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Dark pink rose in a home garden in Sinna Ooranai, Batticaloa district, Sri Lanka [humanityAshore.org]



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A parfait media publication

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FEDERAL BUDGET TO STIMULATE CANADIAN ECONOMY...

President Elect Obama's visit to Canada gives hopes for joint-action to revive economic growth

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Barack Obama - Canada - First Presidential overseas visit

By Siva Sivapragasam

The Federal Budget to be presented at the end of this month is anticipated to bring in measures to stimulate the sagging Canadian economy that is seeing signs of a Recession. A record sum of \$ 30 billion is to be unveiled in the stimulus economic plan in the forthcoming Budget.

Parliament was prorogued and a two month wait time was given for Stephen Harper's Government to present a new Budget that will stimulate the economy. The Government has already bailed out the Auto industry with an economic package that will help the big auto firms to restructure themselves. The auto industry was one of the main sectors of the economy that felt the economic pinch most. Economists feel that tax cuts and public spending on infra structure projects are on the Budget agenda to contain the crisis. Public spending on infra-structure was one of the measures advocated by the famous Economist John Maynard Keynes during times of recession. Keynesian economics may come to play again in the current economic crisis affecting North America.

Meanwhile, it has been officially announced that President elect Barack Obama's first official overseas



Economist John Maynard Keynes - Advocated massive infra-structure expenditure during times of Recession

visit after he assumes power will be to Canada. This is also seen as a signal for some joint collaboration in tackling the crisis common to both countries. Although dates have not been fixed yet, the visit is to take place soon.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, in an interview with the prestigious Maclean's Magazine has made a cheerful comment "Canada was in a strong economic position compared with others and should be able to exit the recession quickly".

The end of January may see a silver lining on the economic horizon and light at the end of the tunnel.



"Canada will exit Recession quickly" - Stephen Harper

Vanni Hospitals struggle to cope with increasing civilian casualties

According to Health authorities in Kilinochchi district only few medicines, fluids and blood bank requirements have come through the Government of Sri Lanka in recent times. They said this material is very minimal and does not cover the requirements of the hospitals in Vanni, as they are trying to cope with rising number of civilian casualties everyday now.

The hospitals and clinic are running short of everything - medicines, medical equipment, sterilising equipment and blood reagents. They pointed out that the blood bank is not adequate and do not have the material to test the blood for blood types.

Dr.T.Sathyamoorthy, Regional Director of Health Services in Kilinochchi District has written to Health Officials in Colombo seeking assistance to improve health care services to civilians being hit in Sri Lanka Army artillery fire in Northern

Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka should immediately give humanitarian aid groups broad access to Vanni to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population and make other urgent steps to help alleviate the suffering of Vanni civilians, several civil society sources in and outside of Sri Lanka have said in recent times.

Years of a highly restrictive blockade and the recent intense military operations have left civilians of Vanni in desperate need of food, water and sanitation. Medical care is woefully inadequate to deal with the thousands wounded civilians from the indiscriminate artillery fire by the Sri Lanka Army. Civilians have nowhere to flee Sri Lanka Army's aerial and ground attacks engulfing Kilinochchi and Mullaithivu districts, as areas near hospitals and other clearly marked safe areas too have become targeted.

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TSUNAMI ANNIVERSARY OBSERVED IN SRI LANKA NORTH AMID TENSION

People in the Vanni marked four years since the tsunami devastated the shores of the region on Dec 26th, 2008.

Thousands gathered at an event in Mullaitheevu in memory of tsunami victims, presided over by the Political Head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, B. Nadesan. Several observances in the region were disrupted due to nearby bombing by Sri Lankan Air Force.

And four years later the massive reconstruction effort in Sri Lanka is winding down to mixed results.

Sri Lanka government did not allow a much anticipated Joint Tsunami mechanism proposal in the aftermath, to re-build the tsunami ravaged North-East.

Several people and dignitaries including President Bill Clinton appealed numerous times that this was in the best interest of Sri Lanka.

"My experience is, whether it is Middle East or Northern Ireland, whenever people work together on specific issues, it helps to resolve the differences," President Clinton said in 2005.

According to a recent World Bank report, Sri Lanka's rebuilding was hampered by ongoing conflict and weak government institutions to carry out re-building.

"Sri Lanka's tsunami reconstruction was negatively affected by the ongoing conflict. The speed of reconstruction was much slower in the north and

east of the country for obvious security-related reasons than in the south and west," the World Bank reported in a statement to mark the anniversary. The World Bank's \$135 million assistance programme closed in September 2008.

The Bank also said the lack of effective institutions overseeing the reconstruction effort had slowed progress. "Sri Lanka's tsunami reconstruction was hampered from time to time by the dearth of effective institutions, especially at the central government level, to undertake the huge task of reconstruction." The Bank said government institutions lacked experience and the capacity to carry out the massive reconstruction effort.



Observances in Puthukkudiyiruppu, Mullaitheevu district, Dec 26, 2008
pic: Puthinam.com

HRW Attacks Highlight Threat to Media

Investigate Killing of Prominent Journalist



Lasantha Wickrematunga

The killing of a prominent newspaper editor on January 8th and the bombing of a private television station on January 6, 2009, highlight the Sri Lankan government's failure to stop violence against the media, Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) said. The groups said that past investigations into attacks on journalists have led nowhere, and that the government should act quickly to bring the perpetrators of the attacks to justice.

Unidentified armed men in close proximity to a security forces checkpoint shot Sunday Leader newspaper editor Lasan-

tha Wickremetunga, a senior journalist acclaimed for his investigative reporting, during his morning drive to work in Colombo today. He died shortly after. On January 6, a dozen heavily armed men badly damaged the studios of the private Maharaja Television station on the outskirts of Colombo by detonating Claymore landmines and grenades.

"The fact that these attacks were carried out in broad daylight against vocal critics of the government without any arrests or law enforcement action adds to the climate of impunity in Sri Lanka," said Roger Normand, Asia-Pacific Director at the ICJ. "The government must not only condemn these heinous acts, but take effective measures to bring the perpetrators to justice."

Wickremetunga's in-depth investigations into corruption and nepotism in the Sri Lankan government frequently made



him the target of intimidation attempts and lawsuits. Maharaja Television came under attack after state media labeled it "unpatriotic" for its coverage of the government's recent military campaigns in the war with the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). On January 2, 2009, government forces captured the LTTE administrative center in the northern Vanni area.

"Sri Lanka prides itself as a functioning democracy. Yet media freedom, a vital pillar of democracy, has increasingly come under attack," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The government should not take its recent military victories as a signal that it can stifle dissent."

The freedom to express views opposing those held by the government has come under severe threat in Sri Lanka. A prominent ethnic Tamil journalist, J.S. Tissainayagam, a Tamil publisher, N. Jaisiharan, and his wife, V. Valamathy, were arbitrarily arrested in March 2008 and six months later charged under the state terrorism laws. These cases have raised serious due process concerns.

On September 27, 2008, unknown assailants flung a grenade into the home of J. C. Weliamuna, a lawyer who is executive director of Transparency International Sri Lanka, an anticorruption group. Weliamuna is counsel in several fundamental rights cases involving torture, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances. So far,

no one has been arrested for this attack.

Impunity for human rights violations remains a disturbing norm in Sri Lanka. The government's unwillingness to hold accountable those responsible for serious violations has fostered an environment in which journalists have come under increased attack. In its 2008 press freedom index, the media group Reporters Sans Frontiers (Reports without borders) ranked Sri Lanka 165 out of 173 countries.

Article 14 of the Sri Lankan constitution provides for freedom of speech. The rights to freedom of opinion and expression are protected under article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sri Lanka is a party.

However, since 2006 the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse has increasingly intimidated and tried to silence the media, nongovernmental organizations, and others with independent or dissenting views with regard to the government's military policies and human rights practices. Senior government officials have attacked such critics, calling them supporters of the separatists and traitors.

"The Sri Lankan government should ensure that perpetrators of rights abuses are brought to justice," said Adams. "For too many years and in too many cases, those who commit violence have gone unpunished while those who dared to speak have paid with their lives. This culture of impunity has to end now." [hrw.org]

ANTON BALASINGHAM'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY OBSERVED

Second death anniversary of Anton Balasingham, theoretician and chief negotiator of LTTE was observed in several parts of the Jaffna peninsula, according to a report on Virakesari, on Dec 16, 2008.

Events in memory of Anton Balasingham were held at the Jaffna University and several private educational institutions. Posters paying tribute to him appeared in several places including Thennaradchi areas of Sarasalai, Madduvil and in Vadamaradchi areas of Nellyyadi and Point Pedro.

Among the Attendees at the funeral services of Mr. Anton balasingham on Dec 20, 2006 was Norwegian Minister for International Development, Erik Solheim. Hon. Minister Erik Solheim said, "Anton Balasingham strove for truth, always spoke the truth and has never lied for any reason whatsoever."

Solheim further said, "He was one of the very few in the Sri Lanka peace process who has not lied to me. He wanted the peace process to be a success. He believed that an everlasting solution will have to be on the Oslo agreement which is a federal solution".



Anton Stanislaus Balasingham (March 4, 1938 - December 14, 2006)

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**He who has a pure mind sees
everything pure.**
- Sri Sarada Devi

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From the Publisher's Desk ... Welcome to 2009

As the New Year has dawned we all are looking to put ourselves to work harder, with New Year resolutions on everything that pertains to our daily lives, for a bright 2009.

The New Year provides the perfect opportunity not only for individual goals, but collective goals, for our communities. It is a time to take stock of the past year, learn from mistakes and build upon successes to face the challenges.

Economically and politically there are uncertainties in many spots. All of which our communities have overcome with perseverance and commitment towards navigating forward to a better

time for all.

The noble values espoused by all religions and faiths in our communities guide us to this beacon of peace and prosperity.

The Monsoon Journal rings into the New Year, with reassuring commitment to serve our communities in the best possible ways joining hands with everyone who has geared towards the betterment of our future.

As Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada said in her New Year Greetings, "...it is important for us to work together - nations, governments, societies, businesses, organizations, individuals, side by side. The



"fend for yourself" mentality has no place in an interdependent world, where the decisions of some have a profound impact on the lives of others; where our fates are inextricably linked. Today, I am calling for greater solidarity between us. Given the

magnitude of the challenges before us, the time has come for us to invent new ways of living together. It is up to us to seize that opportunity"

*The Monsoon Journal Wishes
a Happy New Year to all.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND OPINIONS

Lasantha Wickrematunge Speaks After Death via Editorial of Jan 11th 2009

No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces and, in Sri Lanka, journalism. In the course of the past few years, the independent media have increasingly come under attack. Electronic and print-media institutions have been burnt, bombed, sealed and coerced. Countless journalists have been harassed, threatened and killed. It has been my honour to belong to all those categories and now especially the last.

I have been in the business of journalism a good long time. Indeed, 2009 will be The Sunday Leader's 15th year. Many things have changed in Sri Lanka during that time, and it does not need me to tell you that the greater part of that change has been for the worse. We find ourselves in the midst of a civil war ruthlessly prosecuted by protagonists whose bloodlust knows no bounds. Terror, whether perpetrated by terrorists or the state, has become the order of the day. Indeed, murder has become the primary tool whereby the state seeks to control the organs of liberty. Today it is the journalists, tomorrow it will be the judges. For neither group have the risks ever been higher or the stakes lower.

Why then do we do it? I often wonder that. After all, I too am a husband, and the father of three wonderful children. I too have responsibilities and obligations that transcend my profession, be it the law or journalism. Is it worth the risk? Many people tell me it is not. Friends tell me to revert to the bar, and goodness knows it offers a better and safer livelihood. Others, including political leaders on both sides, have at various times sought to induce me to take to politics, going so far as to offer me ministries of my choice. Diplomats, recognising the risk journalists face in Sri Lanka, have offered me safe passage and the right of residence in their countries. Whatever else I may have been stuck for, I have not been stuck for choice.

But there is a calling that is yet



above high office, fame, lucre and security. It is the call of conscience.

The Sunday Leader has been a controversial newspaper because we say it like we see it: whether it be a spade, a thief or a murderer, we call it by that name. We do not hide behind euphemism. The investigative articles we print are supported by documentary evidence thanks to the public-spiritedness of citizens who at great risk to themselves pass on this material to us. We have exposed scandal after scandal, and never once in these 15 years has anyone proved us wrong or successfully prosecuted us.

The free media serve as a mirror in which the public can see itself sans mascara and styling gel. From us you learn the state of your nation, and especially its management by the people you elected to give your children a better future. Sometimes the image you see in that mirror is not a pleasant one. But while you may grumble in the privacy of your armchair, the journalists who hold the mirror up to you do so publicly and at great risk to themselves. That is our calling, and we do not shirk it.

Every newspaper has its angle, and we do not hide the fact that we have ours. Our commitment is to see Sri Lanka as a transparent, secular, liberal democracy.

Continued in Page 6

Canada will be US like under a Harper majority Tory Government

By Villa Anandaram

At the time of this article being published the political cyclone that Mr Samy Appadurai referred to in his article on Monsoon Journal's December issue (Coalition Government - Patriotism or Power Grab by Samy Appadurai) might have taken a different twist or subsided. But some of the truths hidden by the writer and mis-stated should be exposed so that the public is aware to act on the fallout of this uncertainty.

As accepted and stated by Sami Appadurai that politicians cannot be trusted and he being one his article is biased, misinformed, untrue and deceiving. The event unfolded in the parliament was triggered by Mr. Steven Harper and not by the opposition nor by NDP against which Mr. Appadurai shows profound dislike.

The role of the opposition parties are not limited only to what the wrier has written as helping the ruling party to be balanced but take action if necessary to bring it down if it feels the policies of the ruling party will be disastrous to the country. On doing so the parties can go to the public to seek a new mandate or allow the 2nd leading party to form the government and prove it's legitimacy by conducting a confidence vote. Such process will take place in cases where there are minority governments. The message

that is being sent by the voters to any minority government is "we don't trust you to govern with your own will. Govern with consensus with other parties". If Mr. Harper is a true democrat as he pretends to be, he should have respected this message.

Being aware of the voter weariness of another election, miscalculating that the opposition will be reluctant to bring down his government, Mr. Harper tried to push his conservative agenda. There is no doubt that the world is facing economic turmoil. What action has he taken to tackle this or consulted other 62% of the elected members? He never extended the olive branch before the throne speech nor when the oppositions voiced their objections which he is now pretending to extend to the liberals only to break the coalition.

Mr. Harper is arrogant and not liked even by his own party but they fear him.

Before the elections and during the campaign Mr. Harper went on assuring that the Canadian economy is strong and will not be affected by the looming world wide recession. This he was taking credit for the sound fiscal policy of the previous consecutive Liberal governments.

Continued in Page 6

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SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S DIVERSITY

McGuinty Government Extends RST Exemption To More Community Publications

The McGuinty government is helping Ontarians who rely on community and multilingual newspapers for shared culture and language by extending a tax break to these publications. This measure, outlined in the 2008 budget, allows a greater number of community and multilingual publications to qualify as newspapers and be eligible for retail sales tax (RST) exemption, retroactive to January, 2000. The regulation making the exemption official was filed today.

"I want to thank our multilingual and community papers for all they do to promote and celebrate our unique diversity. That's why I'm happy to be able to extend the RST exemption to these publications, so they can reach even more Ontarians who rely on them," said Premier Dalton McGuinty.

"Many Ontarians enjoy community and multilingual newspapers - these local publications form the basis of our shared cultural, linguistic and geographic experience. This RST exemption

initiative demonstrates our commitment to encourage a level playing field across sectors of the economy," said Finance Minister Dwight Duncan.

This measure, a made-in-Ontario point system, will result in estimated savings to eligible publications of \$2 million annually.

The point system easily lets publications determine their RST status.

The point system was developed in conjunction with stakeholders and is based on the physical characteristics of each publication. This allows more community and multilingual publications to qualify.

The amendment is retroactive to January 1, 2000.

Find more information on 2008 Budget initiatives highlighting tax support for business.

Read about how the McGuinty government strengthened the economy by investing in people.

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CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN ONTARIO

McGuinty Government Increasing Diversity on Ontario's Agencies, Boards and Commissions.

The Maytree Foundation is celebrating diversity in Ontario's leadership. Most recently, Maytree awarded one of Ontario's 630 agencies, boards, and commissions with the Diversity in Public Governance Award. The Health Professions Appeal and Review Board (HPARB) was given the award in recognition of the leadership it has shown in embracing diversity and attracting board members that reflect the province's geographic and demographic diversity.

Maytree's recognition of HPARB is part of its DiverseCity

onBoard initiative. The goal of this initiative is to promote diversity on Ontario's public agencies, boards, commissions and voluntary

The HPARB is an independent adjudicative agency of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Its mandate is to ensure that health professions are regulated in the interests of the public.

The Harbourfront Centre and YMCA were also recognized for their efforts through this initiative.

QUOTES

"The diversity picture of the HPARB is reflective of the province of Ontario. It is proactive in its outreach into different communities and diversity is



embedded in its appointment, training and ongoing professional development of board members. The McGuinty government has made progress in ensuring greater diversity in appointments to Ontario's agencies, boards and commissions," said Ratna Omidvar, President of the Maytree Foundation.

"The award is a great honour," said Linda Lamoureux, Chair of HPARB. "Our board is both highly qualified and reflective of Ontario's diversity."

Close to 4300 Ontarians serve on the provinces approximately 630 agencies boards and commissions.

Canada Council Art Bank attempts to increase its program awareness among culturally diverse artists

The Canada Council Art Bank recently launched a request for submissions of artworks by Canadian artists of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American or mixed racial heritage to enhance its collection of original contemporary Canadian art.

The primary objectives of this purchase are to increase the awareness of culturally diverse artists about the programs offered by the Canada Council; complement the Art Bank's collection; and respond to the increasing cultural diversity of Canada's population. This initiative, developed in collaboration with Council's Equity Office, is in alignment with the Canada Council's strategic plan directions in support of individual artists and equity.

Director Victoria Henry said, "The Art Bank is looking to purchase paintings, photographs, sculptures, prints, drawings, fine craft and mixed media made by Canadian artists from culturally diverse communities. We want to showcase beautiful artworks that reflect the demographic make up of Canada. Our clients are very often looking to rent works created by culturally diverse artists so we hope that many artists will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity."

A peer assessment committee will assess the submissions and select a number of them for purchase within the budget of \$225,000. The process for submitting work to the Art Bank's purchase of works by Canadian artists from culturally diverse communities program is available on the Art Bank's website at www.artbank.ca. The completed submissions must be postmarked on or before 16 February 2009.

Canada Council Art Bank

The Art Bank, which has the largest collection of contemporary Canadian art in the world, was created in 1972 to support the efforts of Canadian visual artists



and to provide public sector institutions with the opportunity to rent Canadian art for their offices and public spaces. The Art Bank includes some 18,000 artworks, and currently has close to 7,000 works rented to more than 200

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND OPINIONS

LASANTHA ...

Continued from page 4

Think about those words, for they each has profound meaning. Transparent because government must be openly accountable to the people and never abuse their trust. Secular because in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society such as ours, secularism offers the only common ground by which we might all be united. Liberal because we recognise that all human beings are created different, and we need to accept others for what they are and not what we would like them to be. And democratic... well, if you need me to explain why that is important, you'd best stop buying this paper.

The Sunday Leader has never sought safety by unquestioningly articulating the majority view. Let's face it, that is the way to sell newspapers. On the contrary, as our opinion pieces over the years amply demonstrate, we often voice ideas that many people find distasteful. For example, we have consistently espoused the view that while separatist terrorism must be eradicated, it is more important to address the root causes of terrorism, and urged government to view Sri Lanka's ethnic strife in the context of history and not through the telescope of terrorism. We have also agitated against state terrorism in the so-called war against terror, and made no secret of our horror that Sri Lanka is the only country in the world routinely to bomb its own citizens. For these views we have been labelled traitors, and if this be treachery, we wear that label proudly.

Many people suspect that The Sunday Leader has a political agenda: it does not. If we appear more critical of the government than of the opposition it is only because we believe that - pray excuse cricketering argot - there is no point in bowling to the fielding side. Remember that for the few years of our existence in which the UNP was in office, we proved to be the biggest thorn in its flesh, exposing excess and corruption wherever it occurred. Indeed, the steady stream of embarrassing exposés we published may well have served to precipitate the downfall of that government.

Neither should our distaste for the war be interpreted to mean that we support the Tigers. The LTTE are among the most ruthless and blood-thirsty organisations ever to have infested the planet.

There is no gainsaying that it must be eradicated. But to do so by violating the rights of Tamil citizens, bombing and shooting them mercilessly, is not only wrong but shames the Sinhalese, whose claim to be custodians of the dhamma is forever called into question by this savagery, much of which is unknown to the public because of censorship.

What is more, a military occupation of the country's north and east will require the Tamil people of those regions to live eternally as second-class citizens, deprived of all self respect. Do not imagine that you can placate them by showering "development" and "reconstruction" on them in the post-war era. The wounds of war will scar them forever, and you will also have an even more bitter and hateful Diaspora to contend with. A problem amenable to a political solution will thus become a festering wound that will yield strife for all eternity. If I seem angry and frustrated, it is only because most of my countrymen - and all of the government - cannot see this writing so plainly on the wall.

It is well known that I was on two occasions brutally assaulted, while on another my house was sprayed with machine-gun fire. Despite the government's sanctimonious assurances, there was never a serious police inquiry into the perpetrators of these attacks, and the attackers were never

apprehended. In all these cases, I have reason to believe the attacks were inspired by the government. When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me.

The irony in this is that, unknown to most of the public, Mahinda and I have been friends for more than a quarter century. Indeed, I suspect that I am one of the few people remaining who routinely addresses him by his first name and uses the familiar Sinhala address oya when talking to him. Although I do not attend the meetings he periodically holds for newspaper editors, hardly a month passes when we do not meet, privately or with a few close friends present, late at night at President's House. There we swap yarns, discuss politics and joke about the good old days. A few remarks to him would therefore be in order here.

Mahinda, when you finally fought your way to the SLFP presidential nomination in 2005, nowhere were you welcomed more warmly than in this column. Indeed, we broke with a decade of tradition by referring to you throughout by your first name. So well known were your commitments to human rights and liberal values that we ushered you in like a breath of fresh air.

Then, through an act of folly, you got yourself involved in the Helping Hambantota scandal. It was after a lot of soul-searching that we broke the story, at the same time urging you to return the money. By the time you did so several weeks later, a great blow had been struck to your reputation. It is one you are still trying to live down.

You have told me yourself that you were not greedy for the presidency. You did not have to hanker after it: it fell into your lap. You have told me that your sons are your greatest joy, and that you love spending time with them, leaving your brothers to operate the machinery of state. Now, it is clear to all who will see that that machinery has operated so well that my sons and daughter do not themselves have a father.

