,
Cannot mitigate the misery suffered when young- similarly,
A woman who spent her years without a man,
Is like a flower that blooms past the season.

People need resources when they are in dire need. The young must have the resources to study and enhance their abilities at their young age. Awwiyar is an expert in finding metaphors. She is comparing the situation to young women with abundance of natural looks who fail to find suitable partners in life. Anything good must be put to proper use in order to uplift the quality of life.

In similar vein Thomas Gray said:
"Full many a gem of ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear,
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness in the air".





Robert Malthus, Population Growth and Population Control

By: J.A. Rajah

A. Growth of Population:

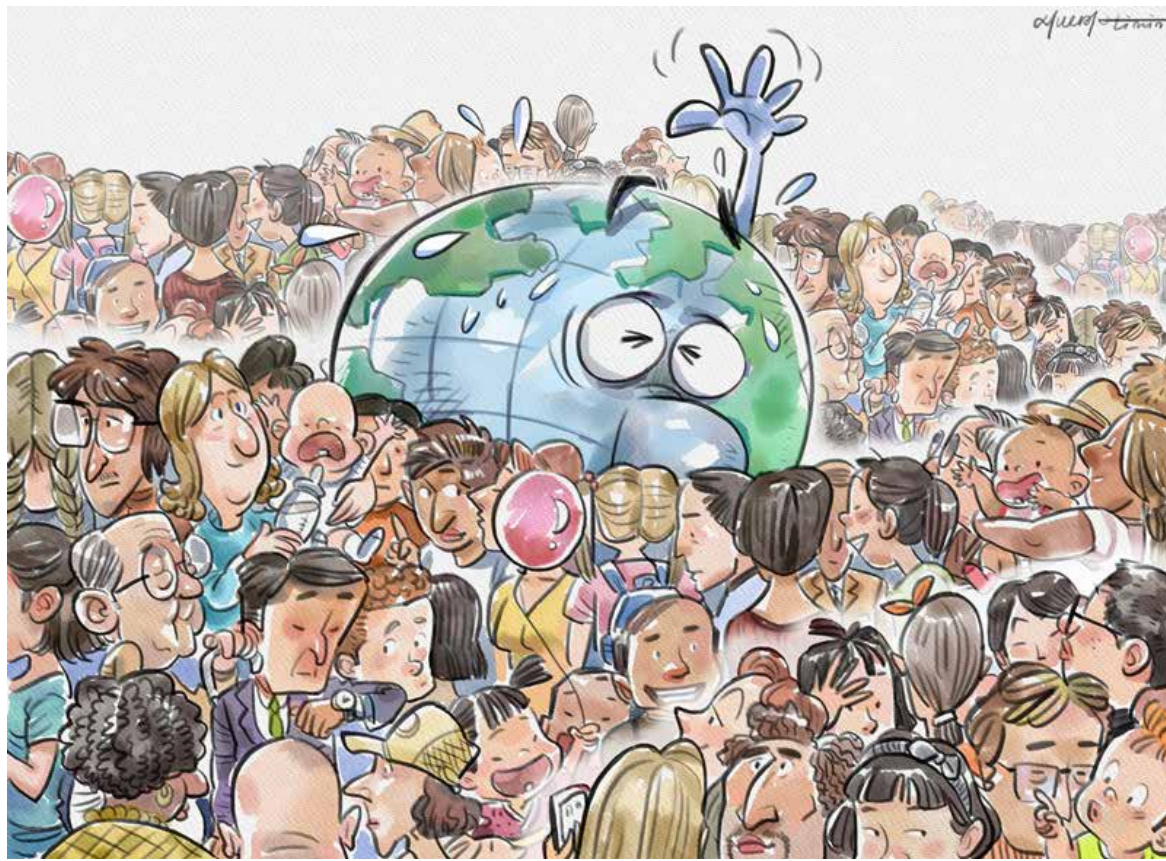
Robert Malthus (1798) asserted that population growth is exponential but growth of food supply is linear. In other words, population increases rapidly but food production does not keep up to it. The current world population is 7.8 billion with an average growth rate as 1.1 %. China has 1.4 billion, India 1.3 billion and USA 331 million. Other countries with high population are Indonesia, Pakistan, Brazil, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Russia. In spite of the vast number of hazards that lead to loss of lives, the rate of population growth is keeping high in countries like China, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Mexico. Canada's population rose to 38 million in 2020 with 400,000 new immigrants granted admission in the current year 2019-2020.

B. Population Control:

The mortality rate as well growth is high in countries that have many people who are poor. Many African countries have such problems. Early marriages, limited access to education, limited access to contraception, need for extra labour in agrarian communities, religious and social norms are the main cause for population problems. Developed countries take adequate efforts to control and limit their population growth. Excellent medical facilities, proper educational facilities, low mortality rate, increased agricultural productivity had ensured less mortality rate. For example, China, which has very large population, was able to evolve a population policy whereby they limited the child birth to one per family and managed to limit their population growth to manageable proportions. Besides, Chinese have migrated to other countries in the world like the USA, Canada and

Australia. Their inborn ability to work hard along with their technical knowledge made them readily acceptable to foreign countries.

In recent years there have been several disasters leading



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to genocide. Forest fires, floods, earthquakes, land-slides are natural disasters that have taken a heavy toll of lives. Blow-up of factories, massive shootings, ethnic conflicts, inter-religious hatred and climatic change has led to loss of lives. Pandemics have caused massive loss of lives over the decades. Malaria, Small-pox, Saars, Plague, HIV Aids, Yellow Fever, Typhus, Cholera and now Corona have erased out human population in several areas of the world. In the US, Covid-19 had already taken more than 200,000 lives in recent times.

C. Pestilences and their impact on Population:

In 1918 the Spanish Flu killed nearly 50 million. It was a dangerous form of influenza. The HIV aid has been going on for several years. It originated in Camerouns and spread to Congo. At least 38 million people were believed to have HIV virus in 2018. The Justinian plagues killed 25 million people in 541. It was reported that rats

in Egyptian boats caused the pandemic and it spread in the Eastern Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Justinian. The Antonine Plague was rampant from 164 to 180 and an estimated 5 million died. The

Cholera which started in 1817 from Calcutta killed millions. It was effective health measures that put an end to it.

D. Population and Development:

Awareness of population trends is vital for a country's planning and development. Malthus highlighted the need to match development and food production to match increase of population. China is able to manage its population increase due to its technical expertise and planned population control. India lags far behind, though it is making magnificent strides in information technology. Countries with less population density like Australia and Canada are able to take in immigrants from other countries as human resources are vital for their development progress. Countries like the US, UK, France have become target of illegal immigrants who try to migrate into them for better life or economic prospects. Many Hispanics illegally get

into US from the Mexican border. France is being targeted by immigrants from Italy and North African countries through their Italian border. U.K is sought after by people from all over the world due

to its educational institutions and economical standing. The general causes for relocation are said to be climate condition, retirement, employment conditions, political conditions and family conditions. For example, large number of Sri Lankan Tamils relocated after the communal riots in their country in 1983. They have gone and settled mostly in India, Canada, Switzerland and Australia. Many young people look for opportunity and adventure when they decide to immigrate. However, population keeps on increasing

and the world's ethnic groups get mixed up due to interracial marriages. Even within a country, some areas are very densely populated but others are left with barren spaces. In Canada, Ontario is much desired by immigrants and hence relatively denser. When people live together, there are both advantages and disadvantages. Now people of different culture have learnt to appreciate and embrace the best in each of them. They emulate their way of life, pass-time, food habits, dress norms and anything that interests them. Recently I found a white gentleman waiting in the queue for Brinjal curry and roti in a Tamil restaurant. The whites find the Sri Lankan dishes cheap and tastier. However, in these COVID days living together has become a challenge and areas with thin populations are considered safer. Thickly populated countries like India and Bangladesh find it difficult to implement the COVID restrictions successfully. Planned management of population is vital for any country's welfare and advancement.