In the wake of my death I know you will make all the usual sanctimonious noises and call upon the police to hold a swift and thorough inquiry. But like all the inquiries you have ordered in the past, nothing will come of this one, too. For truth be told, we both know who will be behind my death, but dare not call his name. Not just my life, but yours too, depends on it.

Sadly, for all the dreams you had for our country in your younger days, in just three years you have reduced it to rubble. In the name of patriotism you have trampled on human rights, nurtured unbridled corruption and squandered public money like no other President before you. Indeed, your conduct has been like a small child suddenly let loose in a toyshop. That analogy is perhaps inapt because no child could have caused so much blood to be spilled on this land as you have, or trampled on the rights of its citizens as you do. Although you are now so drunk with power that you cannot see it, you will come to regret your sons having so rich an inheritance of blood. It can only bring tragedy. As for me, it is with a clear conscience that I go to meet my Maker. I wish, when your time finally comes, you could do the same. I wish.

As for me, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I walked tall and bowed to no man. And I have not travelled this journey alone. Fellow journalists in other branches of the media walked with me: most of them are now dead, imprisoned without trial or exiled in far-off lands. Others walk in the shadow of death that your Presidency has cast on the freedoms for which you once fought so hard. You will never be allowed to forget that my death took place under your watch. As anguished as I know you will be, I also know that you will have no choice but to protect my killers:

you will see to it that the guilty one is never convicted. You have no choice. I feel sorry for you, and Shiranthi will have a long time to spend on her knees when next she goes for Confession for it is not just her own sins which she must confess, but those of her extended family that keeps you in office.

As for the readers of The Sunday Leader, what can I say but Thank You for supporting our mission. We have espoused unpopular causes, stood up for those too feeble to stand up for themselves, locked horns with the high and mighty so swollen with power that they have forgotten their roots, exposed corruption and the waste of your hard-earned tax rupees, and made sure that whatever the propaganda of the day, you were allowed to hear a contrary view. For this I - and my family - have now paid the price that I have long known I will one day have to pay. I am - and have always been - ready for that. I have done nothing to prevent this outcome: no security, no precautions. I want my murderer to know that I am not a coward like he is, hiding behind human shields while condemning thousands of innocents to death. What am I among so many? It has long been written that my life would be taken, and by whom. All that remains to be written is when.

That The Sunday Leader will continue fighting the good fight, too, is written. For I did not fight this fight

alone. Many more of us have to be - and will be - killed before The Leader is laid to rest. I hope my assassination will be seen not as a defeat of freedom but an inspiration for those who survive to step up their efforts. Indeed, I hope that it will help galvanise forces that will usher in a new era of human liberty in our beloved motherland.

I also hope it will open the eyes of your President to the fact that however many are slaughtered in the name of patriotism, the human spirit will endure and flourish. Not all the Rajapakses combined can kill that.

People often ask me why I take such risks and tell me it is a matter of time before I am bumped off. Of course I know that: it is inevitable. But if we do not speak out now, there will be no one left to speak for those who cannot, whether they be ethnic minorities, the disadvantaged or the persecuted. An example that has inspired me throughout my career in journalism has been that of the German theologian, Martin Niemöller. In his youth he was an anti-Semite and an admirer of Hitler. As Nazism took hold in Germany, however, he saw Nazism for what it was: it was not just the Jews Hitler sought to extirpate, it was just about anyone with an alternate point of view. Niemöller spoke out, and for his trouble was incarcerated in the Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps from 1937 to 1945, and very nearly

executed. While incarcerated, Niemöller wrote a poem that, from the first time I read it in my teenage years, stuck hauntingly in my mind:

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me
and there was no one left to speak out for me.

If you remember nothing else, remember this: The Leader is there for you, be you Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, low-caste, homosexual, dissident or disabled. Its staff will fight on, unbowed and unafraid, with the courage to which you have become accustomed. Do not take that commitment for granted. Let there be no doubt that whatever sacrifices we journalists make, they are not made for our own glory or enrichment: they are made for you. Whether you deserve their sacrifice is another matter. As for me, God knows I tried.

(This is a reproduction of the Editorial headlined "And Then They Came For Me" that was published in the first Issue of "the Sunday Leader" dated January 11th 2009)

Canada will be US like under a Harper majority Tory Government

Continued from page 4

Now coming back to power with only minority strength, he is crying wolf in order to push through his pro business, pro traditionalist and anti labour agenda. Mr. Appadurai is hiding this fact by saying Mr. Harper has not taken a U turn. Mr. Harper during his 1st term in office said no matter what, the elections will be held on fixed dates. He retracted from this when he felt that the time was good for his party. He wanted to join hands with Quebec separatist party to bring down the Liberals in power - shamelessly lying in the parliament denying it but exposed by written evidence- but crying democracy is lost when the opposition parties want to do the same. He was for elected senate but now trying to fill it with conservatives. What type of turns are these U, Y or W?

Mr. Appadurai ignores the fact that Mr. Bob Rae was premier of Ontario during the recession for which he was not responsible for. Some of the measures he took has made him unpopular but those actions made the harshness of down turn on economy bearable to

many working and poor families. The cut, cut introduced by his successor the Conservative Mike Harris led to deteriorating Medicare, breakdown of families and increase in crime rate. From pure fiscal pint of view funding cut on essential and social services will look good but the social impact will be disastrous which will eventually affect the economy. The finance minister Mr. Jim Flaherty whom Mr. Appadurai claims to be efficient and capable was flip flopping on his financial perditions. What he admits in closed doors to experts is different from what he states to the public.

Any one reading his statements for the last 3 months can see how many U turns he had made. Don't forget that this man when he was the finance minister of Ontario wanted provide tax relief to the rich who send their children to private schools while cutting funding to government schools.

Let us not forget and make Mr. Harper not forget that 62% of the people who voted rejected Mr. Harper. If we had proportional representation,

it is a good possibility he may not be in power. In the own words of Mr. Appadurai, in the system of indirect democracy where multi parties exist, the verdict of the voters can be interpreted conveniently.

The naked truth is giving only less than 38%, the Canadians did not vote for a conservative Majority rule. Canadians don't trust any parties for that matter. So, listen to what the other 62% of the representative say or let the other 62% govern jointly.

If elected with a majority the Conservatives under the leadership of Stephen Harper will turn this country in to almost another state of US. The Canada we cherished will not be there any more.

The social justice we enjoy will be crushed for the sake of corporate profit. Equal access to essential benefits will be the thing of the past. The right to voice your opinion will be shut under the scare of recession. Remember Hitler was also once elected to power.

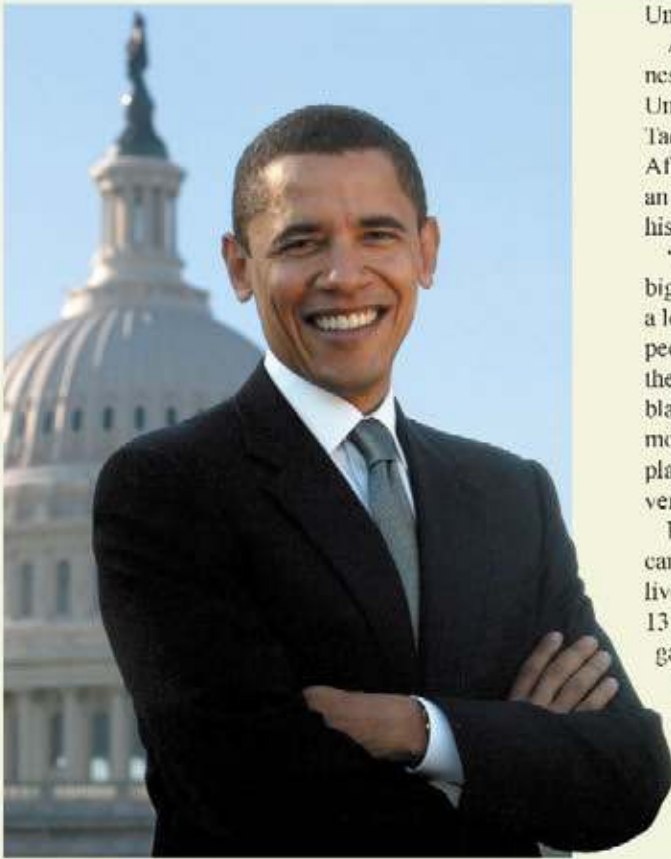
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Monsoon Newsline

Africans Await Obama Inauguration with Mixed Expectations



By Scott Bobb

People around the world are looking forward to the inauguration of Barack Obama on January 20 as president of the United States. Many hope he will bring change to a world they believe is in crisis.

For others, Mr. Obama's ancestral roots in Africa mean even more.

Millions of members of the African diaspora stayed up all night, like many people in America, to cheer when Barack Obama was declared the next president of the

United States.

A professor at Johannesburg's Witwatersrand University, Veronique Tadjó, says for people with African ancestry it was an emotional as well as historic moment.

"Obama has brought a big hope and has changed a lot of things for a lot of people in terms of how they view themselves. A black man becoming the most powerful man on the planet is something that is very important," she said.

But an African-American researcher who has lived on the continent for 13 years, Francis Komegay of Johannesburg's Institute for Policy Studies, says African commentators are warning against expecting too much from the Obama presidency.

"There is a lot of euphoria around his becoming president and a feeling that because of that he will give the continent a lot of attention. But there is nothing that really goes beyond that, that critically looks at what is in prospect," he said.

Komegay notes that the Obama administration will inherit several crises that are priorities for U.S. policy, namely Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East conflict, Pakistan and India.

"That is where the focus of U.S. policy is going to be. So there is no realistic prospect that Africa would overtake any of those concerns. On the other hand there are some pressing security concerns on the continent," said Komegay.

For example, he says new ideas are needed for the crisis in Somalia, which after two decades as a failed state and millions of dollars in aid is about to be overtaken by Islamic militants.

Darfur and eastern Congo are simmering conflicts that risk exploding into war again. And Zimbabwe will need concerted international action, preferably through African multilateral groups, to prevent a massive humanitarian crisis.

Tadjó says she hopes the Obama administration will adopt a tough stance with African leaders who abuse



Francis Komegay



Veronique Tadjó

their powers and their people.

"Our main problem is leadership and bad governance so until we sort this out, there is nothing we can do," she said. "In Africa there are countries that are extremely rich in terms of natural resources, but nothing is happening. So, governance, governance, governance."

But Senegalese analyst Lamine Savane says whatever the policy goals, a new style of leadership is needed.

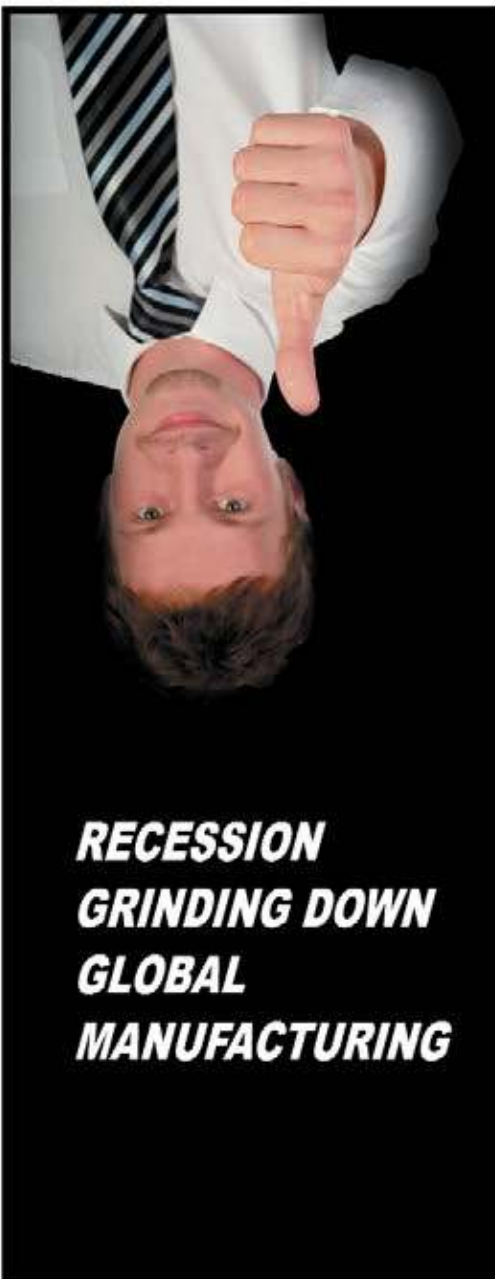
"What is it [leadership] going to be? Is it going to be a big brother-little brother in a positive way? Or is it going to be a big brother in a bully way? I think the way the world is today, the bully thing does not work anymore," said Savane.

Tadjó, who is of French-Ivorian heritage, says she fears Mr. Obama will face additional challenges because of his mixed-race heritage.

"It will be a hard presidency, and from both sides, from the white side people waiting for him to fail, and from the black side because people have always looked at mixed-race people with a bit of suspicion, who are they, who do they represent? So he is going to have a tough job," she said.

But many believe Mr. Obama can also be a bridge between races, cultures and peoples. And they hope he will listen and bring greater balance to relations between Africa and the United States.

[voa news]



**RECESSION
GRINDING DOWN
GLOBAL
MANUFACTURING**

Factories in the world's largest economy are producing fewer goods than they have in nearly three decades - hit hard by the spreading global recession.

A recent report by a private research group, the Institute for Supply Management, finds manufacturing activity in the United States has fallen to levels not seen since 1980, while prices sank to their lowest levels since 1949.

The data comes after a series of reports showing similar cutbacks in emerging markets like China and India.

Recently, the Purchasing Managers' Index said China is on the verge of "a technical recession" after its manufacturing activity fell for a fifth-straight month in December.

Factories in India - Asia's third largest economy - are also shedding jobs, prompting India's central bank to slash two key interest rates recently. Officials there have also introduced a second stimulus package to help spark the economy.

Manufacturing is also taking a hit in Europe, where a new report shows activity in the euro zone

(countries that use the euro as their main currency) fell at its sharpest rate in more than a decade.

Meanwhile, oil prices are rising. Crude oil for future delivery gained almost four percent, to more than \$46 a barrel during midday trading recently in New York.

Some economists say the latest data could indicate another round of interest rate cuts might be on the way for Europe, where manufacturing activity in regional economic powers like Germany and France also hit record lows.

In Belarus, hit hard by the global financial crisis, officials let the value of the Belarusian ruble fall 20 percent in an attempt to make the country's economy more competitive. Belarus is also expecting a \$2.5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund.

There is also troubling data on the British housing market that came out Jan 1. The country's biggest lender, Halifax, says

home prices plunged at their fastest rate in 25 years in 2008.

South Korea's president says his government is now in "emergency mode." And Singapore warns its economy could contract by as much as two percent.

Outgoing U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson tells the Financial Times recently that global economic imbalances - and a failure to understand the impact emerging markets - are to blame for the current financial crisis. [VOA News]

MAATTU PONGAL



"Maattu Pongal" is celebrated on the second day of the month of Thai. (Jan 16th, 2009). This is a Thanks giving day to cows, bulls and buffaloes by worshipping them which help the people in farming activities, and give milk.

The farmers give a bath to the cows decorate them with garlands, saffron, "Kumkuman" and tie silk cloth for them. Then the cows are offered with special "Poojas" and "Sakkarai Pongal" (sweet rice). [pic:1humanityashore.org]



By Lisa Schlein

The U.N. refugee agency says it is concerned about the worsening situation in the eastern part of Sri Lanka. It says there has been a significant increase in recent months in the numbers of killings, abductions and injuries in places where Tamil internally displaced people and refugees have returned.

During the past two years, most of the more than 200,000 people displaced by fighting in the eastern districts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa have returned home.

The U.N. refugee agency and

UNHCR Says Situation Worsening in East Sri Lanka

other humanitarian agencies have been supporting the Sri Lankan government as it reintegrates them to their communities.

UNHCR Spokesman Ron Redmond says aid agencies have been working to provide the returnees with shelter, jobs and non-food relief items. He says the recent series of killings, abductions and injuries in eastern Sri Lanka is very worrying and is putting the return process at risk.

"In November, the U.N. recorded 24 civilian deaths, just in the Batticaloa district of the East. And, UNHCR is asking that the Sri Lankan government and the authorities in the area investigate these developments seriously," he

said. "And, that they effectively investigate it and we urge the authorities provide adequate security to all the civilians living in these areas."

Redmond says there are many armed groups running around in this area, making it a difficult to ensure security. Nevertheless, he says something must be done to ensure the safety of the people.

He says returnees in the Batticaloa area report they increasingly feel intimidated and face restrictions on their movement. He says this limits their ability to support themselves and their families.

He says more than 50 families have already left their villages due

to fear and insecurity. Others, he says are no longer sleeping in their own homes. Instead, several families gather in one house at night for security.

The Tamil Tigers have been fighting for an independent state for the past 25 years. The Sri Lankan government recently has made important gains in this long-running civil war and appears to be gaining the upper hand.

Redmond says the UNHCR is closely monitoring the rapidly developing situation in the north of the country. He notes about one-quarter of a million people remain displaced there due to the ongoing conflict.



[voa news]

SriLankan Airlines receives first aircraft in re-fleeting programme

SriLankan Airlines has launched a re-fleeting programme, and this week took delivery of the first of several new Airbus A320 aircraft, the first to join the National Carrier in more than four years.

A second aircraft is scheduled to arrive this month, with a third and fourth likely to be obtained in the first quarter of 2009. The airline intends to acquire a fifth in the next financial year.

Manoj Gunawardena, SriLankan's CEO, said: "The arrival of this aircraft is a significant milestone in the history of SriLankan Airlines. It signals the launch of our re-fleeting programme, which is an integral part of our strategy to turn the airline around and bring it back to profitability. The re-fleeting is projected to bring about significant cost savings to the airline in both fuel and maintenance, and also enhance flight punctuality."

The new aircraft will replace the airline's existing fleet of A320's. The National Carrier last acquired an aircraft in July of 2004.

SriLankan's new management team is implementing a comprehensive strategy to reduce costs and take full advantage of new and existing business opportunities. The airline on 30th November re-launched services to



Rome, to which it will operate three times a week. SriLankan also launched direct flights between London and Male last month.

SriLankan currently has a fleet of 14 aircraft - five A320's, four A330's, and five A340's. Its oldest A320 is to be decommissioned this month, and a second by the end of the year.

The airline uses its A320's to serve its 11 destinations in India, as well as Male and Karachi, and some cities in the Middle East. Its long-haul A330 and A340 aircraft serve Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and the Far East.

The new aircraft, which

arrived at Bandaranaike International Airport on 30th November, is presently being fitted with the airline's logo and livery at its engineering complex in Katunayake. It will carry 152 passengers in a two class layout of 20 Business Class seats and 132 Economy Class seats. The aircraft has been leased from AWAS of Ireland for a period of three years, and is approximately 2 years old.

Sri Lanka's award-winning airline now flies to 45 destinations in 25 countries throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

Media Relations, Corporate Affairs Department, SriLankan Airlines, www.srilankan.aero.

Baby born during trans-Atlantic flight to Boston on New Year's Eve

BOSTON - There were 124 passengers on Northwest Airlines Flight 59 when it left the Netherlands. There were 125 when it landed in Boston.

Phil Orlandella, a spokesman for Logan International Airport, says a woman went into labor and gave birth to an apparently healthy baby girl over the Atlantic Ocean on Wednesday during the eight-hour flight from Amsterdam.

Orlandella said a doctor and a

paramedic who were on the flight assisted in the birth. He said the plane landed without incident about 10:30 a.m., and the mother and baby were immediately taken to Massachusetts General Hospital.

Orlandella said he did not know the nationality of the mother, but said for customs' purposes the baby was considered a Canadian citizen because she was born over Canada's airspace.



Members of the cast and crew of 'Slumdog Millionaire' arrive at the 66th Annual Golden Globe Awards on Sunday, Jan. 11, 2009, in Beverly Hills, Calif. From left are, Producer Christian Colson, actor Dev Patel, actor Anil Kapoor, actress Freida Pinto, director Danny Boyle, composer A.R. Rahman and writer Simon Beaufoy. (AP Photo/ Matt Sayles)

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Winter Blues

By Mithura Anandarajah, PT
Registered Physiotherapist

The holidays are over, and the long days of winter are just ahead of us. Festival Christmas lights have been removed, the parties have dwindled and the credit card bills make their dreary debut. We wake up in the dark, return home in the dark and it is miserably cold outside. We listen to the news and the despair seems to continue - economically, politically and socially. This year especially, it is not surprising that many of us will suffer from the winter blues. We will experience changes in our mood, have feelings of exhaustion and describe feelings of depression. We will want to eat more, sleep more and do less. While many of us will experience this, for some of us, this isn't just a phase, an expression of speech or social phenomena. For over 5% of North Americans, it is an actual diagnosis of depression known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D). It can be severe enough to warrant medical attention, medication or psychotherapy.

You may think that it is the cold that makes us somewhat miserable at this time of the year. While it certainly doesn't help, in actual fact, it is the amount of light that we are exposed to that influences our mood and rhythm.

Light plays an important role in our health and the amount of time exposed to it affects our performance. As the sun begins to rise in the morning, the light that makes its way through our eyelids is recognized by the pineal in our brain. This gland secretes a chemical called serotonin and reduces the production of a chemical called melatonin. Melatonin is the hormone that our body produces to help us sleep, while serotonin regulates our mood and energy. Serotonin and melatonin work together in managing important aspects of our physiology.

Immunity, pain, digestion, sleep/wake cycle, body temperature, blood pressure, blood clotting, and daily body rhythms are all affected by these hormones. The shortage of light in the winter is what affects our hormonal balance causing the wintertime blues.

On the brighter side (pun intended), there are many actions that we can take to blow away the blues. Firstly, it is important to get as much sunlight as possible. Take some time in the middle of the day to walk outside and absorb the light; try and work by a south facing window either at work, school or home. It is also



important to maintain your daily activity and sleep schedule. Resist the temptation to stay in bed longer. A winter blue's symptom is the difficulty of waking up in the morning. This happens because the mind tells the body not to wake up when it is still dark outside. When a person does wake-up, they feel tired and are melancholy. You could try setting a lamp to turn on half an hour before you wake up. The pineal gland in your brain registers this light and begins secreting serotonin. Therefore, you wake up feeling rested and full of energy.

One of the best strategies to overcome this condition is to increase your activity level and exercise. Exercise increases your serotonin level and thereby, improves your mood. As opposed to avoiding the winter months, embrace it. Take a brisk walk or try winter activities like skating or sledding. Also avoid the desire to eat food rich in sugars and fats. Eat foods that are high in Vitamin

D, which increases serotonin levels and complex carbohydrates, which will give you energy. Take supplements rich with B-complex vitamins, which when taken daily can help improve your energy level.

Light therapy has been shown to be an effective treatment for seasonal affective disorder. While you can purchase expensive, specialized light therapy lighting fixtures for your home or office, some inexpensive alternatives are



also available. Another lighting technique to try is to replace commonly used light bulbs in your home with brighter full spectrum (also known as broad spectrum) light bulbs. While more expensive than regular light bulbs, these bulbs provide light that is similar to natural sunlight. If symptoms are severe and are impacting your daily function, consult with your physician. You may benefit from medication to improve your mood and relieve symptoms of depression.

This winter may have its own challenges to cope with, besides suffering from the winter blues. So take action, eat healthy and add some light to your schedule. Luckily, spring and summer will eventually get here.



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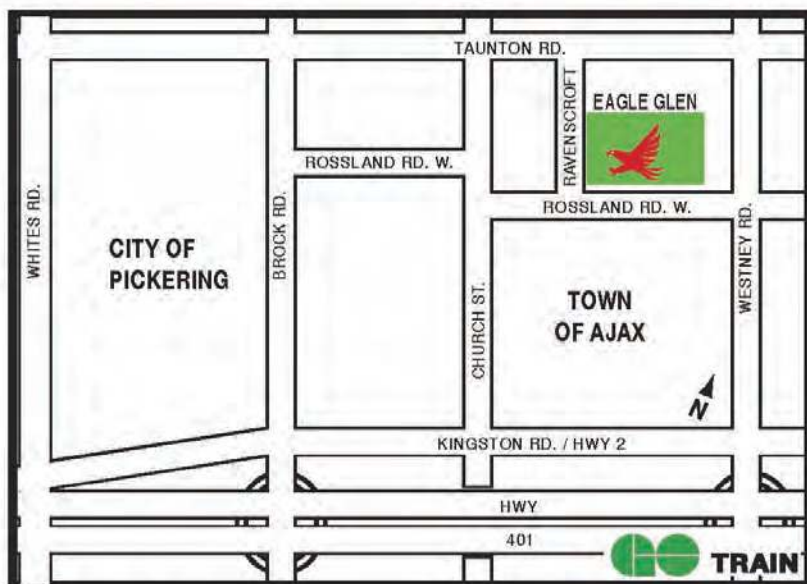
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MONSOON FEATURE

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Toronto is easily accessible from nearby Highways 401 and 407. Located just north of a host of shopping and recreation centres, 'Eagle Glen' allows residents all the amenities of the urban lifestyle while providing the beauty and tranquility of the neighbouring countryside.

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of thousands of new homes throughout Ontario, and has earned a reputation as an accomplished builder of fine residential communities. Of significance are the award winning 1000-acre 'Bridlewood Community' developed during the 1960's and 1970's in Scarborough, the 'Forestbrook Community' in Pickering developed in the 1980's,

'Willowcreek' in Peterborough, and 'Eagle Ridge on the Green' in Ajax developed in the 1990's and early 2000's.

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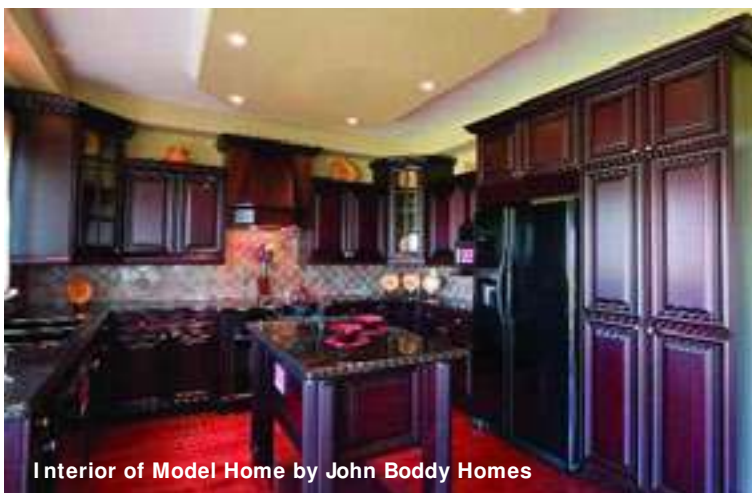
Interior of Model Home by John Boddy Homes

spacious 3,858 square feet, some with triple car garages. John Boddy Homes offers traditional size lots with a minimum of 105 feet in depth and a limited selection of wide shallow lots and pond lots. With such a broad range of house sizes and styles Eagle Glen has the ideal home to suit every preference. From the unique exteriors and charming streetscapes to the elegant interiors, various John Boddy Homes include such impressive standard features as vaulted ceilings, double door entries, décor columns, mirrored sliding closet doors, ceramic kitchen backsplashes, double basin bathroom vanities with make-up counters and so much more. Their gourmet kitchens, welcoming great rooms with cozy gas fireplaces and elegant dining rooms with coffered ceilings are all spacious and comfortable, making them the perfect location to enjoy time together with family or entertaining friends. In addition, some models include such impressive extras as classic french doors, transom win-

entire Eagle Glen community.

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

The Eagle Glen community offers many important neighbourhood amenities such as a brand new public elementary school opening in September 2009, places of worship, fully equipped parks and easy access to both Ajax and Go-Transit Services.



Interior of Model Home by John Boddy Homes



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My Lost Youth

By: C. Kamalaharan

Often I think of that beautiful town
That is seated by the seas;
Often in thoughts go up and down
The pleasant trees of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me...
(With apologies to H.W. Longfellow)

Much have I travelled across the earth
Is there a better place to consider worth
Than Inuvil, my place of birth
Where reigned wholesome fare and mirth

Sweet Inuvil! How often have I loitered along
thy dusty lanes
In the scorching sun and seasonal lanes
Enjoying a carefree and lively childhood
With peers in the neighbourhood.

'Kulakkara' was our childhood hide-out
We trespassed to seek-out
Edible guava fruits from the tree
And scrambled for them in a rioting spree

Nostalgia of thy evenings occur
Bringing me joy and succour
At Kandasamy 'kovilady'
On the 'veethy' near 'Vilaathiady'

It was on that 'veethy' we learnt cycling
Tumbling down many times bleeding
To receive at home thrashes and curses
Prior to treatment of the cuts and bruises

It was also our 'arena' for sports
Where we sweated profusely in shorts
Leaving ourselves daily in a fix
To beat the deadline sharp at six

While the adults played volley-ball
The traditional 'thaachi' and foot-ball
We played the 'improvised' cricket
On a rough, uneven, gravel wicket

Playing 'thaayam' under the spreading tree
The elderly folks watched with glee
Games and other recreations
That kindled their 'dying' temptations

Among them newspapers are read by one
While others listened with fun
Eager to know the latest news
They listened patiently to others views

Oh! What a paradise was my village
Which always maintains its heritage
There was peace and contentment in every visage
Without fear of becoming a hostage

The time pieces of nature in the wee hours
Are bells pealing and cocks crowing from bowers
Together with the gleaming sun rays
Radiating through windows in the haze

The whole area becomes a hive
With activities from all walks of life
People are ever active and agile
Maintaining a low profile

The busy farmers toil in the field
With family members for maximum yield
What a jocund company are they
As they laboured hard the whole day

How often lying on bed did I hear
The songs sung by men so clear
As they ran up and down the 'well sweep'
To draw water from wells so deep

Students cycling with loads on their carriers
And workers hurrying to sustain their careers



Along the road, on a bright sunny morning
Are pleasant memories that kindle my yearning

The rattle of landmasters on the road
The rumble of bullock carts with load
Speeding to and fro throughout the year
Were pleasant 'distractions' to the ear

'Naathaswaram' music that's synonymous
with Inuvil
With 'Sinnarasas' and 'Punniamas' on the thavil
Created sensational feast to the ear
During temple festival throughout the year

How often had I remained in the crowd
Enjoying the rhythmic beating so loud
In the 'vadakku veethy' where we all
Stood in rapture till nightfall

Also the magnificent 'Manjam' sculptured skilfully
And drawn along the 'veethy' cheerfully
Presents a majestic view of the deity
As we held the rope in piety

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moving sight
As they squat in circles with hands chained tight
While men seated outside in deep pensive mood
Helping the grieving in a spirit of brotherhood

How often have I enjoyed thy charm;
The far-stretched vegetable and tobacco farm
The distanced Anna farm
In an atmosphere cool and calm

The fresh air that soothes the body
The hot summer that sweats the body
The palmyrah sap that nourishes the body
Are our natures gifts that grooms the body

Oh! how I wish to lay on thy bosom
And relish the fresh vegetables that's wholesome
And away from you I feel lonesome
And yearn for the life that wasn't troublesome

My only desire is return to you
Do whatever possible to serve you
Spend the evening of my life peacefully
And breathe my last blissfully.



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**By: Subramaniam
Kanthaswamy**

Our Chennai Correspondent

The season of melodies is in its last phase. The month of December had been very hectic and even tiring for the organizers, artists and rasikas. There were performances galore by seniors, sub-seniors and juniors. Instrumental concerts by various musicians on the mandolin, guitar, chitra veena (gottuvadhyam), veena, violin, saxophone and the key-board found platforms in many of the sabhas (cultural organizations).

Among the popular artists Sudha Ragunathan continued to draw crowds and Aruna Sairam mesmerised with her operatic personality and vibrant vocalization. Sanjay Subrahmanian's originality in manodharma and effort at acquiring fine compositions from many sources made his recitals always interesting. T.M. Krishna remained an uncompromising classicist and produced outstanding music.

Vijay Siva was one of the few singers to deliver perfectly polished kritis. Bombay Jayashree has found her direction along the highway of classicism. Her alignment with the two tamburas on either side had a magnetic impact. Sikkil Gurucharan had already proved his mettle in the last two years. This year saw him aiming high and sustaining quality. The Malladi Brothers made robust music in a distinct style.

It was heartening to see young musicians flocking to hear senior musicians whose ripe powers inspired awe. The next rung is occupied by eminent performers from T.V. Sankaranarayanan, T.N. Seshagopalan, and O.S. Thiagarajan to Neyvelli Santhanagopalan

Instrumental music, which once reigned supreme, has now taken a backseat. There were few takers for the flute, and fewer for that primal instrument, the veena. The violin solos fared better, with G a n e s h - K u m a r e s h , Chandrasegaran, the Lalgudi siblings and T.N. Krishnan performing to large and keen audience. What splendid music Ravikiran made! Generations of past-masters spoke through his chitraveena.

Dance

Dancers, with a few exceptions, don't allow themselves to go grey. But yesterday's young girls are pulling in the crowds today. There are, to name a few, Malavika Sarukkai, Priyadarshini Govind, Urmila Sathynarayanan, Rama Vaidyanathan - all Bharatanatyam dancers with their own distinctive stamp, and favorites with various sections of admiring spectators. Older than them but still going strong are Alarmel Valli

CHENNAI MUSIC SEASON 2008

(Bharatanatyam), Leela Samson (Bharatanatyam), Bharati Shivaji (Mohiniattam), Sonal Mansingh (Bharatanatyam and Odissi) and others.

When it comes to the veterans, still forces to reckon with in their seventies and even eighties, minor lapses in tone or movement are often forgiven as natural concomitants of age, by an audience drunk on nostalgia. This year, as in others, dancers C.V. Chandrasekar, Shanta and V.P. Dhananjayan, Padma Subrahmanyam drew rapturous ovations. But leading the pack of elders, doted and doted upon, was surely Vyjayantimala Bali, one-time film star, who held sway during the 1950s and '60s. Long retired from films, this Bharatanatyam doyenne can give any younger dancer a run for her money.

Margazhi Maha Utsav

A rather innovative series of theme-based programmes is the Margazhi Maha Utsav, the brainchild of a private production house. A series of concerts are held from the first to the fifteenth of December at the Chettinad Vidyashram (among the best auditoriums in the city). These are open to all and generally attract record crowds. The concerts are recorded and telecast live over a private channel. Sponsorships have poured in and this could be the way of the future.

Artistes

It is all well an artiste performs but how many performances he or she gives during the season, quality notwithstanding, is the criterion. Some of the senior artiste burnt the candle at both ends, biting more than what they can chew with the result the total non-cooperation of the vocal chords found the audience sympathizing with the plight of the artistes rather than enjoying the music.

To be fair by the artiste a concert lasting just two hours is unfair. Just as the concert gains momentum with a splendid raga alapana it is time for the curtains. Sometimes the curtain drops after the solitary tail piece that the artiste does not have time even to acknowledge the applause.

As for the artists, it is the season they work for all year. New themes, new compositions, and new costumes - it is the time for premieres and launches. Books, CDs and DVDs on the arts sell merrily, not only from shops but also from makeshift tents and temporary counters at performance venues. You can't ask for a better clientele.

It has become routine for some artists to keep note books/sheaves of paper to which they refer constantly during performance. The previous generation greats never had a piece of paper in front of them. They planned their recitals well in advance and knew their subject matter by heart. Another sophistication of this habit is keeping a laptop in front by a senior vocalist who also insists on keep-

ing the decibel level very high (as in pop and film music concerts) and gives a sermon once in a while. However good the music may be this gesture does not seem elegant.

Audience

The electronic media with its mega serials offers tough competition to the season. 7.30/8.30 pm usually sees a thinning of audiences as they prefer to go home and watch their favourite TV serials. It is only the top few artistes who are able to retain a full house till the end. Out of deference to changed times the concert duration has also been reduced from the earlier four hours to two and a half.

Among the audience, just as in the past, there are a fair share of chatters, sing-along song buffs and talam freaks exploding into beats on hands, thighs or armrests. But, the worst menace now is the ring tone of the cell phones. Answering the phone and having a 'quite' conversation is not unusual. The singer might pour out his soul in celestial rapture, but he had no counter spell to stop mid-song walk-outs staged by those hexed by stronger incantations to be at home for their favourite TV serial. The commencement of the tani avartanam is a signal for an exodus. Some even call it 'toilet time'. In one of her recitals Sudha Raghunathan had to appeal to the rasikas passionately not to walk out during the tani. She said, "unkalai kenchiyum konchiyum ketkiran." When it comes to the concert etiquette, the Chennai audience has a long way to go.

A review of a concert at the Music Academy, where I was present, read: "Kadri Gopalnath in the company of Kanyakumari on the violin, Haridwaramangalam Palanivel on the thavil, Amrit on the ganjira and Rajasekar on the morsing took the audience on an exotic trip through his saxophone music. All raga essays were replete with mind-blowing swirls, complicated twists, sharp turns, dangerous bends, daring leaps, incredible ascends and what not." ("The Hindu" - Dec 24). Everyone enjoyed the music and the majority exited the auditorium unscathed - unaware that they had just returned from a rather perilous journey.

P.M. Sundaram and S.Kannan have produced a guide booklet, a ready reckoner (Kachchri Kaiyedu), which gives the name of the song, raga, tala, and composer's name. This is issued free to all music lovers by Dr. Nalli Kuppasamy Chettiyar. Many rasikas carry these and such other reference books to the recitals. The frenzy to decipher the raga is topmost in the minds of the uninitiated that ultimately they lose out on the joy of listening. Unheard of songs and ragas give the singers the maya of a superiority status. Very rarely, an intelligent performer announces the name of the raga for the benefit of the rasikas.



One also gets to see the NRI brethren from the U.S., Australia or Singapore, planning months ahead, to be part of the festival. For yet another set of rasikas, this is a season in which they need to be seen in all their finery, exchange pleasantries and generally be part of a musical scene.

Awards

With the increase in the number of sabhas, titles and awards have also become manifold. Musicians or dancers who go without an award are a distressed lot. To stay in the race, every sabha has to give an award either by compulsion or to follow the footsteps of older institutions. Whatever the reason, the artiste's ego is flattered. Formerly there were only a few awards and receiving one was a prestigious milestone in an artiste's musical journey. But now, awards are aplenty and almost everyone is a Sangeetha Samrat, Nada Mani or Nada Brahman.

Innovations

Coming to the Sabha officials the president, secretaries and conveners of the festival chalk out innovative programmes to attract more members. Kadri Gopalnath playing clarinet to the accompaniment of tavil, mridangam, chenda laya fusion, and flute and clarinet duo are some of the interesting innovations. New ideas were tried, Jugabandi, thematic presentation of dance and song, four hour concerts, one-raga concert, lecture-demonstrations on musical subjects and music appreciation courses were also offered to educate and arouse public interest. Thematic concerts seem to be the order of the day, and are finding favour with rasikas.

Promising Talent to the fore

There was no dearth of talent among the youngsters. They have not only grasped but mastered the techniques. Many seemed determined to return to sampradaya music, chaste and profound. But the younger generation is unable to focus on music alone. The demands of school and college, as also of professional courses, leave little time for practice. Consistent hard work and wholesome effort were evident from these younger stars. Their art is of quite a high standard, pleasing to the ears and these points to a very bright future for Carnatic music. They should be given a break so that this great art

and religious expression can thrive and not just subsist. Will the sabhas take notice?

It has become a fashion for senior artists to conclude their performance with a Kannada sloka, Abhang or even a Hindi bhajan. On the contrary, it is heartening, at least for some, to see the youngsters conclude their recitals with a Thevaram, Divyaprapadam or Thirupukal, as was the tradition in the good old days. The seniors could learn a lesson or two from the young talents. Most seniors do not realize that they are singing to a predominantly Tamil audience.

Chennaiyil Tiruvaiyaru (Dec 20-25)

Chennaiyil Tiruvaiyaru, a six-day music and dance festival was held at the sprawling Kamaraj Arangam, Teynampet, Chennai. This festival was organised by Lakshman Sruthi Musicals, in association with Zee Tamizh, Deccan Chronicle (a leading English daily), and newsreelindia.in, a Chennai-based portal. There were 36 concerts and all leading musicians participated. Raman, one of the partners of Lakshman Sruthi, said that efforts were being made to provide opportunities to upcoming artistes besides the senior artistes with a view to involve more youth in the festival. The morning and afternoon programmers were free (all are welcome).

Music Academy's Digital Library

Eighty years after its founding, the Music Academy has fulfilled one of its original objectives - that of forming and maintaining a library of music. With the inauguration of the TAG Digital Listening Archives, Carnatic music rasikas will have a treasure trove of music at their disposal, all available at a touch on the electronic screen at the Music Academy. Around 6000 hours of music is presently available in the collection (a collection built up over three decades.) These comprise 2000 hours of music by late maestros, 1500 hours of music by senior artists of today, 1000 hours of performance by junior artists, 1000 hours of special thematic concerts and 500 hours of lecture demonstrations. None of these are commercially available recordings. In an aesthetically done up listening chamber, ten touch screen kiosks link up to a central server. The software provides details of raga, tala, com-

poser and other details.

The Music Academy stands high above the other Sabhas in that it has probably the most outstanding auditorium. The new Bose Acoustics system installed in 2008 provides high quality, state of the art listening pleasure. The seats have been replaced with modern and more comfortable ones. The western side of the auditorium, has been developed for a permanent location for the cafeteria. The other plus point - the washrooms were scrupulously clean (in contrast to most other sabhas). This December, as always, Music Academy was the perfect place to spend the day - good music, good food and good ambience.

"Chennai Sangamam"

The third edition of "Chennai Sangamam" will be held from January 10 to 16. Jointly presented by the Tamil Maiyam and the Tourism and Culture Department, the 'Open Festival' will be held this year in parks, beaches and streets. More than 2000 artistes, including 1250 folk artistes, are expected to take part in the progeamme, which will feature 4500 performances. Coordinator Kanimozhi said a significant event this year was that classical singers, who were largely confined to the halls and auditoria, would perform in the open air. Eminent artists, including Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Bombay Jayashree, O.S.Arun, and Kadri Gopalnath would give performances in parks. Twenty-one venues would play host to some of the



exotic cuisines from rural areas.

AARADANA AT THIRUVAI-YARU

The December music season has come to a lingering end and the next significant event is the Sri Tyagaraja Aradhana at Thiruvaiyaru.

Carnatic music owes its stability and steadiness to the sheet-anchor of the Trinity of composers (Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri), Purandaradasa, Swati Tirunal, and their disciples and descendants who were more preceptors than performers.

The lyrics of their kritis, mostly in Sanskrit and Telugu, were steeped in religious fervour which inspired a great devotional spirit. While their songs always extol the manifold virtues of devotion to God, each kriti also demonstrates the unique and challenging grammar and idiom that governs that particular composition, with a wide

parameter for individual variation and excellence.

Tyagaraja was born at Thiruvarur in 1767 to Sri Ramabrahmam, a Telugu brahmin. He was named after the presiding deity Thyagaraja of the Thiruvarur Siva temple. Later the saint's family moved to Thiruvaiyaru, near Thanjavur, famous for the ancient Siva temple. He lived at a house on Thirumanjana Veedhi till he attained samadhi in 1847. Thiruvaiyaru is getting ready to host the annual aradhana of Tyagaraja. The venue of this remembrance festival (Aradhana) is the samadhi of the saint on the banks of River Cauvery.

This year's aradhana will be inaugurated on January 11. Carnatic musicians from all over the country descend here to pay homage to the saint. On Pushya Bagula Panchami day (January 15), the day the saint attained

samadhi, musicians will sit on either side of the samadhi and pay homage to him by singing the saint's 'Pancharatna kritis' in chorus. The festivities and music will be spread over five days.

CHENNAI BOOK FAIR

The Chennai Book Fair, an annual event eagerly looked forward by all book-lovers, will open on the eighth of January. The ten-day fair will comprise 588 stalls spread over an area of 1.75 lakh square feet. About four hundred booksellers and publishers are expected to participate. The secretary of the organizing committee said, "Last year there were eight lakh visitors to the fair. This year we expect to receive ten lakh (one million) visitors. About three lakh tickets have been issued free of cost to school children."

In an age when browsing the net, playing with funky handsets and passing non-stop sms seem to be the order of the day, reading a book has become an archaic idea for most people. While technology is slowly taking a steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is fast vanishing into thin air. Sadly, the reading habit is on the decline among children as well. Popeye and his gang, aided by multimedia games have drowned the shuffle of the pages.

In spite of such refrains, books continue to find their way to the right readers. Libraries in the city may not boast of good attendance, but they do attract ardent readers, who still exist somewhere in the midst of this discouraging sce-



nario. That many contemporary writers are coming out with masterpieces on different subjects is an indicator to this fact. At a time when recreation, enjoyment and mechanical learning have become operative words, it is reassuring to find that a million 'hardcore' readers will visit the book fair.

MARKALI TIRUVATHI RAI FESTIVAL and THAI PONGAL

The Markali Thiruvathirai festival at Chidambaram commenced on the first of December with the flag hoisting ceremony. The chariot festival is on the ninth of December and the Maha Abishekam of Lord Nadarajah followed by the Arudra Darshanam will be on the tenth. THAI PONGAL will be celebrated on January 14.