High School Exams are Important

By: Jenny Ranjithkumar

Students are offered many programs and opportunities throughout high school. In order to assess the overall coursework and understanding of students, exams are given. At the end of every semester, it is a student's responsibility to study and ask questions where necessary. Though exams seem intense, it benefits students' future. Exams offer students the opportunity to review everything they have learned in a semester, give teachers the ability to assess student understanding and the effectiveness of their teaching, and offers students the opportunity to be rewarded with high marks for their studies. Exams also help students build a good foundation for similar courses in the future.

Every semester, students are asked to reflect on their coursework. Exams at the end of the semester is an opportunity for students to be successful. As students begin to study, they learn how to study effectively. Students finish learning an entire course in a few weeks before the exams. Using their learning and time management skills, students review all the concepts and units learned in a course. In order to study effectively, students find ways to organize their work and reflect if time is well-managed. Since students find exam weeks to be intense, they will have the ability and energy to be successful in the final exams. From this, high school students will learn to manage other intense moments in their studies. Exams can cause a build-up of anxiety and stress. When students use their time wisely, it will help them succeed in their final exams. When students are able to memorize during high-stress times, it truly demonstrates how much work and effort students put into studying. Most of the time, grade 9 students are more afraid and anxious. During exam time, some schools offer tutoring and assistance from both teachers and older students. Teachers give advice on how to succeed in exams and effective time management. As

a result, students are able to reflect on their coursework effectively, even during stressful times.

Exams also give teachers the ability to test students on the concepts taught in class. There are students that listen attentively in class and others who are often distracted. In order to assess the students' understanding, teachers test students on the entirety of a course. This will especially help assess students' overall understanding. In order to perform well in tests and quizzes, students should organize work by topics, units, and tests. In order to review the concepts of a unit, students should look back on homework questions and class notes. Based on students' performance on tests and exams, teachers can gauge students' understanding and organizational skills. Exams also allow students to be rewarded for their studies if they achieve a high mark. Through exams, teachers can tell if time was well-managed by students. In order to be successful on a final assessment, self-assessment is important. Students should take time to review work from the beginning. In addition, this will improve the student's overall understanding of a course and memorization skills. Exams will be effective to teachers as it helps them to gauge student understanding and effectiveness of their own teaching.

Exams from each semester give students the opportunity to earn higher marks. Students will put all their efforts into studying and reviewing. The knowledge obtained will lay a strong foundation for courses in the future which build on top of this knowledge. When students earn a good mark in a course, it motivates them to take other courses related to the subject. Students will have the excitement and interest to progress their way through high school. Based on one's interest in high school, course selection becomes a less frustrating and confusing time. As students obtain good grades from exams,

it will motivate them to consider careers in that subject area. The interests students have lets them see the opportunities to possible careers. For example, if a student performs well in math throughout high school, they can become a mathematician or an accountant. A students' career choice will evolve as they continue to see their exam marks. The higher their marks, the higher the chances to be accepted into university or college of the students' choice. High marks will reach the admission requirements to a program of interest. Students will have the ability to focus on future careers.



- Jenny Ranjithkumar

High school students learn and explore education for a better future. Students learn different concepts in courses and are assessed for the overall coursework. Final exams give students the capability to manage time and in studying and earn good marks. It helps students to learn similar courses as moving into the next step in education. Students learn and discover new things to help in their future career plan.



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By OUE Research Institute

It is a harvesting festival. It can be considered the 'thanksgiving festival' because it is celebrated to thank the Sun God for keeping us healthy and helping farmers get better-yielding crops. As we know, agriculture provides food for a living, which inclines towards nature. The Pongal is referred to as Uttarayan, which bears special significance in Hindu mythology and is considered extremely auspicious.

Pongal is celebrated primarily by the Tamil worldwide and observed around January 14—depending on the Tamil solar calendar. It is mainly dedicated to Sun. Pongal, meaning "to boil" or "overflow," is also the main dish made and eaten during the festival. The plate is harvested rice put in milk, ghee, and jaggery to make a sweet rice pudding.

The Sun (Surya)



The Hindu Vedas declare that in the beginning, God manifested Himself as the Creator of the universe, the collective totality encompassing all things. The knowledge and practice of worship of the multiple Gods awaken the devotee a spirit of reverence and understanding. He attains self-realization, and the deep mysteries of creation are unfolded to him. Surya or Sun God occupies a prime place in God's pantheon as he is the chief solar deity in Hinduism. The worship of the sun is one of the Shanmathas or six schools of Hindu religion.

Surya Siddhanta

Surya Siddhanta is the first among the traditions or doctrines (Siddhanta) in the Vedic era's astronomy. It is the oldest ever book globally, which describes the Earth as a sphere but not flat; gravity is the reason for objects falling on the ground. It is the knowledge that the Sun god gave to an Asura called Maya in Treta Yuga. The first version of Surya Siddhanta must have been known around 2 million years ago. However, the present version is believed to be more than 2500 years old, making it the oldest book on Earth in Astronomy.

This book covers day and night about Lord Brahma, length of the year of gods and demons, the elapsed period since creation, how planets move eastwards and sidereal revolution, the earth's diameter, circumference, eclipses, and the color of the eclipsed portion of the moon. It explains the astronomical basis for the week's sequence of days named after the Sun, Moon, etc. Citation of the Surya Siddhanta is also found in the works of Aryabhata. The work as preserved and edited by Burgess (1860) dates to the Middle Ages. Utpala,

a 10th-century commentator of Varahamihira, quotes six shlokas of the Surya Siddhanta of his day, not one of which is to be found in the text now known as the Surya Siddhanta. Bhaskaracharya modified the present version during the Middle Ages. The present Surya Siddhanta may nevertheless be considered a direct descendant of the text available to Varahamihira (who lived between 505–587 CE). It also formed the basis of modern Trigonometry even so many years before western discovery.

Vedic period

Without Sun, there is not living and non-living being on the planet. Therefore, the Sun has been worshipping God. The Vedas glorify Surya as the first cause of the whole universe. He is said to be the eye of Agni, Varuna, and Mitra in the Vedas. He is said to be the conqueror of diseases and the bestower of good health.

The Rig Veda mentions the image of Surya where he is said to sit on a lotus in his chariot of seven golden horses. Aruna, the deity of dawn, is his charioteer, the elder brother of Garuda, the Lord Vishnu's vehicle. Aruna's vast and robust body is said to shelter the world from Surya's blaze as he stands in front of Surya. Several hymns are extolling Surya as the destroyer of darkness and the sign of good. The Vedic Rishis believed in the mystic unity of the whole creation with the view that the Sun's light and the inner divine light were in reality not different. The seven horses as the days of the week or color of the sunlight. The most critical Mantra dedicated to the Sun God is the Gayatri Mantra from the Rig Veda.

Vedic Astrology

Surya is one of the most important planets in Vedic astrology. He is associated with success, fame, authority, and will power. Vedic astrology dedicates a complete chapter to Surya, The palm containing the Sunline is the indicator of Surya, and a strong sun line indicates success in life. The presence of Surya in the tenth house is said to be the strongest.

Upanishads and Puranas

The Sun God is worshipped in the Upanishads as the creator of day and night, the giver of light and heat, the God of Vegetation and fertility. The Suryopanishad states that any Sun's worshipper will become intelligent, all-powerful, and enjoy a long life. According to the Brahma Sutras, the Word Sun (or light) implies Brahman. The Puranas have instances where the Surya mantra was chanted to remove various afflictions. The Sun's glory and greatness have been eulogized in practically all the Shrutis, Agamas, and epics in Hindu scriptures. One of the most famous Mantras of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad venerates the Sun-god while praying for illuminating the inner Divine light.