By God's grace I hope to be in Chidambaram and Thiruvaiyaru for the above festivities. Thiruvaiyaru, near Thanjavur, is the heart of the Chola country and Pongal is celebrated there in a very grand scale.

On my return to Chennai I plan to write about these festivities in detail.

I WISH EVERYONE A HAPPY PONGAL.

(your feedback on my writings is most welcome: skandos@hotmail.com)

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SRI LANKA BASE FOR CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANTS **CIMA** REGIONAL EXPANSION

CIMA in its quest to grow in South Asia and in the Middle East has made its Secretariat in Colombo the launching pad for regional expansion.

"CIMA's goal is to increase annual new global registrations from the current 20,000 to 60,000 by 2015," Bradley Emerson, CIMA's South Asia & Middle East Director told Sri Lanka newspaper The Sunday Leader recently. In this connection CIMA London was looking at South Asia, Latin America, China and the Middle East as the new growth markets, the report on The Sunday Leader added.

The report further said: In this part of the region only Colombo has a fully fledged Secretariat for CIMA, said Emerson.

It's therefore cheaper for CIMA London to make Colombo its base to expand regionally, rather

than open separate offices in individual countries in the region, he said.

The key is to open CIMA tutorial schools in those targeted countries, said Emerson.

Emerson who oversees CIMA's South Asia & Middle East operations whilst based in Colombo said that since last year he has been able to get a commitment from the Maldivian government to sponsor 100 O' Level passed students annually to do the CIMA exams.

He said that 10,000 students annually pass the O' Level in the Maldives. "But there are vacancies for only 2,000 students for the A' Level. "This was the unique selling proposition I made to the Maldives, and they accepted it," he said.

Emerson has already established a tutorial school in the Maldives with the

assistance of CIMA qualified Sri Lankans working in the archipelago to teach CIMA to those students.

In his quest to fulfil London's aspirations, Emerson is also looking at the Pakistani and Bangladeshi markets with populations of 160 million and 150 million each respectively.

"We, together with ACCA went to Pakistan 10 years ago, but whereas ACCA has made inroads, we have been barely staying afloat in that market," said Emerson.

In this regard Emerson has been able to tap 10 colleges in Lahore and Karachi that teach ACCA to include CIMA as well in their curriculum. Literacy in Lahore and Karachi is over 80%, said Emerson. And both those cities have a combined population of 18 million of whom 54% are under 19 years, he said. Further, English is

the medium of instruction in those cities, opening a vista of opportunities to CIMA, said Emerson.

"I want to increase annual registrations from 250 to 1,000 from Pakistan this year," he said.

He also said that this year he will be working on the Bangladeshi market as well.

"I have contacted a couple of Sri Lankan investors in Bangladesh to invest in CIMA education by providing the necessary infrastructure, and the response has been positive," said Emerson.

Bangladesh is a market that is drawing huge amounts of foreign direct investment. And with the country's recent return to democracy, sky's the limit there, he said. Commercial Bank, after investing in banking assets in Bangladesh is reaping a windfall there.

It was one of their former senior managers, Harris Premaratne who was instrumental in the Bangladeshi venture, said Emerson, a former banker. Premaratne is currently the CEO of Sampath Bank.

In Sri Lanka too Emerson is working with the Labour Ministry to get government sponsorship for 100 unemployed graduates to follow the CIMA Foundation course now known as Certificate of Basic Accounting.

That certificate alone is enough for a student to find employment in the business process outsourcing industry, he said. The cost per student for this foundation course is Rs.80,000, he added.

Sri Lanka after UK is CIMA's second biggest market.

CIMA took off in Sri Lanka after the 1971 insurgency which disrupted

university education here, said Emerson. As a result, students, whilst waiting for university entrance over an over-extended period of time, opted to do CIMA then, he said.

CIMA has also opened a branch in Dubai and is now looking at expanding to Oman and Bahrain as well, Emerson said.

"India is a difficult egg to crack, though we have established a branch office in Mumbai," he said.

They may be having only 1,000 CIMA qualified members. That is because the local accountancy body is powerful, and wields a lot of clout, Emerson said.

But with time, when India realizes the value of the CIMA qualification, that market will open up, then sky will be the limit for CIMA, he said. On the web:

www.cimaglobal.com

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CONCERNED OVER DROP IN REMITTANCES

The financial crisis that has sent unemployment soaring in some of the world's largest economies also is striking an indirect blow at developing nations.

For some developing countries, money sent home by their migrant workers makes up a significant part of the gross domestic product. But rising unemployment is cutting these vital funds.

The World Bank says the flow of remittances could fall as much as six percent this year in nations as diverse as the Philippines, Mexico and Tajikistan.

The recession also is hitting the world's largest economy harder. The unemployment rate in USA at 7.2 percent is at a 16-year high.

German officials say that country's jobless rate now stands at 7.6 percent, with more



than three million Germans out of work

Denmark also is feeling the effects of the slowing global economy. Danish officials say 430 companies filed for bankruptcy in December, a 148 percent increase over the same time last year. [voa news]

HEALTHY EATING HABITS help to reduce obesity

By: Dr. Shanmugam Sivanesan

TO EAT IS A NECESSITY, BUT TO EAT INTELLIGENTLY IS AN ART ---LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

Eat throughout the day, according to research people who ate 4 or more times daily were less likely to be obese than those who ate 3 or fewer times daily.

Replace saturated fats (full fat cheeses, red meats) with mono saturated fats (avocados, olive oil and canola oil) and omega 3 fats (walnuts, almonds, fish and fish oils) Good fats are proven to benefit weight loss.

Eat low glycemic carbohydrates (vegetables, fruits, whole grains breads or pasta) and limit higher sugar foods (raisins,



dates, corn, white potatoes) and all refined flours and sugars.

Include thermogenic foods such as green tea, mustard, pepper, ginger and all proteins. Proteins like fish, chicken, egg white, soy and lean beef also increase the secretion of the hormone glucagon which helps to

breakdown fat.

Eat Breakfast. People who eat breakfast regularly find it easy to maintain their weight. The metabolism is its highest in the morning and gradually decreases as the day progresses. Healthy breakfast should include a good source of protein.

Thai Pongal



"Pongal" literally translates boiling over. It means boiling over in celebration, thankfulness, and joyful. It's a celebration of harvest. And it marks the transit of the Sun from the sign of Sagittarius to the sign of Capricorn.

Thai Pongal is celebrated on the first day of the month of Thai according to the Tamil Almanac. "Sakkuni Pongal" (sweet rice) is offered to Sun God. Firecrackers are lit to signify the moment of boiling over.

Celebrators say that Thai Pongal is the merriest of festivals.

[humanityashore.org]

Avoid the wrong foods like a high carbohydrate muffin or cookie. Instead choose vegetable based soups or stews, healthy trail mix, plain yogurt with berries and vegetables (peppers, celery, cucumbers). Researchers found avoiding a particular food group or skipping meals can cause nutritional deficiencies (eat more good foods but do not avoid any food group)

Take a mini fast daily. Avoid eating from 8pm to 7am to improve digestion and it will help to lose weight. If you must eat late then opt for raw vegetables and green tea.

Reduce the sugar cravings. Lack of protein is the main cause of cravings. Drinking milk with your meal is a better way to get these proteins. Eating sugary, refined flour items will help the vicious cycle of cravings and result in weight gain. If you follow the above steps for few weeks your sugar cravings should subside.

The obesity is one of the major health concerns now and with the help of proper information and planning we all can avoid this.

Reference: The last 15 - A weight loss breakthrough

by Dr. Joey Shulman

Ontario Senior Tamils' Center Celebrates Christmas



The Ontario Senior Tamils' Center celebrated the festive season with a Christmas party for their members and well-wishers last month. This is an annual event of the Center and the main highlights of the function were the singing of Christmas Carols

and entertainment in the form of music and dancing. The President of the Center is Mr. Maya Kandiah.

Pictured here are some photos taken at the Christmas Party function.



Grand Opening of Superior Shutters Office & Showroom

Superior Shutters, a leading manufacturer of premium wood shutters, had the grand opening of their new office, showroom and factory last week in Scarborough.

The products of Superior Shutters are elegantly designed to enhance window décor by combining modern technology and craftsmanship. The window shutters come in different sizes and styles to choose from.

A distinguished gathering of dealers, well wishers and Media were present to grace the occasion of the opening last week. At hand to welcome the guests were Ms. Jamuna Lepagaran, one of the partners, Gabriel Hashoul-General Manager and Carmela Marsilla-Sales Manager. Lepagaran was one of the winners of the Young Entrepreneur Awards two years ago presented by the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce. Guests were taken around the factory to witness how these world-class, custom designed shutters are made. The invitees were also entertained with tasty refreshments and gifts for the season.

Seen here are some pictures taken at the opening.



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Margosa - A Shelter from the Financial Storm

While Financial Markets falter all around us, Canada's Credit Union System has remained strong. This is due to well designed lending policies and sound regulatory structures. In Ontario alone, the Credit Union system saw assets grow to almost \$19 Billion and deposit levels rise to \$16 Billion by the end of 2007. Canada is now home to 1158 Credit Unions, managing \$152.4 billion of deposits in 3465 branches and having 10.7 million members. We want you to become part of that membership. Margosa, as you all know is a financial co-operative, owned by its members, who are also our customers. Some of our members have even called us to thank us for accepting their investments and thereby saving their money. Some members have even regretted for not having invested with us. Members of Margosa Credit Union can rest assured that their money is safe and their Credit union is secure. We are committed to upholding and strengthening key policies that protect our Members as the Market Swings and sways. The Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario (DICO) provides deposit protection for all eligible deposits at Margosa. DICO is a provincial Government Entity.

A Start up Credit Union Like Margosa would really have to watch costs. One might wonder how a credit union can survive without having full range of services. It is possible. In fact, it is smart. A small Credit Union like Margosa that is expected to be all things to all people without matching growth with the expense, is engaging in risky behaviour. We are proud to say that we have a small, but committed staff. We would like to take baby steps in this mission as we want to make sure, that our foundation is strong and stable.

1. Products:

Margosa's intention is to offer the fullest range of Financial services feasible, given its limited staff and capital. Today's consumers will not have much patience for an institution that only provides savings and loans. To truly meet the needs of our communities competitively, Margosa will strive to offer reasonably comprehensive line-up of products as we move forward. Our Credit products will be tailor made to meet the needs of our members. We will try to provide fast approvals and funding. As far as Mortgages are concerned, for the time being, we will refer it to our Trustee Concentra Financial to meet all our Member needs. Through Concentra, we can offer our Members Two investment options for their RSP. The most common one is the traditional fixed term

RSP for 1,2,3,4 or 5 years. Alternatively, for the more knowledgeable investor, who prefers to invest in a variety of stocks or mutual funds, there is the Self-Directed RSP. For more information, please contact us.

2. Services:

The services that are currently available are:

- Investment Chequing with daily interest paid monthly.
- Cheque issuance.
- Premium savings daily interest paid Monthly
- High Interest Savings account at 3.05%.
- Bill Payments.
- Automatic Fund Transfer from your current Financial Institution to Margosa Credit Union Account
- Wire Services.

We have started opening Business accounts to our Members.

Margosa will open accounts from all business types, which fall into the following categories:

- " Sole Ownership / proprietorships
- " Partnerships
- " Corporations.
- " Government and Public Bodies, including Municipalities, Hospitals and School Boards.
- " Condominium Corporations
- " Lawyers Trust Accounts
- " Real Estate Brokers' Trust accounts. And other types of Business Trust accounts.

We have started issuing Member ATM/Debit Cards. With your new Member Debit Card, you will receive your Cardholder agreement. To keep records of your transactions, we will issue periodic statements. Your Member card - Debit Card provides you with easy access to your funds at quite a few ATM machines.

3. Tax Free Savings Account:

In January 2009, We would be opening the New Tax Free Investment Savings Account. (TFSA) Features of this product.

" Available to Canadian Residents age 18 and older.

" Maximum Annual Contribution for 2009 will be \$5000.00

" Income earned and Capital gains under TFSA will be tax sheltered.

" Withdrawal of contributions and/or Income will not be subject to tax.

" Unused contribution room may be carried forward and contributed for future year.

" Withdrawals (capital & Income) will increase the unused contribution room.

" Unused contribution room will be reported on your annual CRA notice of assessment



" Contributions will not be tax deductible.

" Contributions may only be made by the Owner.

A TFSA differs from an RRSP in a couple of important ways.

1. RRSP contributions are Tax-deductible, while TFSA contributions are made with after tax income and are not tax deductible.

2. RRSP contributions and Investment earnings are taxable on withdrawal.

3. Unlike RRSP contribution limits, TFSA contribution limits are not determined by your income.

Similar to an RSP, this account was created to help individuals accumulate savings. It should only have periodic deposit activity and rarely a withdrawal. A balance transferred out will be charged a \$50.00 "transfer fee". A withdrawal will be subject to a \$25.00 "transaction fee".

For the TFSA deposit account, Margosa can offer its members the same interest rate as with the "Premium Savings" account. A fixed rate option can be considered when fixed rate GIC's are launched.

The payoff for the Sri Lankan community in launching Margosa Credit Union is twofold: first, there is the obvious banking benefit of improved access to credit and the provision of banking services more closely attuned to the language and cultural needs of our members; secondly, the creation of our own financial Institution will serve as a catalyst in educating the community's members in financial literacy and raising their stature economically.

Our Members will have to help Margosa Credit Union to become a powerful integration force in the community - for young and old, first and second generations, long-established citizens and new immigrants, Tamils, Sinhalese, Burghers, Muslims, and Malays - taking the best of what the Sri Lankan community has to offer, from the leaders who have done well, and sharing their

success with the ones who need a helping hand.

4. Our success factors:

Margosa will need to be successful in the following areas to provide competitive value and ensure its long-term success as a viable financial institution:

" Wide community support and loyalty

" Support from affluent members, for initial capital and to provide the deposit base

" Competitive Products and Prices

Finally as Members of the Sri Lankan Community, it is important for you to get to know us. Only when you get to know us, we could make the financing decisions that could impact you. Margosa strongly believes in continuity. It is time that you started believing in us, and the trust you build today will remain intact tomorrow.

-Corporate Secretary, Margosa Credit Union Limited

Aid Agencies Help Jaffna Farmers Plant Potatoes

Aid agencies have sent a consignment of seed potatoes to Jaffna, for distribution to hundreds of farmers before the end of the monsoon season.

Responding to a request made by the Government Agent in Jaffna coordinated by the Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare, Approximately 58 metric tons of seed potatoes is being supplied to some 500 conflict-affected farmers, some of whom are also Samurdhi beneficiaries who are restarting their livelihoods.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) worked closely together to import the seed potatoes directly from the Netherlands and to ensure that this joint effort complements other programmes these agencies are involved with in Jaffna to increase people's well being. Since there is a current shortage of potatoes in the district, this distribution will boost production in what is considered to be one of the most fertile regions for potato farming in Sri Lanka.

The Department of Agriculture, the Agrarian Services Centre and the Government Agent in Jaffna are assisting with the distribution of the seed potatoes, ensuring efficiency and fair distribution.



"By swiftly responding in this targeted fashion, and as team with the expertise of different UN agencies, we're boosting critical producers, helping create jobs and adding to the food security of this country," said Neil Buhne, UN Resident Coordinator.

This joint effort will also complement efforts to mark 2008 as the United Nations International Year of the Potato. Potatoes are an integral part of the global food system and its consumption is expanding strongly in developing countries, which now accounts for more than half of the global harvest. In addition, the ease of cultivation of this crop and its high energy content have made it a valuable cash crop for millions of farmers.

The UN remains committed to helping developing countries such as Sri Lanka boost food production in close cooperation with the local government and entities.

Economic Crisis in Canada

Arun Senathirajah

The IMF has suggested that Canadian government would run a deficit of more than \$30 billion in 2009 as part of a concerted international effort to prevent global economic collapse. Otherwise it predicts the crisis can only get worse.

It is pathetic to observe while IMF is coming out with measures to be taken to avoid crisis, including Canada, Canadian ruling political leaders are even not giving serious thought about their own economy.

Political Survival V. Economic Crisis

While President-elect Barack Obama is of the view 'things will get worse before they get better,' Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper has mused that a depression is unlikely. In sharp contrast, newly elected Obama Barrack is working with democrats in congress, in shaping a stimulus package of mammoth proportions even before taking the office. Already ruled and in power Conservatives have proved their ignorant on the status of the Canadian economy. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government first presented an economic statement that was more about crushing his political opponents rather than addressing the country's economic problems. When opposition got alerted and about defeating the budget proposals, Harper suspended parliament for almost two months. They are keen in keeping their political power and convinced the Governor General to postpone the urgent economic measures by proroguing the parliament when the economic crisis needed urgent actions.

It seems that Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper have no clear understanding of the impact of the U.S. and the Global financial crisis impact on Canadian economy. Although Canadian economy is more intertwined with the U.S. economy and have already seen the job losses in the auto and manufacturing sectors, and falling housing market have decreased the demand for Canadian lumber, the impact on Canadian economy could not be visualized by the Finance minister and the Prime Minister of Canada. Premier Dalton McGuinty is far better than Harper at expressing empathy for the victims of the economic crisis. Aftermath of the probable defeat in budget challenge, his political life as a Prime Minister and conservatives in the governing status became questionable, he and Finance Minister Jim Flaherty gave serious thought on Canadian economic problems. In mid December 2008, Harper made an explicit statement about recovery of economy and spending of billions of dollars. Question mark is still there whether the proposed billion dollar deficit budget presentation is for political survival or managing economic crisis.

The State of the Canadian Economy

Already 40% plunge in Canadian and U.S. stock markets, we should be ready to face more pains in the forthcoming years. There are concerns over consumer spending habits, corporate expansion strategy, and banks credit policy tightening. Canada's economy shrank slightly in October, according to statistics released by Statistics Canada, providing more evidence that the country has likely entered a recession that is expected



to last the better part of a year. "The decline in October gross domestic product likely marks the start of recession in Canada," said economist Benjamin Reitzes of BMO Capital Markets. The fall-off would have been worse, added Mr.Reitzes, but for an unexpected uptick in oil and gas extraction, forestry and logging. But all those sectors are showing weakness going forward, he added. "The slower growth in October and November is consistent with our forecast for a 2.5 per cent annualized decline in (fourth quarter) GDP, the sharpest quarterly contraction since the 1991 recession," states RBC economist Dawn Desjardins. October decline was concentrated in the construction and the factories sectors, as manufacturing continued its downward slide with production falling 0.7 per cent in October. The battered auto sector has crashed by 8.6 per cent. Governments in Canada and the United States are working to provide billions of dollars of financial help to their auto industries, hoping to stave off potential bankruptcies at General Motors and Chrysler LLC. "As we head into 2009, the Canadian economy will be confronted with a weakening export sector, alongside continued declines in business investment and residential investment that together will likely translate into 300,000 job losses over the next six to eight months," according to TD Bank economist Diana Petramala. "While it may be too late to ward off a recession in Canada, we can expect more rates cuts to come as the Bank of Canada attempts to curb a more severe economic downturn." She said the weakness in October was not broad-based, as only eight of the 19 industries contracted. And in contrast to the past year, the goods sector outperformed the services sector. Construction, a source of strength earlier in the year, has recently begun to track the slide in house prices and sales. Construction slowed by 0.3 per cent in October with home building falling 1.2 per cent. "The drop (in house construction) was widespread as none of the major markets were spared from the downturn," Statistics Canada reported. "As a result, the real estate agents and brokers industry fell 14.3 per cent over the month, the largest monthly decline in over a decade." Wholesale trade fell 2.7 per cent during the month, reflecting cutbacks in autos and forestry. Retail trade declined 0.1 per cent with beer, wine and liquor stores reporting fewer sales, along with home, hardware and furniture stores.

Crisis Management in U.S. and other Countries

Embracing the U.S. and other countries are being pressurized by economists to adopt aggressive strategic approach to overcome the financial mess through their central bankers and fiscal policy makers,

Canadian situation is very pathetic considering actions taken by the ruling political leaders. Already the Fed has brought down its federal funds rate - the interest that banks charge each other on short-term loans to a range of zero to 0.25 per cent and proposals are being recommended for an overall strategic approach to manage the economy rather than case by case (tactical approach) solutions. Central banks in other countries are also ready to go all out in 2009 to fight the crisis. Interest rates will converge towards zero in all the major industrialized economies and the number of central banks - including the Bank of England and the Bank of Japan will follow the pushing interest rates deep down similar to that of the Fed. They are prepared to keep the rate near zero for a long time and buy assets to channel funds to the market to bring more velocity.

Gap in Policy Making between Bank for the Government and the Government of Canada

Although, in September 2008 Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney said 'any slowdown in the U.S. economy would have consequences for Canada', it look like ruling political leaders do not want to listen to the Bank of Canada Governor or purposefully misleading Canadians or ignorant of the current implications of the financial crisis. Although economists, several analysts and opposition parties pointed out and extensive coverage in the media Conservative government has been adamant or ignoring it. In spite of Carney's warning Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been keep telling Canadians our economy is strong almost until November 2008. It looks like ruling politicians disregard opinions of bankers and economists. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has repeatedly sought to reassure the Canadians until he faces a possible threat of failure of budget proposals for the current fiscal year that the economy is sound and the public should maintain the current leadership to ensure that continues. Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney said in September 2008, that 'Canadian institutions are in considerably better shape than their international peers'. Still he predicted there will be more financial losses in the financial industry and increase in the cost of capital. In December he pointed out 'it is entirely premature to talk about implementing in this country the kinds of unorthodox policy tools the Federal Reserve Board is preparing to wield after the U.S. central bank cut its key rate this week to virtually zero. Admitting that Canada has entered a recession that will persist into next year, he suggested that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. But said bankers and government shouldn't let down their guard.' it is sometimes hard to see the end of the crisis, but it will end.' Carney said urging better

early-warning systems to detect future financial crisis.

Billion Dollar Deficit Budget for Political Survival or Economic Recovery?

The ruling party's budget proposals made in November 2008 with a surplus in millions and now has plan to submit with deficits in billions in January 2009 is a very good example of failure of understanding the impact of the U.S. and global financial crisis on Canadian economy by the ruling conservatives. Three weeks after telling Canadians that Ottawa would record \$100-million surplus next year, the federal Conservative government has revealed it now projects a deficit of \$5-billion. Furthermore, deficits could be the norm until 2012. Also, the deficit projected could end up bigger than forecast based on the size of the government's planned stimulus package in the Jan. 27 budget. The number is contained on the last page of revisions that the Department of Finance issued to its Nov. 27 economic statement. In the revised update, Finance Minister said now believes the economy will contract next year by 0.4%, as opposed to its original call for meagre growth of 0.3%. A spokesman for Finance said the department would only issue projections for this and the next fiscal year. However, based on data provided in the revisions, it indicates Ottawa could post a deficit of roughly \$5.5-billion in 2010-11, and \$3.5-billion in 2011-12. Canada could return to surplus as soon as the 2012-13 fiscal year, provided developments taking place in its favour. Jim Flaherty told reporters there would be a deficit next year. But Finance said based on the best-available private-sector data, the budget balance will likely be about halfway between the average and worst-case scenarios. The Harper government plans to run "deep" deficits totaling up to \$30-billion as part of an economic stimulus package, the Canadian Press has learned that. An official said cumulative deficits of \$20-billion to \$30-billion will be "short term," but wouldn't say how many years that will be. The official said the government will go into debt to fund public infrastructure and skills training for workers who lose their jobs. Papers released by the Finance Department suggest the government will post at least four years of deficits even before pouring money into stimulating the economy. Ottawa is officially projecting deficits of about \$5-billion next year and \$5.5-billion in the 2010-11 fiscal period.

Ontario - the Economic Powerhouse of Canada

The economy of Ontario has been rich, diversified and the largest economy in Canada. The economy is much dependent on service and manufacturing sectors. It accounted for 52% of the national manufacturing exports in 2004. Ontario the economic powerhouse of Canada has lost its leading role in economy as several factors have moved against it. High dollar surge, high oil prices, and global competition in manufacturing industry have caused loss of 200,000 jobs since 2003. Out of the 71,000 jobs lost in Canada, 66,000 were from Ontario, during the month of November 2008 alone. Unemployment rate of 7.1% in Ontario is higher than national average of 6.3%.

The slumping economy has pushed down Ontario as a 'Have-Not' province. In 2009 Ontario would be eligible for \$374 million in equalization payments from the Federal Government. This year Quebec alone



will get \$8.5 billion out of total equalization payments of \$14.2 billion. This is 60% of the total payment allocated for all the 'Have-Nots'. It is surprising to see all these years while running millions of dollars in deficit budget Ontario has been contributing to this program, and has been considered as a rich province. Further there is no accountability on the part of receiving provinces how they spend this money and there is no any arrangements to check funds mismanagement even by federal government or by the contributing provinces.

Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan after meeting with Flaherty commented that 'Harper government is finally admitting that Ontario economy is heading into recession and needs major assistance from Ottawa.' It is too early to say how big the planned stimulus package would be. Premier Dalton McGuinty and Harper government has finally agreed to inject \$3.4 billion into the struggling Big Three Auto giants - GM, Ford and Chrysler. Premier Dalton McGuinty is of the opinion banks should cut their interest rates to aid consumer lending. But his government's own economic statement and an update on that were more about exercising restraint on public spending than about providing stimulus the economy evidently needs. He refused the idea of slashing corporate taxes to help banks. He is of the view, helping the auto sector is far more important at this juncture and providing some stimulus to auto industry. He said Canadian Bankers Association's tax cut plan would cost provincial treasury \$2.5 billion. He warned 'Getting into deficit is no problem. Getting out is the challenge, so we want to make sure we don't get in so deep it becomes just extraordinarily difficult to get out ourselves out of that predicament'

Future Years

Although Canada is currently almost in a recession compared to other Group 8 countries, Canadian economy is in a better shape with the past history of budgetary surpluses, strong period of GDP growth and job creation. Subprime mortgage problems also there in Canada, but it is not to a crisis level as it happened in the U.S. Housing market prices are almost flattening rather than in a state of plunge in Canada. Unemployment rate is expected to rise from its current 6.3% to 8%. Canada's worst unemployment rate of 13% was during 1980-81 recession. GDP meagre growth 0.3% in 2008 may turn down to negative 1.3% in 2009. Much of the forecasts depend on the level of strength the U.S. economic recovery might bring in. Increase of commodity and crude oil prices and injecting hope of for the auto sector stability are important factors to revive the Canadian economy. Ontario's economy is much dependent on U.S. owned big three automakers. Demand for Canadian lumber is much dependent on the U.S. housing market. There should be more construction activities to boost Canadian lumber. It is expected in 2009 U.S. economy would shrink to 3%. Canadian economy has to willingly or unwillingly adjust its fiscal and monetary policies in align with U.S. policy makers as Canada has a dependent economy.



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Eric J. Sibley, Funeral Director & Pre-Arrangement Director



Stephen Betts, Managing Director



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OBITUARY NOTICES

Ponnuswamy, Ramanathan , Mr.

April 12, 1931 - January 7, 2009

Gabrielpillai, Swanamma , Mrs

April 26, 1927 - November 27, 2008

Kumarasamy, Selliah , Mr.

November 21, 1925 - November 21, 2008

Patel, Jagdish Laxmidas , Mr.

July 27, 1961 - November 21, 2008

Nallamuthu, Bagawathy , Mr.

April 15, 1917 - November 14, 2008

Muthunayagam, Nirmala G. , Mrs.

January 21, 1949 - November 11, 2008

Subramaniam, Rany , Mrs.

December 24, 1942 - November 5, 2008

Singh, Andy Sohindra , Mr.

February 5, 1965 - November 1, 2008

Joseph, Mary Kamala , Mrs.

June 28, 1930 - October 30, 2008

Raji, Shiu , Mrs.

April 10, 1924 - October 30, 2008

Anton, Mary Pusparani , Mrs.

November 27, 1952 - October 20, 2008

Markandu, Kesavan , Mr.

July 20, 1970 - October 18, 2008

Thevaseervatham, Eliathamby, Mr.

January 28, 1927 - October 15, 2008

Lingeswaran, Somasundaram , Mr.

March 28, 1952 - October 8, 2008

Guhasoathy, Sugirtharanjani , Mrs.

June 1, 1937 - December 1, 2008

Stephens, Charity Dawn

Pushpavathy , Miss

February 27, 1959 - January 6, 2009

Singanayagam, Sivakumaran , Mr.

June 7, 1959 - January 1, 2009

Sinniah, Sellathurai , Mr.

May 4, 1927 - December 23, 2008

Nadesaratnam, Annapooranam , Mrs.

March 19, 1926 - December 17, 2008

Thuraiappah, Subramaniam , Mr.

November 5, 1942 - December 17, 2008

Antony, Thevathasan , Mr.

November 17, 1945 - December 14, 2008

Rajan, Rajani , Mrs.

January 26, 1973 - December 12, 2008

Antony, Thevathasan , Mr.

November 17, 1945 - December 14, 2008

Sivagnanam, Satchithanathan , Mr.

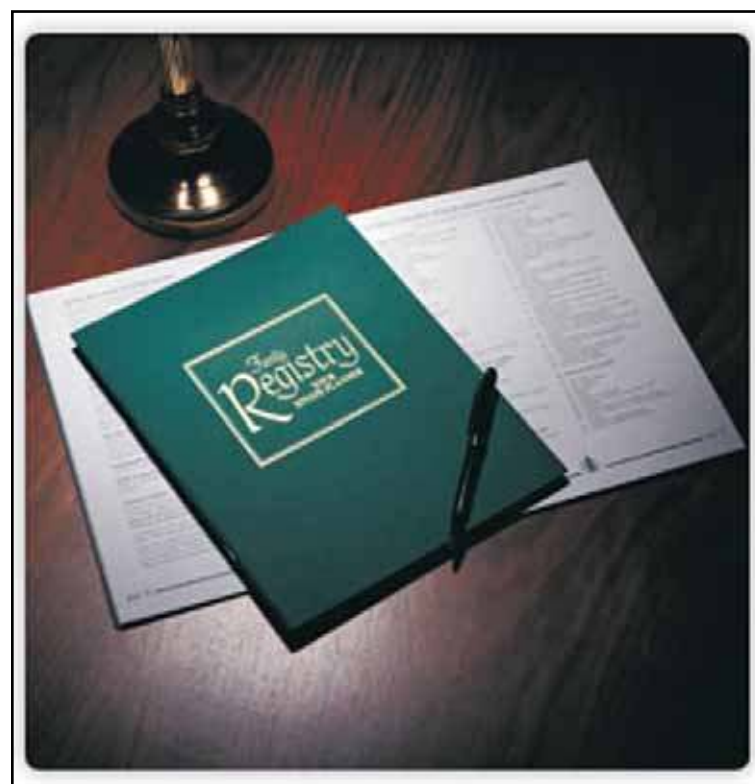
September 15, 1928 - December 11, 2008

Nagamuthu, Thangaratnam , Mrs.

May 17, 1924 - December 7, 2008

Ramalingam, Raguparan , Mr.

October 22, 1962 - December 7, 2008



Family Registry Estate Planner



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Monsoon Journal enters Third Anniversary

Parfait Media Inc. is proud to inform readers of "Monsoon Journal" that the publication has entered the third year of circulation. The uninterrupted and continuous publication of the newspaper has been no doubt due to the dedicated and committed contribution of its team members. It is therefore but fitting to keep our readers informed of the Team members of "Monsoon Journal" - their contributions make "Monsoon Journal" a publication that is much look forward to, month after month.

The Monsoon Journal thanks all contributors from around the globe, advertisers, readers and numerous well wishers- the pillars of continued success as we enter into another year...

We give below a short profile of the "Monsoon Journal" Team for the benefit of our readers.....



Logan Velumailum
Managing Editor & Publisher

Siva Sivapragasam

Siva Sivapragasam is a Media Professional who graduated from the University of Sri Lanka with a degree in Economics. His interest and passion for Journalism made him join Lake House, the largest Newspaper group in Sri Lanka. At Lake House he worked for the Daily News, the premier English Daily in



Sri Lanka in the capacity of Finance Editor for the newspaper. Later he joined the Virakesari Group of Newspapers and functioned as the Secretary of the Company & also the Marketing Manager for the Virakesari Group for more than 30 years. During his period of employment at the Virakesari, he also edited Advertising Supplements for the Newspaper Group's publications.

Since his arrival in Canada, Mr. Sivapragasam has continued his Media work and was assisting for "Thamilar Mathiyil", the Tamil Business Directory. He was also a Director of the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce, handling the Publishing work for the Chamber and functioning as the Editor of the Chamber's Annual Souvenir "Enterprise".

Mr. Sivapragasam brings with him a wealth of experience in Journalism and Advertising to "Monsoon Journal", having served two large Newspaper organizations holding senior and prestigious positions for several years. He functions as the Editorial & Marketing Consultant for "Monsoon Journal".

Raymond Rajabalan

Raymond Rajabalan completed his early education at St. Anthony's college, Kayts, in Jaffna, his birth place. He had his Pre-University education at St. Patrick's College, Jaffna. He is an Honours Degree graduate in Natural Science, from The University of Peradeniya. He



began his teaching career at Kandy St. Anthony's and later taught at St. Peter's College, Colombo. He continued to serve as Additional Chief Examiner for GCE A/L Exam in Botany, in Sri Lanka. Receiving an overseas contract, he served in Nigeria for 6 years with that country's Civil Service Commission. He was appointed Chief Examiner - Biology, by the West African Examinations Council.

He moved to Canada in 1986 and completed a 3 year course in Diploma in Accounting and worked in a leading manufacturing firm for 15 years.

During that time he developed an interest in Broadcast Journalism, worked as News broadcaster for Geethavani and has contributed articles for several Sri Lankan newspapers in Canada for the past few years.

Currently he is serving as an Editorial Executive for Monsoon Journal and regularly contributes articles on a wide variety of topics, in addition to his employment as an Accounts Administrator.

K. Thirukumar

K. Thirukumar contributes regularly to Monsoon Journal's "Publisher's Desk" and "Newslines"

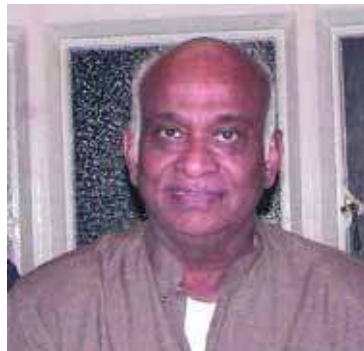


pages. He completed his early education at D.S. Senanayake Vidyalya in Colombo 7, Sri Lanka. After work-

ing as a News Reporter for the premier Tamil Daily Virakesari during 1983-84, he pursued a BA and MBA in the United States and currently employed in New York City.

S. Senthivel

Senthivel, a pioneer in many of the progressive aspects of the Toronto Tamil community is a Retired Banking professional. He is



well known in the community as an Entrepreneur and for his community services. Senthivel is the very first to start a newspaper and a commercial Radio program among the Tamil community in Toronto, inaugurated and hosted by the famous "Radio Ceylon" broadcaster S. P. Mylvaganam about 25 years ago. Senthivel is one of the founding members of Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce. He is associated with Monsoon Journal as Promotions Coordinator since inception.

Kumar Punithavel

Kumar Punithavel has had a long and varied career. After work-



ing in Sri Lanka and Nigeria as an Engineer, he migrated to Canada in 1986 with his wife and two children. Starting afresh in Canada, he began by opening a Sri Lankan grocery store. Following this, he pursued various other trades. He is currently in self imposed retirement due to personal reasons. He started writing articles about Hinduism out of necessity, as he wanted to impart the rich traditions and culture of the Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus to the next generation. What began as a hobby has now become a passion. He is a regular contributor to the Monsoon Journal and other Torontonians Newspapers.

Anand Jayachandran

Anand Jayachandran, is working full time with 'The Globe and Mail'. It was his wish to step into journalism that made him contribute to Monsoon Journal a year ago. He continues to contribute to Monsoon Journal in the Cinema section with Tidbits, film news, gossips and Film reviews.

One of his articles was recently



published in 'Desi Life', a magazine from Toronto Star. Having immense passion for the cine world since his childhood, Anand wishes to pursue Cine Journalism if time permits and may be flag that off as his retirement plan.

Kuhan Velumailum

Kuhan Velumailum, nicknamed as Chefnate, has spent the last 20 years pursuing his passion in global cuisine. He is currently working as an Executive Chef for a world



renowned Hospitals System. In his spare time he has dedicated to contribute for Monsoon Journal, writing articles about various global cuisines and

introducing a variety of recipes. Kuhan Velumailum always wishes to continue the exploration of the taste of sumptuous world cuisine.

Mithura Anandarajah, PT

Mithura Anandarajah is a Registered Physiotherapist with over 10 years of clinical experience.



She completed a Bachelors of Science at Queens University and Physiotherapy at the University of Western Ontario. She currently practices Physiotherapy and Acupuncture in Mississauga. Her caseload includes orthopedic, neurological, work related and automobile accidents. She continues to contribute to the Monsoon Journal in order to promote community health and wellness.

Arun Senathirajah

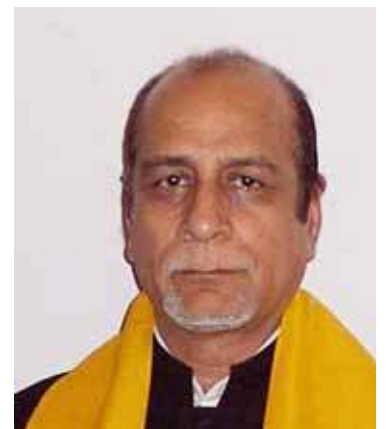
Having held various positions in finance at CIBC-Mellon, Royal Bank of Canada, Desjardins Financial Security etc., currently holding a position in a U.S. head quartered



leading investment and global custodian company in Canada. Former Manager of People's Bank, International Division and possesses more than 20 years of banking experience from Sri Lanka. Hold B A and B Phil degrees from University of Colombo, and an MBA in Banking Management from University of Exeter, U.K. Also hold ACIB in banking and a Lifetime member of the Institute of Bankers, Sri Lanka. Current interests are in Economics, Banking and Finance.

Prof. Saran Ghai

Teaching Hindi in the University of Toronto for the last five years, Prof. Ghai was born, brought up and educated in Jaipur City of Rajasthan State in India. Besides teaching Hindi, he is connected to very many social and literary activities includ-



ing Writing, Editing, Publishing, Hosting TV and Cultural Shows, participating in Community affairs and much more. As a matter of fact Prof. Ghai is a multi-dimensional personality dedicated to the cause of humanity and Literature. Before coming to Canada in 1996, besides his job as a Director Projects in the GT Technical Education Board, Jaipur, he was engaged in education expansion activities. He owned a Secondary School in Jaipur. He also established three schools for the kids of the leprosy patients who were mostly refused admission in the schools where kids of the normal families used to study. This was because of the prevailing stigmas in the society.

Later a shocking incident brought a change in the social life of Saran Ghai. A leprosy patient died not because of any other disease but because of AIDS. This incident made Mr. Ghai to drift his attention towards AIDS. He made deep study towards the causes and prevention of AIDS. In due course his total attention was diverted towards spreading the message of AIDS awareness in school and college students, military and police headquarters and among common masses. Several years he participat-

ed in the 20 KM AIDS walk organized annually in New York.

As a writer Mr. Ghai authored more than 40 books on different subjects including English and Hindi Grammar, Indian History, General Knowledge, Environment, AIDS and Leprosy. Among his other popular publications his book "Essentials of Communication Techniques" remained in the syllabus of some Engineering Colleges in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh for several years. Besides his famous Newspaper "Namaste Canada" - First Hindi-English Fortnightly launched in North America, he also edited Asia Observer, India Post, The Highway Express, Ask Me Biz and Pink Pages Newspapers. His edited-published magazines include Global Trade Time, Kashmir Today and Fluent English. His forthcoming publications include a 2in1 monthly magazine on Wellness, Meditation, Yoga and Astrology titled 'Superior' in English and 'Premyug' in Hindi.

Prof. Saran Ghai is a renowned poet and is currently engaged with his heart and soul in completing his unique poetry composition which he is confident should be the longest poetry ever composed in any language in the literature world. This poetry from the first stanza to the last will be on the same scale, same meter and under one title without any sub-divisions or parts thereof. Objective of this poetry is to create an idealistic environment of Love, Harmony and Peace in the world so that when the future generations write history, should not remember our age as the age of terrorists.

Readers of Monsoon Journal are already known to Mr. Ghai for his articles on Meditation being published regularly for several months.

Subramaniam Kanthaswamy
- Our Chennai



Correspondent

Subramaniam Kanthaswamy who serves as the Chennai Correspondent for "Monsoon Journal" is a writer of cultural and religious articles. Among the books he has authored are Life and Times of Orator Subramaniam and Temples of Tamil Nadu (Tamil). His interest in Tamil culture and music has made him visit most of the important places of interest in India. He is a connoisseur of Carnatic music and does not fail to attend most of the well-known music festivals in Chennai. He is now a regular contributor of articles for "Monsoon Journal". Kanthaswamy is the son of the famous Skandavarodaya College Principal in Jaffna, namely "Orator" Subramaniam.

Santosh Kumar

Santosh Kumar has an MBA in Marketing (Advertising & Sales Promotion) & Diploma in Digital Visual

Communication and Prepress. He has 5 years experience working in the Advertising sector in India and Middle East.

He has been working in Canada



for the past 3 Years and his experience in Graphics is helping Monsoon Journal to develop further.

Gnane B. Gnanendran

Gnane Gnanendran is an ex merchant marine officer and served the trade for 7 years before migrat-

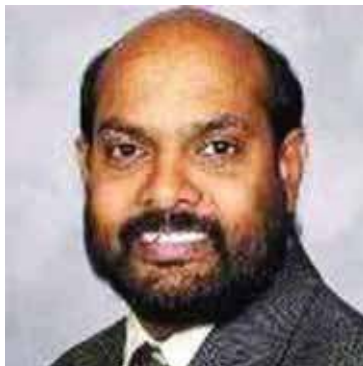


ing to Canada in 1987. He is currently employed as an IT Technician at a leading consulting engineering firm in Markham. In his spare time he does desktop publishing and photography.

He has contributed his services to most of the community newspapers and magazines since 1994. He is also involved performing in cultural events - as MC (in Tamil), singer and drama artist. He is true asset to the development of Monsoon Journal not only in Graphics and Layout but also in many ways such as covering events, design, etc.

Rudy Ruthran

Rudy Ruthran has been in the field of Audio and Video Technology and has served many customers at



many events for well over 15 years. As technology changes Rudy developed himself strategically and positioned himself to tackle any major events. Rudy helps Monsoon Journal in production, introducing new ideas and also covering events.

Abizar Badani

31 year old, Entertainment Editor/Host/ Cartoonist, Abizar Badani began his career as a Advertising student. He knew from



a very young age, that television broadcasting was his one and only love, so he decided to move to Toronto from Bombay to pursue his dream of being in Television and Cartooning. He has worked for three years for a South Asian Television Network, a television broadcaster that provides 24 hours a day and 7 days a week of premium television programming in several South Asian languages to communities across Canada. He has been a host to a variety of Bollywood based shows.

Recently, Abizar has his own pocket size cartoons that appear in the Monsoon Journal every month and also contributes to the kids section in the same newsprint in form of colour me a contest brain stormed with the kind help of Mr. Logan the publisher of Monsoon Journal. Now he is currently contributing on a non-profit basis with the same publication to bring out young talent in the South Asian community.

When he is not busy hosting/cartooning, he spends most of his time with his family, and he is often caught doing something which he says relaxes him, Cooking.

Ayktah Grover

Television and Radio Reporter, Producer, Host and Journalist,



Ayktah Grover began her career as a Biology/Kinesiology student at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia. Needless to say, she soon realized that being cooped up in a medical laboratory, dissecting rats and frogs would not motivate her to jump out of bed and run to work every morning. She knew from a very young age that broadcasting was her one and only passion, so she decided to move to Toronto to pursue her dream of being a Television/Radio Host. For the past four years, she has worked for the Asian Television Network (ATN), a broadcaster that provides 24 hours a day and 7 days a week of premium television programming in several South Asian languages to communities across Canada. She has covered major events in the Greater Toronto area including, the 4th, 5th and 6th Reel World Film Festival, the Miss India Worldwide Canada pageant, and the 4th and 5th Annual Mybindi Comedy Night.

After fine tuning her interviewing and reporting skills in television, Ayktah decided to delve into the world of Radio broadcasting. She currently hosts, reports, produces and writes for Desi Mix - a talk, music, entertainment show, and Shades of Rhythm; a quasi "electric circus" dance show on ATN Asian Radio, a 24 hour, 7 days a week, South Asian Radio station on XM satellite.

With radio and television broadcasting and years of experience on her resume, Ayktah realized she another medium to express herself; through the powerful force of words. She recently published her first article in Monsoon Journal, a

monthly online South Asian magazine. She is currently completing a Journalism certificate at George Brown College, with a concentration in Arts Journalism.

You could also see Ayktah up close and personal, bringing the stage to life, year after year, at the Festival of South Asia, a two-day street festival in the heart of Toronto's Gerrard Street, where she entertained audiences through her musical performances. Her high energy dancing and melodious singing and not to mention her charming wit and humor were definite crowd pleasers.