Science and Sun

The Sun is the center of the universe with planets orbiting around it and the reason for life on earth. It kills harmful bacteria, and its rays provide vitamins, vitality, and energy to humanity. The day-night cycle, respiration, photosynthesis, rainfall, and al-

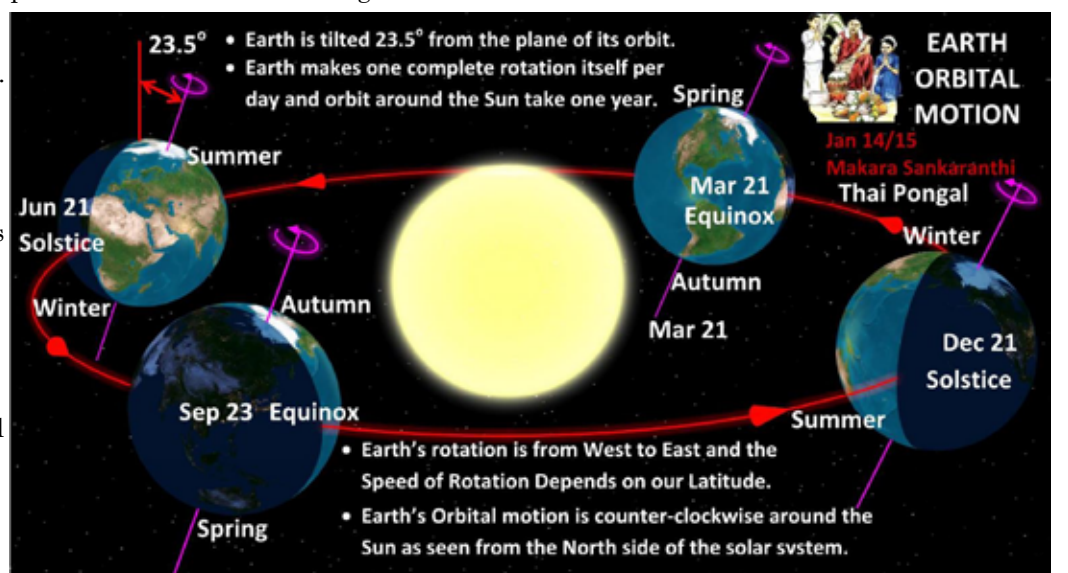


most all processes are governed by the Sun. Ultra-violet rays in the right proportion like sunbathing, chromotherapy, and phototherapy can heal several skin ailments. It is also used to sanitize tools and water. Solar energy and solar power are being harnessed in recent times. It is an essential renewable energy source that would reduce pollution, global warming, and dependence on other exhaustible energy and power sources.

Lord Surya is revered as the source of heat, light, and energy in the universe. He is the deity of all nourishment and the dispeller of darkness. Chanting his name is said to increase the purity of mind and mitigate all sorrows. He is the pivot over which the universe functions and bears great significance in Hinduism in freeing the mind from miseries and leading the devotee to happiness and peace.



Tamil Heritage Month also falls in January. There are several celebrations organized throughout Canada to celebrate the Tamil Heritage. During these ceremonies, the Tamil Heritage Anthem sang, and the International Tamil Scholars accepted this anthem in South Africa during the International Conference on Tamil Culture in 2001. We wish a Happy Thai Pongal and Tamil Heritage Month to all.





Reclaim debt control

– save time and money, too

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

Eliminates high-interest, high-cost loans -- by consolidating car payments, education loans, lines of credit and expensive credit card payments into one, lower-interest loan.

Lowers your monthly interest payments -- by consolidating your debts, you can seek out a lower overall interest rate than the combined rate you're currently paying on all your debts. When you've consolidated all your loans, you then have two choices:

Keep your "pre-consolidation" payment amount – because you're paying a lower interest rate on your consolidated loan, by applying the same payment amount towards your debt you will be putting extra money towards the principal debt repayment and will eliminate your debt much faster.

Keep your amortization or debt payback period the same – your new lower-interest

Consolidated loan means a reduced

payment amount and the creation of additional cash flow that you can use to reach other financial life goals.

Here are a few other debt management suggestions:

Consider consolidating through a home equity loan – you'll pay a much lower interest rate than on many other types of loans and especially your credit cards that can range from 19 to 28 percent interest on outstanding balances.

Keep amortization to a reasonable timeframe – aim for repayment within five years.

A line of credit is not for everyone – although it provides added flexibility for your borrowing needs, if you have trouble sticking to a budget and typically have little money left at the end of the month to apply to your debt, a personal loan or a refinanced mortgage might be better options because they require a defined principal re-payment plan instead of allowing

for interest-only payments.

Keep one credit card for emergencies – and cut up all the rest until you have control of your debt.

Be cautious about debt counseling companies – be sure the company is reputable and is focused on your best financial interests. It's a good idea to speak with a professional advisor about creating a debt management plan that works for you. And once you've done that, take steps to create a longer-term financial plan. After all, with your debt under control and

better cash flow, you can really start saving toward all your life goals.

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.

IG WEALTH MANAGEMENT

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7 Things You Can Do When You Are Debt Free

Being stuck in a debt trap ties up your money so you can't do all the things you'd like to do with it. Over time, the constant pressure of debt can also damage your work, health, and relationships. Freeing yourself from debt can make your life better in just about every way. In this article, we are going to highlight and expatiate on 7 things you can do when you are Debt Free.

1. Start with Alternative Investments

Now that you have more money freed up each month you have the freedom of looking for ways to earn even more. One of these methods could be through alternative investments. Some things to consider include: Investing in Real Estate, Investing in Peer to Peer Lending Learning How to Trade Stocks.

Equally important, be sure to thoroughly research any new investment idea. Learn as much as you can before investing large amounts!

2. Increase Your Savings

If you have been living in a starter emergency fund while paying down your debt then there's no doubt, now is the time to beef it up. If your emergency fund is full you can also consider things like car savings or a house down payment.

3. It is vital to pay off Your Mortgage

The mortgage is usually the last debt to be paid off. Once you pay off your mortgage you will have extra breathing room in your monthly budget. Not only will it free up extra money every month, but it provides added financial security during a housing crisis, allows you to save

more, or even lets you chase down your dreams that needed extra financial backing.

4. Put More toward Retirement

Even increasing your retirement savings by 5 or 10% can go a long way. This is one of the best strategies for reducing the taxes you have to pay before the end of the year.

5. Start a Side Business

When you're saddled with debt taking any type of risk with income can seem scary. Perhaps that debt has held you back from trying out a new side business idea you've been interested in? If so, now is a good time to get your feet wet and give your idea a fair try.

6. Reevaluate Your Income

In this realm, one vital thing to do is reevaluate your income. You've had all of your extra money

going toward your debt payoff and it's now time to redirect the money somewhere else. Furthermore, if you've been working yourself to the bone and pinching pennies over the last several months or years take the time now to figure out how you want to reallocate your income.

7. Keep out of Debt

You have worked so hard to get rid of your debt. Do not let it come back. Keep your cash savings high so that you can cover emergencies and plan for future purchases. Don't rely on your credit cards or personal loans for anything.

In a nutshell, the above ideas are the most suitable things you can do when you are debt-free.

In case of you have credit or debt issues visit www.gtacredit.com or call 416 650 1100



Notice to Sri Lankan Pensioners

Acceptance and Attestation of Life/Residence Certificate 2021

The Consul General's Office in Toronto wishes to inform Sri Lankan pensioners that

Life/Residence Certificates for 2021 are now accepted for attestation by the Consulate until 31 March 2021.

Since, the Consul General's Office has to strictly follow the Ontario health guidelines with regard to COVID-19, and restrictions, all pensioners are kindly requested to adhere to the following instructions;

1. Duly fill the Life/Residence Certificates 2021 and place your signature at category 03 (front page down)

and the Declaration category on the reverse side of the form.

2. With duly filled form attach copies of the following

i. Only the photo page of your valid Sri Lankan or Canadian passport.

ii. Pension card, and

iii. A self-addressed stamped envelope in order to send you the attested copy

3. You can only drop off the form with the attachments in the special box at the

Consul General's Office or send by post.

If you wish to send by post please get your doctors attestation with his/hernames stamp on the Certification category of the reverse side of the form. In order to avoid Covid-19 risk, specially disabled, medically, physically challenged and seniors are kindly requested to refrain from visiting our Office and instead send their forms with doctors attestation post with self-addressed stamped envelope.