Sivakumar Somasundram

Sivakumar completed his early education at St. Peter's and Royal College in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Later he joined Hatton National Bank Ltd., a leading commercial bank in Colombo. He immigrated to Canada in early 90's and has been serving the Waterloo region community



since then. Apart from his regular work, he is an active member of the City of Kitchener, Arts & Cultural committee, City of Waterloo Scared Music Arts festival, Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region and also takes keen interest in promoting Kitchener, Waterloo Region news through Monsoon Journal as well as promote Monsoon Journal in that Region from the inception.

Krishni Loganathan

Krishni Loganathan has finished her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto for History and



Political Science. She is now currently doing a post-graduate program at Seneca College for Human Resources. She has been involved with the Monsoon Journal since its inception through various ways and continues to stay connected with the community through her involvement with the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce as their Administrative Assistant.

S. Sri Krishnan

Sri Krishnan is a Retired businessman. Before he got into jewellery business in Canada over 15



years ago by founding and operating Selvasekara Jewellers successfully, he worked in the Telecommunication Industry as an



Engineer in Singapore and Canada. Currently he travels and spends time to write feature articles for Monsoon Journal. He is also one of the founder members of Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce and also has helped the community in many ways.

S. S. Mathavan

Mathavan, soft spoken and gentle, is well known for his 'always willing to give a helping hand by nature' - to everyone around his circle. He moved to Canada in 1989 and always ready with this helping



spirit. When monsoon journal was looking for assistance in distribution, he voluntarily came forward and helped in circulation.

Currently he is pursuing a career as a licensed driving instructor and of course, helps as the circulation Co-ordinator of Monsoon Journal.

Shiyam Loganathan

Shiyam has completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto Majoring in



Biology. He is now studying abroad pursuing a career in Medicine. He has written a variety of articles for the Monsoon Journal and continues to remain connected with the paper in many ways.

Killy Sivarajah

Killy Sivarajah is a community worker involves in many social



activities. He is the President of Midland Sports Club that organizes many sports events and the famous "Ganamum Kadshiyum" cultural event for well over 10 years. He is also the President of Puttur Village Association. He is very active and helps in the distribution of Monsoon Journal in the Greater Toronto Area.

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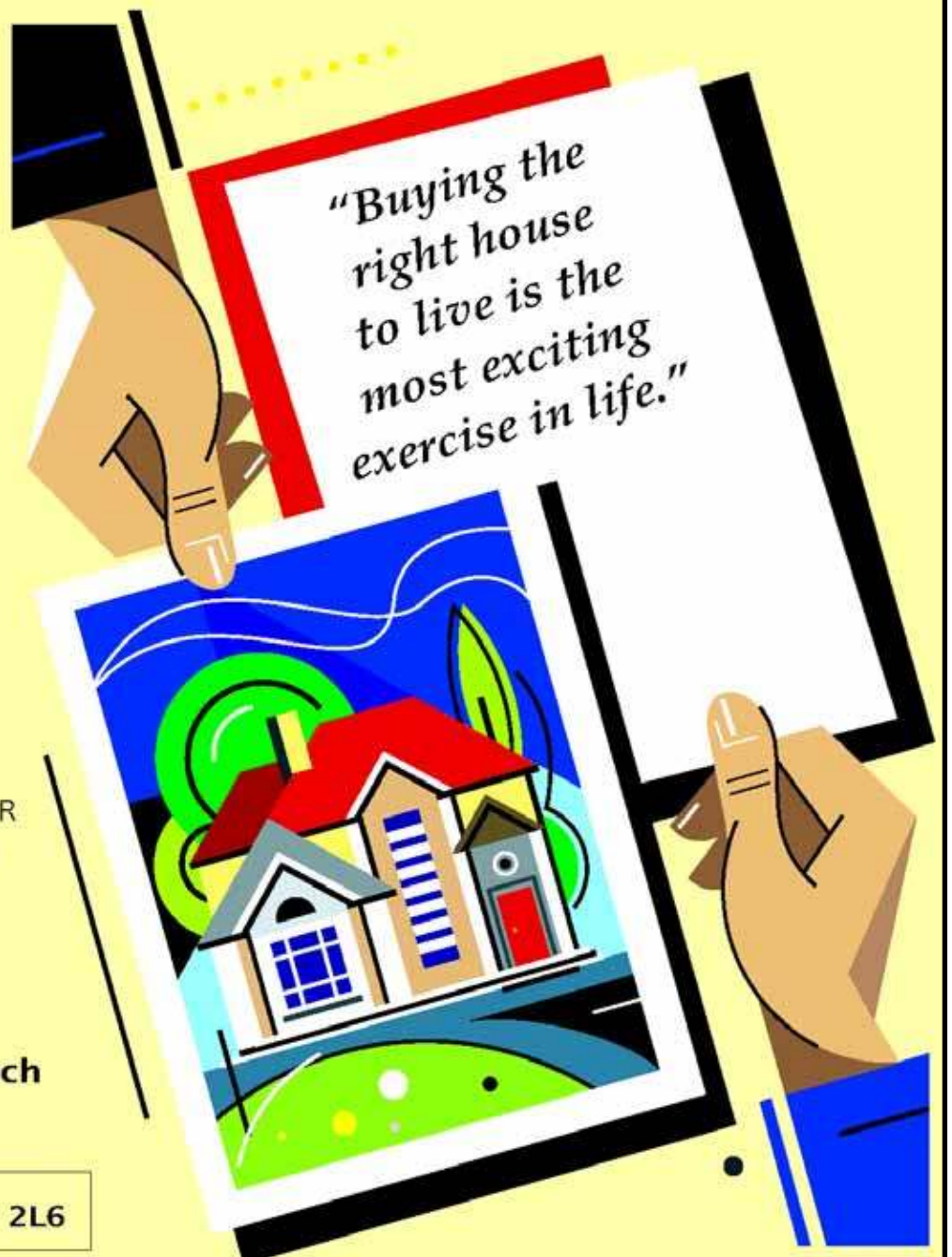
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Lasantha: Fearless Editor who spoke truth to power

By D.B.S. Jeyaraj

Lasantha Manilal Wickrematunge was brutally assassinated in broad daylight on a public road. He was murdered on January 8 by cowardly minions for courageously speaking truth to power.

Refusing to be silenced by the powers that be, the fearless editor of "The Sunday Leader" fought valiantly against overwhelming odds to expose corruption, nepotism, misgovernance, racism and militaristic triumphalism.

The motto of "The Sunday Leader" was "unbowed and unafraid". Lasantha personified the motto in every way and remained to the very end, unbowed and unafraid.

Fateful morning

On that fateful morning, a domestic aide had detected signs of potential danger. Some unknown men on motor cycles were hovering around in the vicinity of Lasantha's residence. The domestic aide warned Lasantha.

When Sonali Samarasinghe, his wife heard about the hovering motorcyclists she pleaded with Lasantha not to go out of the house at that time. But Lasantha refused to do so and started out in his car to office asking Sonali to come later in her car.

The motorcyclists had followed the vehicle and Lasantha had telephoned some friends on his mobile phone and told them of the suspicious activity of the "motor cyclemen".

Lasantha's car was in Attidiya near the "Bakery handiya" junction at the land side end of Templer's road when the stalking assassins got into action. They gathered speed and converged around like predators encircling prey when the vehicle was close to the Malagalage junior school.

Four motor cycles

According to some eye-witness accounts there were four motor cycles in all. Two had cut across in front of the car blocking Lasantha and forcing him to brake suddenly. Two other motor cycles moved up on either side of the car.

The assassins in black wore helmets. Like the four horsemen of the apocalypse, these messengers of death closed in on Lasantha. A steel bar wrapped in newspapers was whisked out. The windscreen was smashed.

The assassins then fired into the car and yanked the door open. Pulling out sharp instruments like unaffixed bayonets, the "black" souls began jabbing and cutting him. A few blows with the steel bar were also delivered. Then they fired at point blank range. Lasantha was hit in the chest, abdomen, ear and head.

The assassins then mounted their bikes and sped away. There was a sentry point manned by the Air Force about 100 metres away. Several onlookers saw the terrifying assault. But the assassins simple vanished.

The unconscious Lasantha was bleeding profusely. He was first taken to the nearest Kalubowila hospital. An ambulance was prepared to take him from Kalubowila to the National hospital.

The doctors found his condition too critical to move him. So emergency surgery was done at Kalubowila with a team of doctors rushing to Kalubowila from Borella. The medical personnel strove hard for hours to resuscitate him. After four hours of battling for life Lasantha passed away.

Thus ended the saga of one of the bravest human beings I have ever

known. Thus ended the life of a fearless scribe, crusading for justice and peace. An irredeemable loss for journalism and Sri Lanka. Cry, the beloved Country!!

Personal loss

His death is a huge, personal loss to me.

He and I were colleagues on "The Island" in the eighties of the last century. We were also residents of Kotahena then. Later I was for many years a columnist at "The Sunday Leader" which he edited.

But "Lassie Boy" as I called him was a friend in every sense of the word. How I shall miss him!

I have interacted with most of his family members also. My heartfelt condolences to Sonali and Raine, his children Avinash, Ahimsa and Aadesh, his parents Uncle Haris and Auntie Chandra, his brothers Lal and Anil, his sisters Savitri, Rukmani and Kumudini, his brothers and sisters-in-law and all nephews and nieces.

Needless to say, Lasantha was a controversial - larger than life - character whose journalism evoked various reactions in various people. Some loved him, some hated him; Some admired him while others condemned him. But the real Lasantha Wickrematunge was totally different to the "image" many had of him due to negative perceptions. He was friendly and easy to get along with. What I want to do in this column is to portray the lesser known side of Lasantha. Something close and personal.

Lassie boy

It was indeed my privilege and good fortune to be closely associated with him for many years. Apart from a brief period of estrangement our friendship endured the trials of time.

This temporary break came in 2007 when I broke ranks from "The Sunday Leader" and switched to "The Nation". This rift on a personal level lasted only a few months.

He extended his hand of friendship and I grasped it firmly. Once again we were buddies! I am glad and grateful that we reconciled as his loss would have been even more unbearable had there not been rapprochement.

I used to call him "Lassie Boy". This was because there were two guys with the name Lasantha at "The Island" editorial those days. To differentiate, I shortened his name to "lassie" which amused many colleagues.

He objected vehemently saying "lassie" was a girlish name. To his utter chagrin I compromised by adding "Boy" after lassie to emphasise his masculinity. "Lassie boy" it was forever.

Teetotaler rarity

Lasantha Wickrematunge joined "The Island" in 1982 shortly after the Presidential elections in October. He had cut his journalistic teeth on the now defunct "Sun," but joined "The Island" because he was given a very raw deal there.

When the presidential elections got underway, Lasantha was assigned to cover Hector Kobbekaduwe's electoral campaign. This he did with gusto and passion thereby incurring the wrath of "Ward place" circles. There was much pressure and the management caved in. Hence, the crossover.

Our friendship began and grew while working as reporters on "The Island". For some reason he took a liking to both Ajit Samaranyake and myself. Both of us were four years



Ahimsha Wickrematunge (R), daughter of slain newspaper editor Lasantha Wickrematunga, and his sister mourn over his body at his residence in Colombo, Sri Lanka, January 11, 2009. Pic: REUTERS/Buddhika Weerasinghe

elder to him but we got on famously. We were not his mentors. He needed none.

Unlike both of us, Lasantha was a teetotaler, a rarity those days among scribes. Still that did not prevent his joining us sometimes when we quenched our thirst in waterholes. He would sip a soft drink while we imbibed the hard stuff, chatting away.

But Lasantha and I got even closer as we were reporters which Ajit was not. Also we were residents of Kotahena. I had moved from Wellawatte to Galpotha road to be within walking distance of Upali newspapers at Bloemendhal road. He was a native of Wasala road.

This enabled us to interact more closely. We were young and bachelors then. More importantly Lasantha had a car of his own. Thus we travelled about in his vehicle to many places and events having fun. I was also a frequent visitor to his home.

All Party Conference

Among the pleasant memories of "The Island" experience was the time when the All-party conference was held in 1984. Both of us were assigned to cover it.

Unlike fellow scribes who depended only on the press conferences and press releases to write their news stories we delved deep into our sources about what really transpired in the conclave.

Our editor at that time Vijitha Yapa who was himself bold and unconventional, encouraged our approach. We pooled our resources and because of our friendship combined to write our stories. Our coverage was the best and the official spokesperson Lalith Athulathmudali would laughingly tell us at the APC press conference "You people don't need me".

Abiding Interest

He revealed to me then his abiding interest in politics. We were alike in that respect but unlike me he wanted to be an active politician. This was due to his family background.

Lasantha's father, Haris Wickrematunge had been a municipal councillor for three decades. He was at one time deputy mayor of Colombo. Uncle Haris had also contested Colombo North as an independent and lost in 1970.

Lasantha also wanted to engage in politics. Uncle Haris had crossed over from the UNP to SLFP with AHM Fowzie and others. This and the bitter experience he suffered at the hands of JR and cronies propelled Lasantha into the SLFP. He was also assigned to cover that party for the paper thus developing his SLFP links further.

It was this which made him contest

the 1989 Parliamentary polls in the Colombo district. He didn't make it then. Later he worked as private secretary to the then opposition leader Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike.

In retrospect, I am glad that he couldn't shine in active politics. Otherwise he would not have had his "avatar" as Sunday Leader Editor. He grew into his role and was really conscious of the historic role he was playing. There was a time when he wanted to be a cabinet minister in a future UNP government.

But when the prospect loomed large on the political horizon, Lasantha opted to remain as a journalist and editor rather than be a politico - minister. This was because he had become very fond and devoted to his editorial role. Despite the dangers he preferred that to full time law or politics.

Lasantha was not unaware of the dangers he faced. He had encountered innumerable problems in the past. After Richard de Zoysa was killed by former President Ranasinghe Premadasa's henchmen, Lasantha was among the journalists whose lives were threatened.

The Sunday Leader

He went to Australia where he stayed for a while. He returned after a while and in 1994 co-founded "the Sunday Leader". The newspaper under Lasantha's unprecedented editorial drive and direction charted out a new course in Sri Lankan journalism. He pulled no punches in a zealous quest to cleanse the Augean stables. Lasantha was no Hercules. Yet he went about his task with indomitable courage. Like Prometheus he defied the "gods" (with clay feet)

For a decade and a half the popular Sunday paper pitched into the powers that be. In the finest embodiment of journalistic values, Lasantha Wickrematunge and his "Sunday Leader" spoke truth to power. In the process he did not merely ruffle feathers but stripped the "birdies" bald.

One Man Opposition

From Chandrika Kumaratunga to Mahinda Rajapaksa, the highest in the land were all targets of his journalistic archery. He was a virtual one - man opposition. Under his editorial leadership his staffers and colleagues worked together as a dedicated team for the common good of this country by upholding liberal democratic values.

In the process he underwent much hardship and danger. Thugs assaulted him in the presence of his wife; machine gun fire was sprayed at his house. The paper was sealed under emergency regulations; numerous



court cases were filed; a blatant attempt to arrest him was made, he was the target of hate mail, abusive calls and death threats. He and his loved ones were targets of vulgar attacks in sections of the media. Still he battled on, unbowed and unafraid.

Finally the end came in a gruesome fashion. In the Sri Lanka of old the barbarians were at the gates. Now they are inside the gates occupying positions of power. Lasantha fully realised the dangers he faced.

He could have gone abroad to save his life. He was a lawyer and could have simply donned the black coat; He could have capitulated and compromised his journalistic integrity. He could have allowed himself to be bought over by or co-opted into the power structure. These he did not and instead opted to go along the straight but narrow path.

Uncommonly Brave

He was uncommonly brave or foolhardy depending upon how one looks at it. The fact that he never had bodyguards or sought protection is illustrative of his defiant spirit. Except on rare "official" occasions he drove his own car. Each day he would walk 45 minutes for exercise, along the road sticking to the same routine. Even on the fateful morning he opted to go out alone regardless of consequences.

I was always concerned about the danger to his life and caution him. I am sure many others would have done so too. But he would flippantly dismiss them. "Machang" he would joke, "there are two things where you gotta go when you have to go. One is the toilet and the other is the grave".

There was also another source of inner strength for this courage. Very few know about the "spiritual" side of Lasantha. Most people think of him as a hard-headed, cynically rational person. But there was a metaphysical aspect to him.

I was surprised when he told me face to face in Canada, "Don't worry machang. Nothing will happen to me because there is a divine power watching over me. That's my protection". I first thought he was joking but later realised he was very serious. This was due to a spiritual experience.

Spiritual Experience

Lasantha's parents and all three sisters and families reside in Canada. One of his sisters had a "problem" of sorts, which was resolved through the prayers of an evangelical Christian mission. This made other members of the family to embrace the faith.

Lasantha himself on one of his trips to Canada underwent a spiritual experience. Thereafter he like Saul being transformed into Paul on the road to Damascus was changed. He even introduced me to his pastor Angelo once. This spiritual experience steeped him in faith and provided strength and solace to him.

Lasantha used to visit Canada every year during late spring to see his sisters and parents. This gave me annual opportunities to meet him in person and have heart to heart conversations. He would also call me when he was abroad in other countries. We would then engage in prolonged conversations without fear of being tapped.

CONTINUED IN PAGE 42...

INDIA SHOULD STOP MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SRI LANKA : LTTE

Under pressure following serious losses, the LTTE has asked India to "stop providing military assistance" to the Sri Lankan Government and vowed to take back its de facto political headquarters Kilinochchi.

"India should stop all military assistance to Sri Lankan Army and recognise our struggle for liberation", the LTTE political head B. Nadesan told the Tamil bi-weekly Junior Vikatan in an e-mail interview.

On whether India seemed to be close to Sri Lankan Government than to the LTTE, Nadesan said "this causes us deep anguish. We have been reiterating that India should understand its true friends are Tamils".

Conceding that the outfit was

"upset" over the loss of Kilinochchi, Nadesan said it was however not a "setback" and the LTTE has recaptured the town on earlier occasions.

"This is not the first time that Kilinochchi has been captured by the Lankan Army. We have retrieved Kilinochchi from the army several times and had it under our control for long periods. This is history. We do not see this as a setback", Nadesan said.

"We are of course upset (on losing Kilinochchi). But only buildings have been affected. Our doors to liberation remain strong", he added.

On why the LTTE is not retaliating in many places in the ongoing confrontation with Sri Lankan security forces, which

yesterday took over the crucial Elephant Pass, Nadesan said "to withdraw is a war strategy to ensure minimum casualties".

"The Sri Lankan government wants to eliminate the entire Tamil race. But Helam Tamils are not orphans; the most important message conveyed to this world and the Lankan government is the seven crore Tamils of Tamil Nadu will not remain mute spectators to sufferings of Eelam Tamils," he said.

"We would retrieve the lands and construct our buildings. I would also like to mention that police department, banks and finance departments have been functioning despite being relocated," he claimed.

The LTTE political head said

the residents of Kilinochchi who have left the town have been relocated to safer places in Wann.

"When situation is favourable to us, we would recapture Kilinochchi and let people live there", Nadesan said.

On the situation in areas under LTTE control, Nadesan said "facing the consistent military actions and continuous relocations, our people hope to retrieve the lost lands. All our people have been making huge sacrifices for this cause."

On whether it was possible to get the ban on LTTE revoked, Nadesan said the support rendered "to our struggle by the global Tamil community in unison proves that it is possible".

Nadesan also said that several

countries "especially Pakistan and China" have been sending ammunition to Sri Lanka by ships. "This has been confirmed by media in Colombo," he said.

Asked if the relief supplies sent from India has been distributed in a fair way, Nadesan replied in the affirmative.

"The relief material has been distributed through the International Red Cross society functioning in our regions. They have been doing the distribution in a fair and complete way. Tamils are our umbilical cord relatives and this timely help will remain etched in our memory," Nadesan added.

[PTI]

INDIA PROMISES ACTION TO PREVENT FRAUD AFTER IT INDUSTRY SHAKEN BY SCANDAL

By Anjana Pasricha

Indian officials are promising to strengthen laws to prevent corporate fraud in the wake of a massive corporate scandal in the country's famous information technology industry. The revelation that one of the country's biggest technology outsourcing firms had inflated its profits and assets for years has shaken corporate India as well as foreign investors.

As the scale of the biggest corporate fraud in India becomes clear, top government officials have moved quickly to say they will do all they can to ensure there is no repetition.

During the first week of January, the chairman of Satyam Computer Services - the country's fourth largest Information Technology company - rocked

corporate India by disclosing that over 90 percent of the \$1.1 billion listed as cash on the company's books was fictitious. Satyam specializes in business software and back office services, and its clients include some of the world's biggest banks and manufacturers.

Regulatory authorities in India have begun searching for clues as questions are raised about how the fraud could have been hidden for so long.

Corporate Affairs Minister Prem Chand Gupta is promising stringent action against those found guilty.

"It would be the strictest possible action against the erring company ... We are in fact more concerned about the investors, the stakeholders, the country's image," said Gupta.

A new management in Satyam

is trying to salvage the situation. The company's interim chairman, Ram Mynampati, says they have reached out to their top 100 customers worldwide.

"The next step is to ensure that business continuity remains undisturbed ... These steps include reaching out to our customers to assure them that business support deliverables will continue as usual, practicing complete transparency in all that we do," said Mynampati.

But analysts say it is unclear how the company will survive the scandal, dubbed as "India's Enron".

However the jury is out on how the scandal will impact foreign investors. Some analysts fear that global businesses will be cautious about investing in India as the country's corporate governance and accounting standards come

under scrutiny.

Others say those worries will be short-lived. They say investors will continue to pump money into one of the world's fastest growing economies, although they will pay closer attention to the books of companies they are investing in.

On its part, India's information technology is reassuring customers that Satyam represents a "stand-alone case." The \$50 billion IT industry has grown massively over the last two decades, and several Indian technology companies are listed



Media personnel wait outside office of Satyam Computer Services Ltd. in Hyderabad, India, 08 Jan 2009

on the New York Stock exchange. The New York Stock Exchange has halted trading in Satyam's shares. [VOA News]

Meenakshi-Sunthareswarar Thirukalyanam



Meenakshi-Sunthareswarar Thirukalyanam in sculptures carved on the side of the main Kopuram of Sri Muththumariamman Temple in Matale, Sri Lanka.

Meenakshi-Sunthareswarar Thirukalyanam is considered as the divine marriage. According to Hindu legend, Meenakshi-Sunthareswarar Thirukalyanam was supposed to be the biggest event on earth. It's also believed that Lord Siva came down to earth in the form of Sunthareswarar to marry Meenakshi, and incarnation of Goddess Parvathi.