4. Due to Covid-19 risk, entrance to the building is restricted and facility is not provided to fill the form at the Office. No waiting will be available

until Ontario

Covid-19 restrictions are eased/lifted. Therefore, please fill your forms at home.

5. Upon receipt of your form, this Office will attest and forward the originals to the

Pensions Department and send your copy to you in the self-addressed envelope within 10 days.

6. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation and wish you good health.

7. Visit our website



MONSOON KITCHEN

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.

Chilli Cheese Toast

2021 is finally here, but more importantly we've once and for all gotten rid of 2020; a year of many sorrows and a few joys too. Whilst we wait hoping that this year is a little more easy for everyone, we present you with a super easy recipe which will be one to keep all our spirits up.

Ingredients:

- ✓ 1 cup grated English Cheddar cheese
- ✓ 1/2tsp salt
- ✓ 2 finely sliced green chillies
- ✓ ¼ tsp red chilli powder
- ✓ ¼ tsp coriander powder
- ✓ ¼ onion, diced

2 slices of bread

Butter (for spreading)

Method:

Toast your slices of bread until lightly brown and butter generously. Turn your grill to max. In a bowl, add all the ingredients together, minus the bread and butter of course, and combine well. Top each slice with the mixture generously and pop under the grill until the cheese has melted and is oozing! Perfect with a cup of tea!

As always, we want to see your creations! Tag us in your pictures on Instagram, using #monsoonjournal, or send us a picture via email. If you are looking for a particular recipe, send us an email at editor4mj@gmail.com - your request could be on the next Monsoon Kitchen!



2021 COOKING CLASSES

Interactive group cooking classes

- 2 Jan Sambhar
- 10 Jan * Sweet and savory pongal
- 16 Jan Rasam
- 30 Jan Salmon and chicken sambal
- 13 Feb Nasi Goreng
- 27 Feb Chicken curry
- 13 Mar Chicken Biryani
- 27 Mar Kurma
- 10 Apr Puliyodharai
- 24 Apr Mango curry

Email: Tamilfoodclasses@gmail.com to book a spot

Classes are CAD \$30-\$40/ GBP £20-£30 per session | Limited spaces only

Classes will be morning sessions conducted online

*This will be an afternoon session (3-5pm EST)



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Canadian Tamil Congress' Activities

13th Annual Thai Pongal Dinner & Thai Pongal Celebrations

CTC's 13th Annual Thai Pongal Dinner & Tamil Heritage Month Celebrations was held on January 18th 2020 at the Hilton Suites in Markham. The "Leaders for Change" award for 2020 was presented to Ms. Kanimozhi Mathi for her successful legal intervention in protecting Keezhadi, Tamil Nadu an area of great archaeological significance for Tamils. The "Service Excellence Award" was presented to Dr. Thangamuthu Sathiyamoorthy, Director of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital for his immense and selfless contribution towards Health and Education in the over the decade aftermath of the Sri Lankan civil war that mostly impacted the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka.

CTC Advocacy Team at the United Nations Human Rights Council

In January of 2020, at the invitation of USTAG, a CTC representative participated in two meetings in Washington DC. Another member of CTC's UNHRC team was in Geneva for the early part of the UNHCR session that occurred prior to the COVID 19 pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, CTC has worked with its Global partners via various virtual meetings including two with the Office of the High Commissioner. CTC along with its global partners also had a meeting with the Canadian mission in Geneva related to the outstanding UNHRC resolution. Finally, CTC engaged with a 7 member Global affairs team related to imposing the Magnitsky Act on those who engaged in human rights violation over the course of the Sri Lankan Civil War and its aftermath.

Support for COVID 19 pandemic

CTC spearheaded the Tamil Canadian support campaign for Markham Stouffville Hospital along with the Canadian Tamils Professional Association, Centre for Leadership and Innovation and the Jarvis Sport Club. The Campaign raised over \$10,000 to fund the purchase of key personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks, gowns, face shields and gloves. In addition, CTC supported the Markham Stouffville Hospital and the Scarborough Hospital with supply of snacks and hygiene kits. CTC donated surgical masks, gloves and dental hygiene kits to the Orchard Villa Long Term Care Home (



Dr. T. Sathiyamoorthy
Service Excellence Award 2020



Kanimozhi Mathi
Leaders for Change Award 2020



Pickering, Ontario) on June 9th 2020. CTC also promoted a blood donation drive as well as support for food banks.

COVID 19 Food Relief in Sri Lanka & India

CTC raised funds for COVID-19 Food Relief for the most vulnerable families in the war affected Northern & Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. The funds raised by CTC provided one week's worth of dry food supplies to approximately 3,200 families in all 8 districts of the Northern & Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka by the North & East Economic Development (NEED) Centre which was established by CTC to coordinate Tamil diaspora investments and expertise. In addition, CTC also helped raise

the support for 4,000 more families through organizations and business entities.

CTC also supported COVID-19 Food Relief for families in some rural villages of Tamil Nadu and to the Eelam Tamil Refugee Camps in Tamil Nadu. The RISE Global and OFERR India organizations supported and coordinated the dry food distribution for these families in Tamil Nadu, India.

May Remembrance

CTC in partnership with the Australian Tamil Congress (ATC), the British Tamils Forum (BTF), the Irish Tamil Forum (ITF), the Solidarity Group for Peace and Justice (SGPJ-South Africa) and the United States Tamil Action Group (USTAG) hosted Global Simulcasting of Mullivaikkaal

Remembrance on May 18 2020. The virtual event commemorated the 11th year anniversary of the loss of tens of thousands of people in Mullivaikkaal, Sri Lanka during the last stages of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

Meeting with Ontario Minister of Finance

CTC hosted a virtual meeting with the former Ontario Minister of Finance the Honourable Rod Phillips on June 25th 2020 to discuss CTC's contributions and provincial government's initiatives and support program. The Premier of Ontario Honourable Doug Ford also joined the meeting briefly.

YDocs Film Festival

(www.cficanada.ca)

7th Annual YDocs - Youth Short Documentary Movie Competition was held virtually by the Centre for Leadership and Innovation (www.cficanada.ca), a brainchild of CTC. This competition was open to students between the ages of 11 to 18. The innovative program endeavours to teach project management, issue resolution, team working and leadership skills and movie making techniques.

Youth Leadership Program

(www.cficanada.ca)

The Centre for Leadership and Innovation (CFLI) hosted the term-end celebratory event, Milestones, for its Youth Leadership Program in November 2020. These fun-filled events were chaired and run by youth and included speeches, competitions and presentations. Today, approximately 450 youth are enrolled in this program.

33rd FeTNA Convention

(www.fetna.org)

CTC is a Canadian member organization of Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA) and actively participates in its annual convention. In 2020, FETNA's 33rd convention was hosted on a virtual basis, and CTC participated in this year's convention as well. CTC's former board member and current member Mr. Sivam Velupillai, who was previously on CTC Board and is a current CTC member was elected as FeTNA's Treasurer for 2020.

Chair in Tamil Studies at the University of Toronto

(www.torontotamilchair.ca)

CTC along with Tamil Chair Inc. USA is spearheading a historical campaign to establish a Tamil



Chair at the University of Toronto's Scarborough Campus. As per the agreement with the University, the endowment of \$3 million required to establish the Tamil Chair at the University of Toronto must be fully funded. To date, over \$2.25 million in donations and pledges has been collected. Over the year the Toronto Tamil Chair Committee has organized various online events in support of the Tamil Chair.

world and provided an opportunity for a number of Canadian artists to showcase their talents internationally. Tamil Fest 2020 also supported two key initiatives this year important to the Tamil Canadian Community, namely the Toronto Tamil Chair initiative at the University of Toronto and re-settlement support projects in war affected Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka.

Tamil Canadian Walk
(www.tamilcanadianwalk.ca)

CTC hosted the 12th Annual Tamil Canadian Walk virtually on September 19th 2020, to support two important projects in the war affected Tamil regions of Sri Lanka. CTC with the support of its partners, the Trincomalee Welfare Association Canada and the Tamil National Alliance Canada raised \$30,000 towards the Thennamarawady Farm project in the Trincomalee District. Another \$15,000 was raised to implement the Home Food Garden (Food Security) project in 10 rural villages belonging to 4 districts of Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. A total of 1000 families are to be supported in establishing their own home food garden in 2021.

North & East Economic Development (NEED) Centre
(www.needcentre.org)

NEED Centre, a non-profit organization in Sri Lanka with the support of CTC and Canadian Tamils' Humanitarian Association (CTHA) initiated its home food garden project (follow-up action to its distribution of COVID-19 dry food supplies) in 8 villages to benefit 100 families in each of these carefully selected villages. These villages are from 3 districts in Sri Lanka, namely Jaffna (2), Kilinochchi (2) and Batticaloa (3). NEED Centre also implemented the Thennamarawady Farm project with the support received from Tamil Canadian Walk. Thennamarady's Goat Farm is now fully operational from September 30th 2020 with more than 90 goats and 3 youth from Thennamarawady village have now been employed in the farm.

37th year – Black July Remembrance
(www.blackjuly83.com)

CTC virtually hosted the 37th Year Black July remembrance event "In Search of Our Roots" to educate the youth about the tragic circumstances that led many Tamils to uproot their lives and families. The event included meaningful conversations between survivors and youth.

TamilFest – Sixth Annual Tamil Street Festival
(www.tamilfest.ca)

The Sixth Annual Tamil Fest was celebrated virtually on August 29th and 30, 2020. This two-day event featured live performances from popular local and international Tamil artists. The event was viewed by tens of thousands of people around the



The Rise North America Summit
(www.tamilrise.org)

CTC partnered with RISE Global and the RISE USA to host the RISE North America Summit virtually on October 23 & 24, 2020. The RISE is a global organization of Tamil entrepreneurs, professionals and enthusiasts who work in partnership with people across the world.

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Wishing Everyone a **2021**

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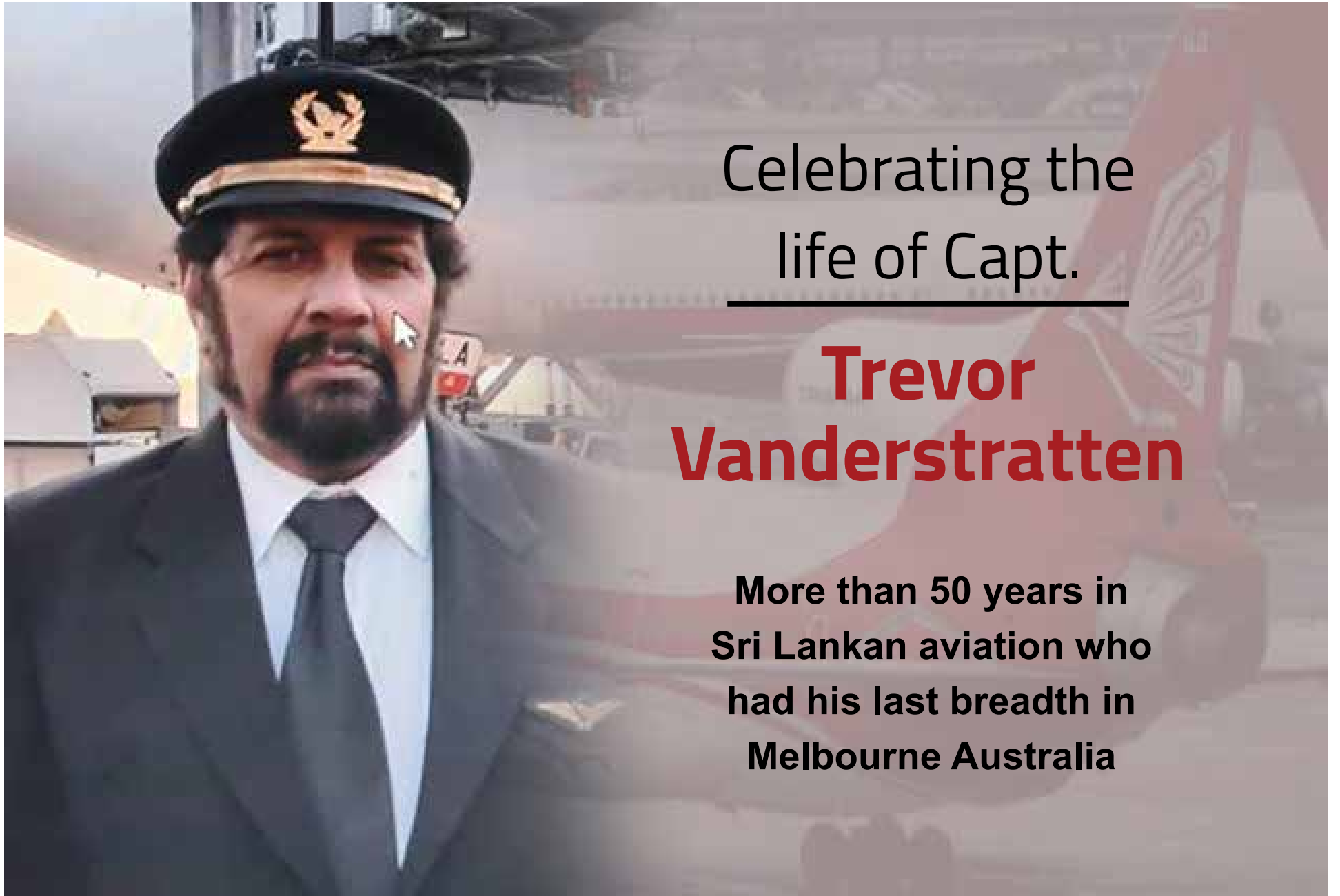
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TRIBUTE



Celebrating the life of Capt.

Trevor Vanderstratten

**More than 50 years in
Sri Lankan aviation who
had his last breadth in
Melbourne Australia**

Trevor, as I came to know him when I joined the Sri Lanka's pioneer airline, Air Ceylon in 1971, used to meet him occasionally at head office Chatham Street in the accounts department. I went to work at the flight Operations Dept. of Air Ceylon, and used to meet Trevor practically every 4th day or so while working at the operations at the airport Katunayaka.

He was a trainee pilot in the DC3 s (The Good Old Dakota Aircrafts) and which was used mostly for flying, in the domestic sectors. My first impression of him was, really of an awesome hand some looking man. His trade mark was his "Ray Ban Gold Plated" sun glasses., he used to wear that at all times, and I used to think that I was looking at Clint Eastwood. The only thing missing was the gun in the Holster. (Trevor was too gentle and too good for that.) He had a great personality.

As time passed I got to know him well, a person who was always full of fun, friendly and really had a charming personality. He was one of the tallest pilots among the cockpit crews,. there were others too. He was one of a kind who never got involved in any politics among the pilots and kept a distance other than one of his closet companions and fellow pilot Capt. Hiranjan Bibile. He really carried himself above all the frays and nonsense that was going around. I would say the atmosphere was that not conducive enough for young pilots at that time, for reasons known to some, but since I worked day in and day out in that atmosphere, aware of this. This atmosphere prevailed until an ex Air India Capt. of Sri Lankan origin was

brought in to train and graduate them as captains for the airline. Late Capt. C.K. Pathy (bless his soul) eventually trained about 8/10 of them as first officers on the Avro. Later Capt. Pathy trained them as young captains and elevated them to fly in command on the turbo prop aircraft Avro HS 748. Trevor was one them who got his captaincy and started flying as captain on the Avro aircrafts, which was operating the flights to Jaffna, Trichy and to the Maldiv Islands. I still remember very vividly when he would see me after a flight at the Katunayake airport would immediately offer me Benson or Dunhill cigarettes he smokes, that was the kind of person Trevor. A check or training Captain will graduate or check out a pilot as a captain in the aviation parlance but this does not make a person a great human being or as a captain among people, but it's the way manner that he conducts himself with his colleagues and fellow associates, eventually makes him a great human being and above all an adorable one. Trevor exemplified in this quality like few others and he was second to none in his relationship with all he met and touched their lives. Unequivocally I was one of them. No ego, arrogance at all, down to earth, a humble, giant human being for me. He was so tall and me just opposite.