[pic by: Dushiyanthini Kanugasabathipillai-more pics: HumanityAshore.org]

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LINGUISTIC LEADERSHIP



My years of experience being a program coordinator for the program Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) gave me the wonderful opportunity to interact with many immigrants from all over the world. Based on this experience, I became interested in the subject of language development and acquisition which prompted me to write this piece.

The acquisition of language is at the centre of overall human development and it reaches beyond the means of ordinary communication. Language penetrates into various other skills, such as research, analysis, discovery, invention, and the creation of new ideas, the exchange of emotion, sentiments, perception, conceptualization, abstraction. It is organic, a living entity that changes and grows according to time and place.

The Universal Declaration of Mandatory Learning states that children up to the age of 14 are to receive an education. The education of children is regarded as a right that is to be provided by the State. In the West, this provision is followed in both letter and spirit. However, this is not the case in many other countries due to factors such as: poverty, armed conflict, child labour, general ignorance and not knowing the value of an education. Canada is regarded as an educated and highly literate country, however among certain groups, the level of education and literacy is substantially lower.

In Canada, bilingualism manifests itself in many forms; we do not automatically think of French/English bilingualism only. We have different linguistic families represented in our many towns and cities most of them with very ancient roots. There are some crucial differences however. The English spoken by a person born and raised in a unilingual environment will be different than the English spoken by someone raised in a bilingual home. The same can be said for French. There is another situation where English and French are taught in environments where neither language is spoken commonly e.g. Japan, Germany, Korea. In this situation, the level of mastery and retention in either language is compromised due to the lack of

practice and exposure. The bottom line is that we must master the host language and retain our ancestral language. The first allows us to integrate into our chosen country, the second allows us to maintain our connections with our cultural identity.

In Canada we officially recognize bilingualism in French and English, but in reality Canada embraces multilingualism. For example, on Dundas St. W and Spadina in Downtown Toronto, the street signs are written in both English and Chinese characters. On Pape Avenue and Danforth in the east end of Toronto, the signs are written in English and Greek. Though Quebec places an extra emphasis on the French language, in the various levels of government a multilingual approach is promoted. There is a general worldwide trend in that there is a shift from unilingualism to multilingualism. This linguistic shift is more common in urban centres than rural areas. For example, many languages have their own numbering system like that of the old Roman culture and they are falling into disuse. But the Arabic numerical system has in many ways become universal and internationally accepted.

Modern technology has brought along a whole new language, sometimes referred to as the "sixth language". We can now "talk" to computers. Language is a system of communication and is a tool for conveying information. The ability to verbally communicate distinguishes us from other animals. Other animals are able to communicate with each other in a limited way using signals and signs. But the verbal communication of humans is unlimited, new words and phrases can be invented every day. The ways in which we combine words and sentences is infinite as any poet or creative writer will tell you. In the modern world, the usual definition of literacy includes not only the ability to read, write and perform simple mathematics but also includes computer literacy. Computer literacy and computer technology minimizes human contact and can solve the problem of human labour shortage mainly caused by the retirement of the so called "baby boomers".

In this fast paced world, the number of people joining the literate class is increasing due to the increased participation of the masses in civil society and a better quality of life. A higher standard of living can be achieved by being both being educated and literate. The modern economy has opened the gates of migration so wide that many can now move from place to place freely. This kind of interaction makes it essential to learn from one another.

There are 6 competencies in language acquisition namely speaking, listening, reading, writing, and thinking. Computer language is the sixth, but falls into a category of its own. The level of mastery in a language brings innovation in terms of invention and ideas.

There are many variations within bilingualism and multilingualism. For example there is a category known as balanced bilingualism in which both languages and their respective skills are used in roughly equal proportion. Another category is semi-lingualism, in which one language dominates over the other. Another sub-category within these 2 examples is academic/professional language versus the vernacular. When it comes to learning other languages, it is important to remember that with each language that we learn, the level of competency in each can be compromised to a certain extent. In other words the so called "richness" can be lost.

Socio-linguistic competency is also of great importance. Each language has its own culture if you will. For example an Englishman has a variety of language skills that are suited to his environment but his skills would not be suitable for the socio-linguistic environment of Greece. Each language carries its own social and cultural norms and it is important to learn these things. Merely speaking the words is not enough; one has know both the words and the song. You cannot separate the language from its roots, the roots carry the traditions, customs, culture and world view. One may go through a language, but the language might not necessarily penetrate into the core of your being.

Another important issue that faces many immigrants is the

issue of professional language competency. For example, in Canada we expect immigrants to have a certain level in conversational English or French. But many immigrants from a professional background face a challenge in this regard. They are not conversationalists; they may be able to communicate well amongst their colleagues in their field, but not with the average person. In order to succeed, it is important to be competent in both levels of communication.

Ethno-linguistics is another interesting field which has a great influence. For example there are many countries in the world which have a spoken language, but no written script. There are also many dialects and accents within various languages. This can pose a particular barrier when it comes to learning English or French and also in terms of interacting within the greater society. For example, some languages have expressions and terms that are not easily translatable and thus pose a challenge for some language learners when it comes to creative writing. This can also make verbal communication difficult.

Let us now look into the second and third generation of non English or French speaking immigrants to Canada. As far as my research into heritage language study by 20 different ethnic groups shows, only 30% or less are effectively learning these languages. In most cases, they are functionally literate but they learn English or French in Canada as their first language. There is a big difference in learning a language as ones mother tongue versus as a first language. By mother tongue I am referring to not only the language but also the socio-linguistic norms associated with it. In the modern world where technology dominates every aspect of our public and private life, except for high research intellectuals for an average or semi skilled person, the command of linguistics has been swallowed by technology. The need for linguistic mastery has been diluted.

In the evolution of languages, some languages die out and some are born. In South Africa among the European settlers, the Dutch, German and the English speaking immigrants intermingled and produced a language known as Afrikaans. Hebrew, one of the oldest languages in the world was not spoken by the common people and reached the stage of what we refer to as a "dead" language and has been revived only recently. When 2 equal languages intermingle both of them will survive. When a language dominates another, the weaker one will eventually fall into disuse. Some so called "dead languages" are still used by some segments of various cultures. For example, Pali the language spoken by the Buddha, though it is not spoken by common people today is still used in the ceremonial chanting and prayers performed by



Samy Appadurai

Buddhist monks in Southeast Asia. The same can be said for the use of Latin in the Vatican.

There are many languages on the brink of extinction. In a number of countries there are only a handful of speakers and when they die, the language dies with them. For example many First Nations languages suffered this fate after European contact. Sometimes the socio-cultural norms prevent the language from surviving. For example in Australia, there is a cultural taboo that prevents siblings from speaking to each other in certain Aboriginal languages. Research into language survival says that there are over 6000 languages spoken in the world today; within a century only 10% of them will survive. This is very frightening, for when a language dies, so does the culture and the history.

The third generation of many new immigrants will be illiterate in their heritage language. It is unavoidable and whatever steps we take to preserve these languages will not yield significant results. Therefore whether we like it or not we have to accept the reality that is the command of a language beyond just the basic competencies, and for Canadians it should be either English or French. It does not mean we should not advocate for the retention of our heritage languages but rather shift our focus to the language of our chosen country.

Most of the new immigrants at the initial stage or longer confine themselves to a minority language spoken environment within a majority language spoken area. It becomes a kind of language community. There will be a constant change between the minority and majority languages and certainly the majority language will supersede the minority. The minority language will be spoken mainly in the home and in certain cultural circumstances, such in ones place of worship. So the chances of developing and practicing the minority language are limited. These minority languages are spoken in an informal manner within the family whereas the majority language is used in a more formal context. This situation arises within immigrant communities that are of neither British nor French in origin. For example, in the city of Toronto over 165 languages are spoken. When the majority language is used as the medium of instruction, the language of business and the language of daily life, the minority language falls into disuse and is replaced by the majority language.

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by S. Rajagopalan (B.A)

The Meaning and Significance of "Thai Pongal"

The month of January is called "Thai Maatham" in Tamil, which begins on the 14th of January this year. It is generally believed, that the beginning of "Thai Month" ushers in a period of positive and beneficial planetary influences on the earth and its living beings. Therefore the Hindus consider this day as a very auspicious day and have special celebrations to welcome it. They cook milk rice and prepare delicious food items to make offerings to honour "The Sun God". When milk is boiled, it comes up and spills over the pot. This process is called "Pongal" in Tamil. Literally the word "Pongal or Ponguthal" also means overflow of any human feelings.

The day of "Thai Pongal", marks the beginning of the month of "Thai" for the Tamils. It has important astronomical and astrological significances. The earth rotates itself and moves round the sun causing day and night. But the orbit along which the earth moves round the sun is not exactly circular. It is spherical, little larger than a circle. Therefore the earth's orbit has 365 Degrees. As the earth moves along its orbit, it spends 24 hours on each degree. Therefore the earth rotates 365 times to complete one journey round the sun, resulting in one year. Although the earth moves round the sun, it appears that the sun is going round the earth. From the point of view of the Sun, the orbit, is called "Zodiac". The "Zodiac" is divided into 12 parts representing the 12 months of the year. It takes one month for the earth to move through each part. These parts are known as "Houses", "Constellations" or "Zodiac signs". The "Zodiac" consists of 12 such "Houses". These "Houses", called "Rasi" in Tamil, are as follows.

1. Aries (Medam) 2. Taurus (Idapam) 3. Gemini (Mithunam) 4. Cancer (Kadagam) 5. Leo (Singam) 6. Virgo (Kanni) 7. Libra (Thulam) 8. Scorpio (Viruchigam) 9. Sagittarius (Thanu)

10. Capricorn (Makaram) 11. Aquarius (Kumbam) 12. Pisces (Meenam) On the "Thai Pongal" day, the Sun enters into the "House of Capricorn" - "Makara Rasi" when a change occurs in its direction, leading to climate, environmental and astrological changes.

During the first half of the year, the sun keeps on moving towards north, where as during the second half of the year it moves towards south. On the day of "Thai Pongal" - Sun begins to move towards north, as a result of which, changes take place in nature and human lives. These changes are conspicuously felt and seen in the east, where the



sun rises. The Sun being the original source of energy, is considered to be the Divine manifestation of God, and therefore venerated and worshipped by the Hindus. The beginning of its northward (upward) movement is believed to bring about positive influences to the earth and its living beings. According to the Hindu tradition, one year is equal to one day and one night for the angels (Devas) in the heaven. The period of July 14th to January 13th is considered to be the night time for the angels when they have their sleep, where as the first half of the year from January 14th to July 13th is the day time when the angels are said to be active and the Sun keeps moving towards north. This phase is called "Uttharayanam" and is believed to be the ideal period to begin any new business ventures, to buy houses, or perform any important rituals, such as weddings, connected with "Rites of passage" in one's life. The latter half of the year, when the sun appears to be moving southwards and when the Devas are sleeping is referred to as "Thetchanayanam", and is said to be not a good period to start any new ventures or perform any "Rites of Passage." The dawn (morning) of the Devas (Angels) comes on the day of "Thai Pongal" on which they awake and start bestowing their grace. This is another reason for the auspiciousness of the day. There are many episodes in Hindu epics (Puranas), to demonstrate the significance of the day.

For the farmers of the east, this day marks the beginning of the harvest season. The grains from their first harvest is offered to Sun, as a way of expressing gratitude for mother nature. In other words this is the "Thanks Giving Day" of the Hindus, but unlike the corresponding celebration of the Westerners, they don't kill turkeys and rejoice on meat and alcoholic drinks to mark the occasion. They refrain from alcoholics, and relish on vegetarian foods, and demonstrate love and compassion towards their fellow humans, birds and animals, dis-

tributing delicious food considering all the living beings as vital part of "Mother Nature", which is venerated as Divine by the Hindus. The "Thai Pongal" celebration is a form of worshipping and thanking "Mother Nature" - An aboriginal tradition that had once existed all over the world and had been destroyed by the European Christian Colonialism and Missionary activities.

Metaphorically the word "Pongal" refers to an over flow of any human feelings. On this day of the year, the Hindus are inundated with spiritual feelings and positive emotions. They experience a dynamic awakening of their soul, by the divine energy and grace of the Sun after a long period of sluggishness and lethargy. As the sun moves northward, the rays of the sun are felt more on the earth, leading to hotter season. While on its northward phase, the Sun comes to the center of the earth (Equator) on the Hindu new year day in April, when the day time and night time consist of equal hours, a day which the western astronomers refer to as "Equinox".

The northward movement of the Sun during its journey round the sun, culminates on the day of new moon in the month of July, (Ahadi Amaavasai) when we experience the peak of summer. On this day, the Sun again starts moving south during which period, the Sun's rays begins to have lesser effect on the earth leading to colder season.

According to science, as well as the ancient Hindu "Vedas", the earth and all its living beings originated from the Sun. (Big bang theory of the scientists). The Sun is the origin of Time (Kala) and Energy (Sakthi), and is regarded as the visual manifestation of God. "Sun represents the supreme principle, first non manifest, and then manifest" Chandaogya Upanishad - section 3:19:1. As the Sun enters into each "House" or "Rasi", it produces different degrees of positive and negative influences on the living beings of the earth. On the day of "Thai Pongal" when the

Sun enters into the "Mahara Rasi" ("House of Capricorn") and starts moving north, a period of positive influences usher in the life and environment of the world. In Tamil there is a saying that "Thai piranthal vali pirakum" - The beginning of "Thai" month will remove all obstacles and pave the way for success. After period of difficulties, failures, and restlessness, the Hindus expect to have peace, happiness and success with the changes in the position of planets that occur on the day of "Thai Pongal".

Let us hope and pray that,

the Dawn of light that appears at the heaven for the Devas on January 14th this year, will bring about a dawn of peace, happiness and relief to all the nations and communities of the world and especially to the Tamil community from their long period of discrimination, war and sufferings in Sri Lanka.

"Loka Samastha Sukino Bavantho" a Sanskrit statement recited at the end of Hindu prayers and religious services. The meaning of this recitation is

"Let all living beings on earth be well and happy".

LINGUISTIC LEADERSHIP

Continued from Previous Page

For example, using historical Canadian immigration patterns, the Ukrainian communities that settled in Western Canada were more able to preserve both their original written and spoken language. Whereas in the urban centers such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, the use of minority languages by new immigrants became limited and the majority language, in this case being English was adopted. The periodic influx of new immigrants into the urban centers ensures the continuation of minority language use as these new immigrants take time to integrate into the mainstream culture.

There is an interesting case however when it comes to learning the majority language. Undocumented immigrants, some of whom are smuggled into the country are deliberately prevented from learning the majority language in order to keep them in subjection.

There is a misconception held by many people that learning and using 2 different languages with children is a burden on the brain and can lead to confusion. This is not the case at all. In fact there is demonstrable proof that children who use 2 different languages often have better linguistic, creative and social skills than monolingual children. It is also said that bilingualism leads to more brain elasticity and each language becomes compartmentalized within the brain as evidenced by MRI scans performed on bilinguals. It is quite fascinating to see how the brain stores language and this is proof that one does not become confused when learning 2 or more languages. In terms of social interaction people who are bilingual have better listening skills and can respond more appropriately in social situations.

However, bilingualism has not always been held with such high esteem. We can find many historical examples of what one could call "language murder". For example, in Guyana, though the

majority population was originally laborers of East Indian descent, the use of Hindi was forbidden by the British and now a language that is a mixture of Hindi and English remains which is spoken only by people of a certain age. In Canada, many First Nations languages were wiped out as a result of the Residential School system. Children were severely punished for speaking in their original language until eventually there remained until recent times, a handful of speakers. This injustice is being remedied however. Many First Nations communities are relearning their languages and are teaching them to their young people.

In actual fact there is no multilingualism, there is only ones first language and the rest of the languages the person may speak be it two, three or more. The skills acquired from learning ones first language are transferable with each additional language. These skills are likewise, not a burden on the brain and do not cause any hardship but can in fact enrich ones thinking and worldview. One example is the word "Ysgol" in Welsh which means both "ladder" and "school". Thus a Welsh speaking child who also speaks English would come to think of school as a ladder.

In this age of globalization, it is not feasible for a person to be monolingual if one is going to survive. It is important to learn more than one language. On the other hand the development of technology is posing a particular challenge in this regard. Technical skills are replacing language skills at an increasing rate; one does not need to speak much when operating computer equipment. In conclusion we must all be concerned about the linguistic development of our young people for language is power.

Samy Appadurai is a renowned broadcast journalist, author, educator and public speaker who makes his home in Toronto.

WORDS OF PEACE

The Power of Life

Strange as it may sound, sometimes people put off their own need to commit themselves to finding happiness, says Maharaji, who communicates a simple message that happiness and peace should take priority for every individual. That peace, he says, can be found within. Over many years of traveling the world, he has addressed millions of people in many countries on this theme.

Maharaji says he doesn't deal with ideas or philosophies or religion, but in answering the one universal, innate need to find peace through the enjoyment of existence. He sometimes uses simple allegories to make this profound point.

"There was once a businessman whose desire was to make as much money as possible," says Maharaji. "One day, to his great surprise, he heard a knock on his door. It was a stranger who took a stone out of his pocket and offered it to the businessman.

"Let me explain to you the power of this stone,' he said. 'If you take this stone and touch it to any metal, the metal will instantly turn into real gold.'

"To the businessman, his wildest dream had come true, because now he could be wealthy beyond his dreams. He was very happy.

"However, he wanted to be very careful with his money, so he called to find out what the price of metal was on the market. That day, it happened to be expensive. So he waited.

"Now, the stranger had also given him a warning: 'One day I will come back to collect this stone. I'm not giving it to you; I'm letting you use it. When I come for the stone, you will have to give it back. There will be no extensions.'

"Although the businessman remembered the warning, he kept checking the price of metal, which kept going higher. So he kept delaying.

"One day, the businessman heard a knock on his door, and there was the stranger. He said, 'I want my stone back.'

"In a panic, the businessman replied, 'Just one second. I'll see if I can find some metal somewhere in my house.'

"The stranger said, 'No. This was the deal. I have come back,

and you have to give me back my stone.' He took the stone and left. "Who is this businessman?"



Maharaji asks. "We are. We're given the gift of life. Life is like that stone. We're told, 'With this stone, you can turn any metal into gold. You can realize your dream. You can be happy.'

"What do we say? 'I don't have time right now. I'll wait. Maybe when I am a little bit older. Maybe when I have a little more time.' The amazing thing is that the older we get, the less time we have. One day there's a knock at our door: 'I want the stone of life back.'

"What do we say? 'Oh, I wish I could have done this; I feel terrible about that; I should've done this, I should've done that.'" But there is no negotiation. When the stone must be returned, it must be returned. Then there is no tomorrow."

Human beings, says Maharaji, have a responsibility to recognize the beauty of this gift of life and to experience the joy it can bring. That joy, he says, is within the heart, and he offers inspiration and assistance in discovering it.

"This is the only thing that can truly fulfill us," Maharaji says. "There's no wisdom in realizing the preciousness of something when it is gone. Wisdom is recognizing the preciousness of what you have.

"Within us is magic. Within us the dance of life is unfolding. The thing we are looking for—the true beauty, the pure joy—is within us.

"I'm not here to sell you anything. I'm here to remind you of what you already know. You have known this since you were a little child. I just remind people of what is important.

"Balance this existence. Look for peace, find peace, enjoy peace. If you can't, I can help. It's as simple as that."

Prem Rawat's message is more than words. To help individuals prepare to learn what he offers, Prem Rawat has created a self-paced learning process called The Keys, which are available as a series of DVDs, on a loan basis.

To find out more about the Keys or to order An Introduction to the Keys and a free DVD, call 416 657 2124

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To learn more about Maharaji, visit:
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www.wordsofpeace.ca
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Mahima



A 39,000 square-foot meditation facility

By Ravi R. Ponangi

Cumberland Plateau, Tennessee: The widely renowned yogi, mystic and visionary, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev consecrated a commodious 39,000 square foot meditation facility in Isha Institute of Inner Sciences, McMinnville, Tennessee, USA. More than 700 people attended the consecration and opening ceremony of Mahima, on November 7th and 8th at the Isha Institute for Inner Sciences. Designed to accommodate 3,000 people in sitting meditation posture, this 39,000 square-foot free-spanning domed space, Mahima, meaning "grace" in Sanskrit, was built to fulfill the felt need of a growing number of spiritual aspirants in the United States. More than a mere structure built with stone and mortar, Mahima now symbolizes a potent sphere for self-transcendent meditation.

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, founder, Isha Foundation, consecrated Mahima, sanctifying the place with a

In those two eventful days, through numerous guided meditations, Sadhguru demonstrated the potency of Mahima and the possibility that it holds for spiritual seekers.

Mahima is now open to the public 365 days of the year. Additional information about Mahima, the Inner Institute of Inner Science and Isha's Inner Engineering programs can be found at www.ishafoundation.org.

To a pointed question, why the need for such a big 1200 acre Isha Institute of Inner Sciences? Sadhguru said, "The most important aspect is universal in nature. With out any distinction of caste, creed, race or religion people can participate in this process. Every temple every place of worship should have been like this. But essentially because these institutions have come up with certain belief system it has naturally divided people. People who believe in one type of worship would not like to go to a place where another type of worship. This is



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev is a realized master, yogi and mystic, who has founded Isha Foundation, an international public service organization that strives for ultimate human well-being. For world-wide program information, visit www.ishafoundation.org
Toronto local contact 416 300 3010 or email Toronto@ishafoundation.org

divine energy to aid the spiritual seekers from the West. To prepare the space, the 700 meditators present were instructed to deploy certain energized sounds in specified patterns and at appropriate intervals. Then through an elaborate series of steps, using various ingredients and alchemical processes, Sadhguru imparted an energy source for Mahima that is soothing and yet vibrant and powerful.

Sadhguru instilled Mahima with the more fluid, passive energies to facilitate the spiritual seekers to realize his or her inner self through the perceptible movement of energy up the spine. It is this arousal of energy that is conducive to meditative practice and provides access to states of divine bliss. This is to specially done to aid visitors to Mahima to experience what it means to become meditative, without the need for instructors.

This unique energy feature in Mahima is in congruity with the energy imparted through the Shambhavi Maha Mudra Kriya, offered in Isha's Inner Engineering programs. Thus, the seekers in the West can now readily and unrestrictedly experience the transcendental power of yoga. It is through the strength of this inner realization and self-transformation that Isha has inspired over one million volunteers to implement programs aimed at human betterment.

For those that gathered, the consecration was a rare opportunity to witness the transformation of a building into a meditation powerhouse. On November 6th, as the final touches were being completed, Mahima was no more than a very large concrete structure. On November 8th, after the consecration was over, Mahima was reverberating with an effulgent energy that was felt all around.

not a place of worship. This is not a place of religion. This is not a place which is nurtured by some philosophy or belief system. This is the place we are exploring technology for well being. This is a place for people to find and make use of technologies for their own inner well being."