He would tell me towards the end of the week: "... Blue please, make sure to send me the roster for the, flight deck crew for the oncoming week through a crew member or through the driver of the crew transport, which was normally prepared by late John Vethavanam & typed by Madame Shanthi very efficiently. But

Trevor would always reciprocate anything you do for

him in a different way. I remember many times whenever he is on a Maldiv sector flights will always bring some maldiv fish for me also, a great gesture of him. After a year or so Trevor used to fly on and off as a super numeracy crew member on the Trident aircraft, HS721, jet Aircraft on the international sectors like Singapore, . Bangkok (eventually may be as a first officer on the Trident, could not remember well).

Eventually when Air Ceylon was forced to close down in mid of 1979, Trevor joined the newly formed Air Lanka and had no turning back in his aviation career.

He retired as a senior captain from Sri Lankan Airlines and enjoyed his life with his adoring wife Jenny & his son Dirk.

He will be greatly, surely missed by his fellow colleagues, friends, associates and by all, whom he touched their lives. But more especially by his good old friend of many, many years, none the other than Capt. Hiranjan Bibile.

Trevor "Hats off to you" and to your wonderful service to the Aviation industry of Sri Lanka and for your easy going manners and pleasant personality at all times.

Blessed to have had known you and worked at least for seven great years which enriched my life and a sincere thanks for it.

May God bless your great Heart and your wonderful Soul Sir.

Blue. K.N. Sivagnanasunderam
(Toronto)



DURHAM TAMIL ASSOCIATION

DTA Celebrates 20 Years



DTA SERVING DURHAM TAMILS DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED AND CHALLENGING TIMES

Durham Tamils Association is always looking for ways to help its members, youth, and seniors. During this pandemic period and this winter, DTA is continuing to provide free virtual activities almost every day. Thanks to the fabulous volunteers who do not expect anything but serve the community. DTA truly appreciates their continued support. Also, DTA's Tamil school continues to provide virtual Tamil classes for students.

DTA's 2021 Tamil Panchanga Calendar

Great news! DTA's 2021 Tamil Panchanga Calendar 2021 (j k p g Q r h q f e h l f h l p 2021) is available for free. There is a lot of valuable information in it.

ZOOM MADE EASY -

Zoom touch technology is easy to use. Larry Rosen of the Ajax Public Library presented DTA with clear and concise information on how to use zoom properly.

19th Youth Festival and 20th Year Anniversary

DTA had its 19th Youth Festival and 20th Year Anniversary which was successfully celebrated virtually. This was another testament to DTA's amazing youth who provided a great virtual show that had over 6000 viewers. Thanks to all the volunteers who did lots of hard work behind the scenes. DTA thanks everyone who joined and showed their strong support to Durham Tamil Association. If you missed the celebrations or want to re-watch the celebrations, you can go to DTA's utube channel to find the videos of the celebrations.

Virtual Christmas Celebration

DTA had a great virtual Christmas party with many kids and families. Even though it is a virtual party, everyone dressed up and enjoyed the celebration which had many fun games. DTA thanks all the participants and

volunteers.

DTA's Seniors

DTA is keeping our seniors fully occupied with multiple free virtual classes and programs. DTA runs Seniors Chair Yoga Class, Mind Exercises, Mat Yoga Class, Cooking Classes, Health Seminars, Chess Club, Virtual Game Nights, Travel Around the World From Arm Chair, Crafting Classes (including free craft items), and much more for seniors. DTA is here to support you in any way. DTA is arranging to give the senior care package soon. Please register for virtual Seniors programs at www.durham-tamils.org

If you want to participate in DTA programs, please check DTA monthly calendars.

Tamil Heritage Month

DTA will be celebrating Tamil Heritage Month virtually. It will be every Sunday from January 3rd to 31st between 5 to 6:30 pm.

For more information, please visit DTA website at www.durhamtamils.org

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Durham Tamil Association wishes a Prosperous and Happy New Year to everyone.

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DURHAM TAMIL SENIORS WEEKLY PROGRAMS SCHEDULE						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	10:00 am-11am Mind exercises to experience complete peace & happiness 			10am-11:30am Virtual chair yoga class (1.5 hour) 	10:00am-11:00am Mind exercises to experience complete peace & happiness 	10:00PM-11:30PM Virtual Mat yoga class
	11:00am-12:30pm Drop in Zoom Sessions for Tamil Seniors 					
			5:00PM-6:30PM இலக்கியமும் வாழ்வியலும் கேள்வி பதில் நிகழ்ச்சி 			5:30PM-6:30PM Durham Tamils Got Talents
6:00PM-7:30PM Tamil Discussion Group 	5:00PM-6:30PM Travel around the world from arm chair 	5:00pm-6:30pm Beading and clay workshop 	Medical Seminar (Every third week- 6:30-8:00pm) 		7:30PM-9:00PM Virtual Game Night 	



SPECIAL FEATURE

HISTORIC INFLUENCE OF HINDUISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN ARCHITECTURAL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AREAS

– PART II

By: KIDAMBI RAJ

Historical background of the spread of Hinduism in INDONESIA

Hinduism came to Indonesia in the 1st-century through traders, sailors, scholars and priests. A fusion of pre-existing *Javanese folk religion*, culture and Hindu ideas, that from the 6th century also synthesized *Buddhist* ideas as well, evolved as the Indonesian version of Hinduism. These ideas continued to develop during the *Srivijaya* and *Majapahit* empires. About 1400 CE, these kingdoms were introduced to Islam from coast-based Muslim traders, and thereafter Hinduism mostly vanished from many of the islands of Indonesia. As per the 2010 census of Indonesia, Hinduism is practised by 1.7% of the total population, and by more than 83% of the population of Bali. Hinduism is one of the six official religions of Indonesia. The Indonesian government has officially recognised six religions: Islam, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Yet, the country shares a beautiful history with Hinduism, including several historical sites, which show the long association of Indonesians with the Hindu religion. Parts of Indonesia were once under the rule of the *Chola dynasty* when a slew of temples were constructed there. Archeological evidence suggests *Tarumanagara* as one of the earliest known Hindu kingdoms in Indonesia

After Indonesia gained its independence from Dutch colonial rule, it officially recognized only monotheistic religions under pressure from political Islam. Further, Indonesia required an individual to have a religion to gain full Indonesian citizenship rights, and officially Indonesia did not recognize Hindus. This joint petition quoted the following Sanskrit mantra from Hindu scriptures: **Om tat sat ekam eva advitiam** – Translation: Om, thus is the essence of the all pervading, infinite, undivided one. Currently *Hindu Dharma* is one of the five officially recognized monotheistic religions in Indonesia. These factors and political activity had led to a certain resurgence of Hinduism outside of its Balinese stronghold.

In February 2020, President Joko Widodo has issued a presidential regulation elevating the status of Hindu Dharma State Institute in Denpasar, Bali into the country's first Hindu state university, named **Gusti Bagus Sugriwa State Hindu University**. This institution of Hindu higher study started out as a state academy for teachers of Hindu

religion in 1993, before being converted into the Hindu Religion State College in 1999, and then into the Hindu Dharma State Institute in 2004.

The national emblem of Indonesia is called *Garuda Pancasila*. The main part of Indonesian national emblem is the **Garuda**. The **Garuda** is a large legendary bird, bird-like creature, or humanoid bird that appears in both **Hindu and Buddhist mythology**. In Hinduism, Garuda is a **Hindu divinity**, usually the mount of the Lord Vishnu. Garuda is depicted as having the golden body of a strong man with a white face, red wings, and an eagle's beak and with a crown on his head. The story of Garuda's birth and deeds is told in the first book



Prambanan.

of the great epic Mahabharata. Not only the national emblem but also the national airline of Indonesia is named **Garuda Indonesia**.

Why did a Muslim majority country have Ganesha on its currency note?

Lord Ganesha's status as the god of wisdom, art and science could be one of the reasons he was featured on the currency note. Before the 20,000 Rupiah paper currency with the picture of Lord Ganesha on it was formally released, the Finance Minister of Indonesia stood up in the parliament and displayed that currency and explained that Lord Ganesha's picture was in the currency because he said that Lord Ganesha was known as a **remover of obstacles** and so, as a Finance Minister he wanted the Indonesian economy to keep moving ahead without any obstacle on its way.

Incidentally, Indonesia's first President Sukarno was named after the Mahabharata character *Karna*. His daughter **Megawati Sukarnoputri**, who later succeeded him, was named by former Odisha Chief Minister Biju

Patnaik. **Megawati** means *cloud goddess* in Sanskrit.

What is the cultural influence of Hinduism in present day South East Asia, especially Indonesia?

The heritage of Hinduism left a significant impact and imprint in *Javanese* art and culture. The wayang puppet performance as well as wayang wong dance and other Javanese classical dances are derived from episodes of Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Although the vast majority of Javanese now identify as Muslim, these art forms still survive. Hinduism has survived in varying degrees and forms on Java. Certain ethnic groups in Java, such as the *Tenggerese* and *Osing*, are also



Picture of Ganesha in Indonesian paper currency for 20000 Rupiah.

About Bali

Bali was historically a more *traditional* part of the country, a move resistant one to change. After Indonesia had adopted Hinduism, Bali, unlike the rest of Indonesia, had resisted conversion to *Confucianism*.

Bali is a province of Indonesia and the westernmost of the Lesser Sunda. Bali is part of the Coral Triangle, the area with the highest biodiversity of marine species especially fish and turtles. In this area alone, over 500. Bali is also known as the island of the Gods, due to the numerous idols of Balinese ancient Hinduism, which is enshrined in the local's daily life. With over 200,000 temples on the island it is evident to see that spirituality and community is integral to Balinese people; both town dwellers and in remote villages.

Balinese Hindu temple

The Balinese Temple is called *Pura*. These temples are designed on square Hindu Temple plan, as an open air worship place within enclosed walls, connected with series of intricately decorated gates to reach its compounds. Each of these temples has a more or less fixed membership; every Balinese belongs to a temple by virtue of descent, residence, or affiliation. Some house temples are associated with the family house compound (also called *banjar* in Bali), others are associated with rice fields, and still others with key geographic sites. In rural highlands of Bali, *banua* (or *wanwa*, forest domain) temples in each *desa* (village) are common. The island of Bali has over 20,000 temples, or about one temple for every 100 to 200 people. Temples are dedicated to local spirits as well as to deities found in India; for example, *Saraswati*, *Ganesha*, *Wisnu*, *Siwa*, *Parvati*, *Arjuna*, and others. The temple design similarly amalgamated the architectural principles in Hindu temples of India and regional ideas.

Each individual has a family deity, called *Kula Dewa*, who resides in the temple called the family temple that the individual and his family patronize. Balinese Hindu follow a 210-day calendar (based on rice crop and lunar cycles), and each temple celebrates its anniversary

SPECIAL FEATURE



once every 210 days. Each temple anniversary, as well as festivals and family events such as wedding include flowers, offerings, towering bamboos with decoration at the end and a procession. These are celebrated by the community with prayers and feast. Most festivals have a temple as venue, and they are often occasions for prayers, celebration of arts and community.

Top 10 Must Visit Hindu Temples in Indonesia

There are several Hindu temples in Indonesia known as **Candi, Pura** and **Kuil**, Indonesian term to refer a temple. These are ancient Hindu temples, Balinese temples or most famous Hindu temples in Bali and Indonesia include **Penataran, Jawi Temple, Kidal Temple, Surawana, Ijo Temple** and **Singhasari temple**.

1. Pura Besakih, Bali

Pura Besakih is the largest Hindu temple in Bali and one of the most popular Balinese Temple in Indonesia. The Besakih temple is dedicated to the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh). Pura Ulun Danu Bratan temple is dedicated to Lord siva and a major Saivite water temple on the island of Bali. Bali is an island unto itself amongst the 17,000 islands that make up Indonesia. The Island is still Hindu, whereas the majority of



Pura Besakih the Mother Temple.

the group of islands is now Muslim. Pura Besakih is the Hindu island's largest, most important and holiest temple. Sitting 1,000 meters up on slopes of massive Mount Agung in the eastern part of the island, the temple is worth a visit just for the view of the lush, rolling country side and the towering volcano above. There are 23 related temples that make up Pura



Goa Gajah.

Besakih but make sure to visit the largest and most impressive – Pura Besakih Agung. Be prepared for a bombardment of downtrodden locals

begging for your rupiah on the way to the temple.

2. Prambanan Temple, Java

Prambanan Temple is dedicated to the Trimurti in the city of **Yogyakarta**. The temple is the largest Hindu Temple in Indonesia and is one of the **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**. The largest Hindu temple in all of Indonesia and sits in the middle of the now-Muslim island of Java. Often referred to as the Hindu Masterpiece, this incomparable Temple is still being reconstructed. In fact, that is the first thing you will notice as you walk in the park of Parambanan, as the stone ruins of 224 outer temples lay scattered. As you ascend into the centre of the temple area, you will find eight major and eight minor temples. These ornately carved spires praise Trimurti, or the expression of God as Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Protector and Shiva the Destroyer. Visitors all marvel at the preservation of this mid 9th century construction.

3. Tanah Lot, Bali

Tanah Lot temple is an ancient Hindu temple and a must visit place in Bali. The temple sits on a large offshore rock and a popular tourist attraction in Bali for photography. In the heart of equatorial Indonesia, deep within lush landscapes, hides some of the most impressive ancient structures in the world. The Hindu and Buddhist temples of this island nation were painstakingly crafted with stone so that they would stand forever. Now they wait for you to find them. Put on a ceremonial sarong, quiet your mind and enjoy spirituality etched in stone that has been handed down through the ages and an overview of the most amazing temples in Indonesia.

4. Goa Gajah

You will find ornate cave carvings at Goa Gajah, south of Ubud on the island of Bali. You will enter the sacred area through the parking lot after walking past throngs of merchants urging you to buy a required ceremonial sarong. Choose to buy a local's garment or wait for the free sarong you can borrow as part of your entry fee at the gate. A cave with menacing characters carved into its face is the main attraction,

mentioned in Balinese poems dating as far back as 1365. Inside you will find sexual carvings like the phallic and yoni, symbols of Lord Shiva. The



Tanah Lot, Bali.

bathing pools in front of the cave, complete with beautiful female fountain sculptures, were discovered in the 1950's. The surrounding structures were added to the ancient site some times later.

5. Candi Plaosan

You will find that the Muslim locals take great pride in this central Java temple despite its Hindu-Buddhist dedication. You will enter the massive collection of temples past the watchful



Candi Plaosan.

gaze of the **dwarapalakas**, or temple guardians, each wielding a snake, a club or sword to fend off evildoers. The main attraction among the 248 perwara temples is the twin viharas, or main shrine buildings. These two multi-storey shrine buildings are perhaps the most impressive temple structures on all of Java.

6. Ratu Boko Temple

Sitting on the southern side of Central Java, the true ruins of Ratu Boko Temple are perched high on a plateau. Bring water and be prepared for lots of stairs in the heat. The crumbled remains of the structure suggest that the site was a fortified castle or mansion for the royal families of either the Sailendra or Mataram Kingdoms. There is a ruined outer wall, a dry moat, and, at the highest point in the area, a lookout pavilion. If you climb up to the pavilion yourself, you'll enjoy a panoramic view with a clean look at the nearby Prambanan temple with Mount Merapi. The sunset views are stunning.



Ratu Boko Temple.

7. Sewu Temple

The Buddhist universe manifests itself in the central temple of Mahadeva at Sewu Temple. Emanating out of the central temple are four rings containing 250 smaller temples dedicated to different Gods. Situated just about a mile from the Hindu Prambanan Temple, Sewu Temple is the second largest Buddhist temple on Java. The close proximity suggests that ancient Hindus and Buddhists lived in peace. The grand entrance to the main temple faces east and contains an inscription dating the building back to 792 AD. Sewu Temple was one of Java's major religiously active temples starting back in the 8th Century.



Pura Taman Ayun the beautiful Garden Temple.



Pura Tirta Empul the Holy Water Temple.



Bali Shiva.



Porobudur.



COMMUNITY WATCH

APPOINTMENTS

Compiled by Siva Sivapragasam

Ms. Dileeni Daniel-Selvaratnam appointed Governor of Anguilla



Ms. Dileeni Daniel-Selvaratnam of Sri Lankan origin has been appointed next Governor of Anguilla, a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean. She will succeed Tim Foy, OBE, in January 2021.

Selvaratnam has extensive experience in the government with her previous roles at the UK Department of Business and the Ministry of Justice.

She received her Master of Laws (LLM), Public International Law, from the University of London. She is the daughter of Mr. Daniel Selvaratnam from Araly.

Prabaharan Kumararatnam appointed Judge of the Appeal Court in Sri Lanka



Prabaharan Kumararatnam has been appointed as a Judge of the Appeal Court in Sri Lanka. He had been earlier a Puisne Judge in Fiji and his last appointment in Sri Lanka was Senior State Counsel at the Attorney General's Department.

Commercial Bank of Ceylon appoints former Chief Justice K. Sripavan as Chairman



The Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC has announced the appointment of former Sri Lankan Chief Justice Kanagasabapathy Sripavan as Chairman and senior academic Prof. A. K. W. Jayawardane as Deputy Chairman with effect from 21st and 29th December 2020, respectively.

Justice Sripavan and Prof. Jayawardane succeed Messrs. Dharma Dheerasinghe and Preethi Jayawardena, who retire from the positions of Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Sri Lanka's benchmark private bank after completing their tenures.

Quotable Quotes - 2020

By: Siva Sivapragasam

“They said it”



“In America, politicians don't take power — the people grant it to them. The flame of democracy was lit in this nation a long time ago. And we now know that nothing, not even a pandemic — or an abuse of power — can extinguish that flame. It is time to turn the page. To unite. To heal.”

- Joe Biden, U.S. President Elect



“Sadly, the next four to six months could be the worst of the pandemic. The IHME (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation) forecast shows over 200,000 additional deaths. If we would follow the rules, in terms of wearing masks and not mixing, we could avoid a large percentage of those deaths,”

- Bill Gates, the co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation



“If there is one overall prediction for 2021 that is easy to make it is this one: This coming year will be better in many respects than the one we are now ending. The Pandemic will largely be under control, vaccines will proliferate, and the global economy will rebound”

- Queen Elizabeth II



“We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return. We will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again.”

- Tony Burman, Toronto Star Columnist



“Let everything turn out to be great & way better than you ever imagined, in 2021. Believe me your current situation will pass. You will be on top of this world soon. You will improve every situation & circumstances not only for yourself but for everyone in your world.”

- Rajesh Goyal, Prof. (Dr.) Rajesh Goyal Dean and Professor at National Institute of Construction Management & Research (NICMAR) Kurukshetra, Haryana

COMMUNITY WATCH 

Election of Kamala Harris inspiring young Black Canadians toward politics - MPs

By: Raymond Rajabalan

The election of Kamala Harris as vice-president of the United States will inspire more young Black women in Canada to engage in politics and run for office, says Velma Morgan, a Black Canadian activist based in Toronto.



Velma Morgan –Black Canadian activist

Harris’s father was born in Jamaica, her mother in India. She is the first woman and the first Black or South Asian person elected to the vice-presidency. Through Morgan’s work as the chair of Operation Black Vote, a not-for-profit, multi-partisan organization that aims to get more Black people elected at all levels of government, she supported Annamie Paul in her bid for the Green party leadership.



Annamie Paul – Leader of Green Party

“The combination of those two (Harris and Paul), young girls are seeing themselves,” Morgan said in a recent interview.

“Representation does matter,” she said. “You can’t be what you don’t see.”

After the next election, those girls might also see a Black woman on the Conservatives’ front benches in Leslyn Lewis, who showed strongly in the last Tory leadership race and is the party’s nominated candidate in a solidly Conservative riding in southern Ontario.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, who became the first person of colour in Canada’s history to run for prime minister during the 2019 election, said Harris’s election will encourage a future generation of Canadian women to get involved and run in elections.



Jagmeet Singh NDP Leader

“Each person who breaks a barrier inspires more people,” he said in an interview.

“We’re only here today because of the people who broke barriers before us.”

Singh said he was happy about — and proud of — the positive impact he had on young people of colour in Canada during the election campaign in 2019.

Liberal MP Greg Fergus, who is Chair of the parliamentary Black caucus, said there is a need to elect more Black people to the House of



Greg Fergus Federal MP

Commons.

“I remember when there was only one Black MP in the House. And then we went to two, and then we stayed for a number of years, and then we went to five,” he said.

Fergus said there has been some

progress, but the number of Black MPs do not yet represent the “democratic weight” of the Black population in Canada. According to the 2016 census, there were just under 1.2 million Black people in Canada, making up 3.5 per cent of the country’s population.

Morgan said Canada needs more Black policy-makers. Her organization facilitates training sessions and fellowships programs for young Black Canadians to encourage more of them to run in elections.

“We’re giving them the tools to participate, whatever way they want to participate, whether it’s to run, or to volunteer or to just help out,” she said. “We’ve been trying to get the word out to say, ‘You know what, we’re here, there’s not a lot of us, but we can change that by bringing a lot more people on.”

NDP MP Matthew Green, a Black person representing the riding of Hamilton Centre, remembers in 2008 when he gathered with his community to celebrate the election of Barack Obama as the first Black president of the United States.

But he said the goal shouldn’t only



Matthew Green - NDP MP

be to achieve representation and reflect the diversity of the population. It should also be to achieve inclusion and equity.

Having diverse people, women elected, for me personally, is only important if their legacy is dismantling the barriers that they faced to get there,” he said.

He said people have traditionally been privileged in Canada by race, gender and economics.

“(The system is) disproportionately, advantaging white men ...That still remains a fact,” he said.

“As a city councillor, the first elected person of African-Canadian descent in my city’s history, I was still racially profiled by police in my own community.”

He said Kamala Harris — a former district attorney in San Francisco and

then Attorney general of California — was part of a system that also incarcerated and disenfranchised Black and Latino communities and low-income people throughout her career. What really matters, he added, is whether she will be able to help marginalized people break barriers.

Former MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes, who left the Liberal caucus several months before the 2019 election to sit as an Independent, said that claiming “diversity is our strength,” as the Liberals often do, is misleading.

“Having people of different colours



Celina Caesar-Chavannes Former Liberal MP - for Whitby

and different races or ideas within your systems or organizations does not mean that you’re going to build strength if those people feel excluded,” Caesar-Chavannes said in a recent interview.

She said collective strength comes when Canadians make spaces inclusive, so racialized people can voice their ideas and feel like they belong.

“That for sure creates a system that is fairer and more just,” she said.

Caesar-Chavannes, expected to detail her disillusionment with the Liberal brand of politics in her upcoming book, “Can You Hear Me Now?” to be published in February, said she’s not optimistic.

“If we never address the root cause, and we keep putting Band-Aids on a situation, it’s not going to get better,” she said.

Jagmeet Singh said it’s sometimes hard to understand that Canada has systems that are designed to exclude people.

“We look at the way the criminal justice system works, we look at the way policing works, and realize that there are systems in place that have to be changed because, right now, they’re designed to discriminate,” he said.

Some of these systems have to be changed and some have to be dismantled, he said. But he said he believes there’s enough appetite in Canada for a person of colour to be elected prime minister.

Fully revised document based on a news story by Mann Alhmedi - The Canadian Press News Fellowship, Nov 14, 2020.

COMMUNITY WATCH

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**Best wishes for a
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