Sadhguru is a fully evolved spiritual master, a complete yogi, an accomplished mystic and a rare visionary. He has shown the people how to attain their spiritual heights. Sadhguru's scientific approach towards spirituality and upliftment of humanity has received universal praise. His life and work serve as a reminder that yoga is not an esoteric discipline from an outdated past, but a contemporary science, vitally relevant to our times. Deeply insightful, irrefutably logical and unfailingly witty, Sadhguru's talks have earned him world-wide reputation as a speaker. With speaking engagements that take him around the world, he has been a delegate to the United Nations Millennium Peace Summit, a member of the World Council of Religious Leaders, as well as a special invitee to the Australian Leadership Retreat in 2006 and 2007, the Tallberg Forum and the World Economic Forum at Davos in 2006-2008.

Isha Foundation, founded by Sadhguru in 1992, is an entirely volunteer-run, international nonprofit, non-religious organization dedicated to exploring human potential. Isha Foundation is headquartered at the foothills of the Velliangiri Mountains near Coimbatore India and houses Dhyanalina, a meditation shrine and multi-religious temple that include a 13 ft powerful and vibrant energy form-- the first of its kind to be completed in over 2,000 years.

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Late Thiagarajah Maheswaran is Remembered in Canada

Sri Lankan Parliamentarian and Hindu Cultural Affairs Minister Late Thiagarajah Maheswaran was remembered by Tamil Canadians at his first Death Anniversary event organized by Canada-Karai Cultural Association at North York Civic Centre auditorium on Sunday, Dec.28th evening. Representatives of community organizations and Religious institutions, Hindu priests, media persons and mem-

bers of the Tamil Society paid tributes to his services to the Tamil community and to his performance at the Sri Lankan Legislature.

The event commenced with the lighting of traditional lamp and garlanding his portrait by his relatives followed by observance of silence in memory of the people who lost their lives during the military operations by the Sri

Lankan Army and the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka.

Rev. Pon. Panchadchara Kurukkal in his word of blessing at the occasion said that Late Maheswaran was a model to those entering public life. President of Hindu Congress of Ontario Kavingar V. Kandavanam said that Late. Maheswaran hailed from a town abound with men dedicated to the service of

saivism and he led his life befitting to the fame of his town, Karainagar.

Principal Emeritus of Tellipalai Mahajana College recounted the impression he got of Maheswaran at the only one meeting he ever had with him. He said Maheswaran was humble and affectionate. Trincomalee District TULF organizer Mr.Veera Subramaniam spoke of

Maheswaran's courage political will and public concern.

President of Tamil Canadian writers Forum Mr.T. Sivabalu, Uthayan Chief Editor Mr.R.N. Logendralingam, Canda-Karai Cultural Association former Secretary Mr. Kanaga Sivakumaran, President of Nainativu Canadians Development Society Mr. Jeyasivathasan, Mr. Siva Sunthram and Mrs.P. Paramasivam were among those who paid tributes. The event concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Canada-Karai Cultural Association Secretary Mrs.K. Sothinathan.



Homelife GTA hosts Annual Award Function

Homelife GTA, a leading Real Estate Company hosted its annual award ceremony at Princess Banquet Hall on December 17th, 2008.

Founders of Homelife GTA Realty Inc. Raja Mahendran and Eddy Woo were full of joy and excitement and had

invited several of their friends, well wishers and media to show the success of their sales agents. There were several winners who achieved very high targets and these successful Agents were recognized with mementos and plaques. Homelife GTA is one of the leading Real Estate

Companies that has branches in Scarborough and Mississauga with over 100 sales staff to serve the needs of customers who are in search of homes, condos and businesses.



(L-R) Raja Mahendran, Tammy Surendran receiving Award from David Lam and Eddy Woo on Right



(L-R) Raja Mahendran, Kathir Subramaniam with Award and Winson Chan from Tridel



(L-R) Raja Mahendran, Thurairajah Ramesh with Award, Winnie Chan and Eddy Woo



(L-R) RBC Rachel Yeh, Vanessa Chang, Lawyer Stephen Shub presenting a gift, RBC Mortgage Senior Account Manager Vincent Sinnadurai, Eddy Woo and Raja Mahendran



(L-R) Rachel Yeh, Vanessa Chang, Lawyer Gary Anandasangaree (3rd from right) presenting a gift, Eddy Woo and Raja Mahendran



(L-R) Raja Mahendran, Siva Sivagnam with Top Producer Award, Eddy Woo

Christmas celebrations, a sprit for unity

The Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region (TCAWR) celebrated Christmas on 13th of December at the KW Community Centre Hall in Kitchener. The Christmas celebration, a community event celebrated all religious denominations in the membership is a popular annual event.

Addressing the gathering briefly on this special occasion, the president Mr. Sivakumar stated that the Tamil community had

celebrate all the major religious festivals observed by the Tamil community and that this year had also been arranged in the same spirit. He also said that Christmas was a time for giving and sharing and that it was also an occasion to think of those who are less privileged and assist them in whatever ways possible and also to reflect on and cherish the blessings that we all have. A cheque presentation for the

Ramakrishna Mission, Batticaloa was made by the association. The proceeds go to the children of Tsunami and internal conflict in the Batticaloa district, Srilanka. He wished the gathering a merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful new year.

Thereafter, the celebrations commenced with Christmas carols and hymns sung by the members of Venezuelans community of both genders. The carols and

hymns included many popular and well-known numbers which was enjoyed by the gathering. It was followed by a documentary movie by local producer Miss. Saroja Ponnambalam about the community council in a developing neighbourhood in Venezuela, South America. Games, Musical chair and songs followed.

The Christmas celebration was graced by the director of Social Events Mr. Dennis Loyola



and wife Ramya Joseph. The children, who were among the invitees, were welcomed by the Santa Clause at the end of the evening and were given sweets, balloons and gifts, in keeping with the spirit of Christmas



A helping hand for the Sri Lankan children from TCAWR

Sri Lankan children in the district of Batticaloa had a New Year hope from the Waterloo region community. The Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region (TCAWR) through the Global Relief fund organized "PROJECT HOPE" for the children affected by the internal conflict. The association raised funds during summer of 2008 by organizing garage sales in Cambridge and Kitchener. Kids sold chocolates in the community and members supported with cash donations.

Batticaloa is a beautiful town situated in the coastal area of the Eastern province of Sri Lanka. Ramakrishna Mission is a leading Non government organization serving the community since 1980's and established the Sri Sarada Gilrs' Home (Orphanage) at Ramakrishnapuram (Kallady - Uppodai). A long felt need of a new and separate building to accommodate the Sarada Nursery School of the Ramakrishna Mission, Batticaloa, was met in 2008 with the opening of a new block at the premises of the Mission. The new building is very urgently in need of furniture and other equipments for use by the children numbering over one hundred and the staff. A sum of \$2000 will be handed over to the Swami-in-Charge of the children's home for this purpose.

The president of TCAWR Mr. Sivakumar handed over the proceeds to Mr. Balakrishnan during



the Christmas celebration in Kitchener. Mr. Sivakumar appreciated the volunteers for helping the needy children. He stressed the need for co-operation and voluntarism to help the poor and needy. The director of Finance, Mr. Balakrishnan in his address explained to the community how this small contribution will assist the children in the region. He also said that education is vital to the children and we could make a difference in a child's life.

TCAWR is a non-political, non-religious association with members migrated from India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. The association had organized projects for the children in Nunavil, Jaffna and Trichy, Tamil Nadu, India in the past.





Pudhuvai N. Raman

Toronto Council of Agencies serving South Asians for the past 20 years with its office at 1992 Young St # 205 Toronto to cater the needs of various social aspects. Bangladesh-Canadian Community Services, Punjabi Community Health Services, Senior Tamil Centre of Ontario, South Asian Family Support Services, South Asians Women's Centre, South Asian Women's Rights Organization, Social Services Network and Vasantham - A Tamil Seniors Wellness Centre are the members of CASSA. With the coordination of these social organizations, CASSA has been doing wonderful services with multi various activities with special importance for development of their economy with better prospects by representing to the Ontario Government. Its main mission is to facilitate the economic, social, political and cultural empowerment of South Asians by serving as a resource for information, research. Mobilization. Coordination and leadership on social justice issues effecting these communities. As such its values are social justice, Anti-racism, Responsiveness, Diversity, and Accountability.

As such Key Community Action issues, its strategic Direction for the year 2008-2010 has been classified as follows:

Poverty Reduction - Coordination of Access to Health and Wellness -

Strengthening the Communities' capacity to address and strengthening responsiveness to community stakeholders.

Celebrating its 20th Anniversary with events focusing on Social and Economic Justice various programs have been carried out from October to December with good moral support of all communities with grand Gala Dinner.

As one of the special events on 16th December a press meet followed with anti-poverty rally to build support for reducing poverty among immigrant communities with a particular focus on the perspective of South Asians were held into two sessions at Scarborough Civic Centre, headed by the Executive Director Mr. Neethan Shan.

At the entrance of reception hall, visitors got registered and an Exhibition displaying various charts of social community Organizations with distribution of leaflets, flyers and folders were arranged for Rally. Many number of members from various organizations participated in the Rally Meeting.

As the first session, a Press Meet was held in the Meeting Room. Media persons from News

CASSA - Council of agencies serving South Asians - Action on Poverty Reduction Strategy - Press Meet and Special Rally held on 16th Dec 2008 -



Papers, Radio and TV attended this special meeting. Mr. Neethan Shan, The Executive Director of CASSA, Mrs. Sonia Singh of Workers' Action Centre, Mr. Athulaya Sarman from South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario and Abimanyu Singam were the speakers, who were introduced in the beginning by Mrs. Sonia Singh, who high lighted the importance of the event.

Speakers gave an elaborate details of CASSA with special reference to the South Asians Respond to Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy as well the continuing session of Anti-Poverty Rally - A Call on behalf of under privileged immigrant's communities in the GTA to fight poverty.

Mr. Neethan Shan in his address stated that government of Ontario has taken an effective leadership role in trying to address poverty. The strategy addresses many real issues that our communities face, including the problems associated with temporary workers and the lack

of adequate employment standard enforcement.

Mr. Faria Chowdry, while answering to the question raised by one of the media persons said that in addition to advocating for change at a policy level, CASSA

creates ways for South Asians to work towards eradicating poverty in their neighborhoods at the grass root level. Childcare programs, job search support groups and many other such activities can originate and be sustained within the communities at local level.

In discussion Mr. Abimanyu Singam and Mr. Athulya Sarman also expressed their views in response to the questions raised by various participants.

The Press conference followed by an anti-poverty rally where hundreds of concerned community members from across GTA gathered in full strength to raise their voices heard in the form of workshops for women, children/Youth, seniors and access to employment.

Faroah Choudry (Coordinator)

welcomed all and Mr. Neethan Shan briefed out the importance of the Rally and introduced the guest speakers intermittently. Fatema Sajan, Abimanyu Singam, Priya, John Kamy from 25 & 5 and Mrs. Sulthana Jahangir representing various community organizations spoke at length the general problem of unemployment, economic recession and its consequences resulting to poverty, lack of health and education facilities, senior care and women status etc.

Mr. Neethan Shan proposed a vote of thanks with his concluding remarks.

Monsoon Journal feels proud to congratulate CASSA's effort for having brought out to raise the voices of various communities in the interests of better prosperity under one roof.

"Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ should be the appropriate way of celebrating Christmas."

by: jja

Re. Isaac Selvaratnam giving his message at the annual carol service of the Tamil Christian Church of Canada emphasized the importance of putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. Putting on Jesus Christ means living according to His precepts and the example set by Him.. The carol service was held at the Bridletowne Church in Scarborough on Saturday. Isaac further added Jesus took a lowly birth to identify himself with the poor, the humble and the social-

ly- distanced people.. The True meaning of Christmas should not be forgotten while all enjoying the festivities with all its modern indulgences. The choir sang Tamil songs with the accompaniment of a variety of instruments both eastern and western. 'Veenaiye olithiddu vinnavar piranthar;' Sathirame, sathireme, bethalaiyin sathirame' were two of the remarkable carols that captivated the hearts of the audience. Introductory preludes to the special carols in excellent Tamil prose narrated in absentia

added clarity to them. The special 'Thavil' played by Narendran to the carol-'sathirame, sathireme' was very well received by the audience. Pradeep Rajaratnam, the secretary of the church thanked all those who helped in various ways to make the carol service a spiritual experience for the devotees who had come to worship at the church. It is evident from these services that the blessed name of Jesus and his matchless deeds will continue to enhance human lives until the very end of the world.

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Sritharan wins Topgun and Top Recruiter Award from Liland Insurance

Humble Sritharan Thurairajah is no Stranger to the Tamil Community. For the past four to five years he has changed his career to become a full time Insurance industry professional and now wins two main awards for 2008 from Liland insurance. Sritharan plays a very active role in community work and also the Secretary of the Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce.

Liland Insurance is the leading MGA for Industrial Alliance and both the second and third combined will not even reach Liland's Sales volume, said Paul Grimes Vice President for Sales from Industrial Alliance at the Awards and Dinner function hosted by Liland Insurance in a very grand scale and attended by Liland team, their families, Corporate staff from Industrial Alliance and

Media personnel. Liland Insurance founded by Roland Chan has been the leading MGA for Industrial Alliance for the past 12 years and probably since its formation. Roland Chan has helped several agents to reach a very high standard and continue to maintain high reputation for his sales team and provide services for their customers. They showed no signs of any slowdown despite

the current slowdown in the economy and continue to win their customers with the excellent leadership of Roland Chan. Roland Chan hired top experienced managers and staff for the support of his sales staff to help serve the customers' needs in Insurance, RRSP and Investment products. Congratulations from Monsoon Journal to the main Award win-

ners, Topgun-Sritharan Thurairajah, Runner up for Topgun-Nannette Britanico and Rookie of the year-Freddie Magno, and Runner up Rookie-Leonides Awing. Seen here are some pictures taken at the event on Friday, Jan 9/09

Photo Courtesy: A1 Digital



J & J Group Celebrate Annual Client and Employee Appreciation Night



J & J Group, one of the popular Banquet and Restaurant service providers in the Hospitality industry, celebrated their Annual Client and Employee Night last week at their elegantly set J & J Swagat Convention Center. Nearly 250 guests were present at the Night to witness the gala event

hosted by them. J & J Group are today the proud owners of the following Banquet and Restaurant services: J & J Swagat Convention Center
Caseys at Dundas & Jarvis
Caseys at New Market
J & J Express Kitchen at

Whitby
The partners of J & J Group are Mr. Tenison Joseph and Mr. Jude Francis.
Speaking at the Appreciation Dinner last week, Mr. Vinod Rana, the vibrant and energetic General Manager of the J & J Group thanked their clients and employ-

ees for the enthusiastic contribution and support extended for the success of their business ventures. He hoped that everyone associated will keep up the good work in the years to come. He also mentioned a projection for year 2010 when the public would be able to witness one of the

biggest and best Convention Centers in the East end.
Guests were entertained to a night of enjoyment coupled with delicious meals served for dinner. Seen here are some pictures taken at the function.
(Picture Courtesy: Shankar from Quick Snaps)



Happy New Year 2009

May your new year be blessed with peace, prosperity, and happiness.

Seva Ratna "Rajaguru" T. Ravindran M.A., M.S.
* Founder / President / Grand Master *

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Clients of Realtor Sameem Mohamed win fabulous Prizes

Popular Realtor Sameem Mohamed hosted an Annual Appreciation Dinner & Prize Giving event on Sunday, December 25th, 2008 on a grand scale attended by many of his clients, referrals, bankers, friends and media. This event is an annual function that Sameem hosts to co-incide with the festive season.

Pictures shown here are photos of clients and winners receiving their prizes from Mr. Sameem Mohamed.

Photos: Gnane



1st Prize Winner Receiving 50 Plasma TV



2nd Prize Winner Receiving 40 LCD TV



3rd Prize Winner Receiving Digital Camera



4th Prize Winner Receiving GPS



5th Prize Winner Receiving Gift



6th prize Winner Receiving Gift



7th prize Winner Receiving Gift



8th Prize Winner Receiving Gift



Children Receiving Gift After Musical Chairs



Dr Mohamed Giving Gift to the Winner



Gift Are Ready to be Drawn



Meals are being Served to his Clients



Sameem Mohamed Addressing His Clients



Sameem Mohamed Chatting with his Clients

Medical doctor to cashier: Is this the fate of Canada's immigrants?



Ayktah Grover
December 22nd, 2008

"Would you like to try our new chocolate, hazelnut truffle?" Those are not the words you expect to hear from a university educated medical doctor, with a specialization in psychotherapy and addiction, and 12 years of professional experience. Working as a part-time cashier at a retail chocolate store, for minimum wage, was the cold, bitter reality for Marcela Lecuona, who emigrated from Mexico with her husband and four children.

With the crime rate increasing, and storm of corruption sweeping through their hometown, Lecuona, concerned about her family's safety, was forced to leave her home and begin a new, unfamiliar life in Canada.

"Everyone told us that it would be easy to find a job in Canada because there are a lot of opportunities for professionals," says Lecuona. "My husband is a lawyer and I'm a medical doctor. We were told that we would have to wait, but we would eventually work in our fields. That didn't happen."

Lecuona, like many others, decided to start from the bottom; working in entry-level positions for no or little income, with the hope to eventually practice in her desired field.

For four years, she volunteered as a coordinator at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, with the promise of a full-time position. "I had the Mexican education and experience, but I needed the Canadian experience," says Lecuona. "I was willing to work for free because they kept making promises that I would get a full-time position. They eventually just stopped calling me. It was so frustrating. It wasn't fair. It was like you have the wings but you cannot fly."

Lecuona recalls how challenging and frustrating it was to simply find a volunteer position in her field.

"I sent them my resume many times. I had to keep changing my resume," says Lecuona. "I called them over and over and tried to speak to the head of the volunteer department, wanting to volunteer, and no one would speak to me. And when they did, they were rude to me. They questioned what university I went to,

my education and experience."

In Canada, the accreditation process is extensive and lengthy. Trained professionals with foreign credentials must be evaluated by their particular profession's committee and association. Depending on their skills, academic and professional experience, the process may involve returning to graduate school, rewriting exams, attending multiple interviews and obtaining the required Canadian work experience.

"Doctors and lawyers, people whose professions are regulated and need to be licensed, have to undergo the most difficult accreditation process," says Vilma Filici, a certified immigration consultant and president of Filici Immigration Services. "It takes a long time. You must learn the language and speak it. You have to start all over again, and work in menial jobs or do something related to your field."

Studies show that 37% of immigrants between the ages of 25 to 54 have a university degree compared to only 22% of native-born Canadians. Yet, the employment rate for immigrants is less than that of native-born Canadians.

Sadly, Lecuona is not alone; others also share her frustration.

University of Madras law graduates Suresh and Geeta Sharma emigrated from India in 2002 on a student visa, hoping to eventually practice in their area of expertise.

"I came here with expectations of becoming a lawyer or at least working as a lawyer, but found that you need to study a lot," says, 30-year-old Geeta Sharma. "We thought we would start by doing an international business degree, which had components of law, and use that as a stepping stone so we could eventually get our law degrees."

Eight months after their arrival, their student visas had expired and their savings were running low. The couple had to find another means of making ends meet.

"The first couple of days of serving tables, I thought to myself, what am I doing?" says Suresh Sharma, who worked as a part-time waiter at an Indian restaurant. "Am I on the right path? I could've been in India working in my field. Is this what I put years of education towards?"



At the end of the day, you don't have much of a choice when you need to make sure your bills are paid. We were trying to survive, to make money, and get our lives together."

Filici said that she often comes across cases of this sort. With the lengthy accreditation process and the financial burden, many with dreams of establishing a better life in Canada are often disappointed.

"I'm very old now, I'm too old," says Lecuona, now 50. "I can't spend that many years in school and my kids need to go to university."

"What is really sad are those people that sell their properties back home, invest money in paying lawyers and consultants and the fees for immigration," says Filici. "They come and realize that they just wasted a lot of money and they don't have a place to go back to. They've sold everything and can't establish themselves well here those are the people you see driving cabs, working menial jobs."

But, with Canada's dearth of trained professionals, from general practitioners to engineers, and the growing influx of immigrants, why are newcomers still faced with such a rigorous and challenging accreditation process?

"There is an ignorance about the foreign education system,"

says Filici. "They think if you speak with an accent you think with an accent. They're afraid and not willing to hire people or give them a chance. You get in to this vicious circle: no Canadian experience, no accreditation."

Non-academic or professional factors such as language, marital and financial status also act as hindrances.

"People won't give you a job because you have an accent and assume you can't speak English," says Lecuona.

"Language is a huge problem," says Filici. "They have to be able to speak the language according to Canadian standards, and most immigrants have a lot of trouble with that."

According to a 2005 survey, 31.9% of immigrants aged 25 to 44 had difficulty seeking employment due to language barriers.

"If a person has a spouse or children and they do not have money or financial stability, they would be forced to work in low income jobs, work overtime or two jobs to make ends meet," added Filici. "They would be making just enough money to pay for rent and food, leaving them very little time for anything else. The need to continue to support their families takes over their need to prepare for accreditation."

Fortunately, it's not all doom and gloom. Positive initiatives are being implemented at multiple levels-municipal, provincial and federal. Now, as opposed to 25 years ago, a variety of resources are available including enhanced language training programs, immigrant settlement and adaptation programs, language instruction for newcomers to Canada, websites (Going to Canada, hireimmigrants.ca) and immigrant serving organizations (Maytree

Foundation, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and the Foreign Credential Recognition office).

"I think they are all really good initiatives," says Filici. "If the government gives incentives to encourage the business world to give foreign-trained professionals a chance then the new measures may have a positive impact."

Geeta Sharma adds, it's not simply about educating employers, it's also important to inform immigrants, who are unaware of the lengthy process, about the steps that are involved in gaining accreditation.

"We do have a lot of websites and programs available but unfortunately people don't know about them back home," says Geeta Sharma. "The word needs to get out. We need to reach people overseas. They need to educate people about the requirements. At least then they will be aware of what to expect."

Is there light at the end of the tunnel? Does the future of our immigrants look hopeful with new opportunities and a smooth integration into the Canadian labour force?

"Nothing has changed in the past eight years and I don't think anything will change in the future," says Lecuona. "You just don't have many options as an immigrant."

Filici said although changes are being made, not much can be done at the present time since we are in the middle of a crisis.

"The future is not looking bright," says Filici. "You cover one hole and there is another one that pops. We create a crisis and we fix the crises with no thought for long-term change. There is only temporary change."

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Sri Lanka & the Tamils

Understanding the National Conflict

The island called Ceylon had three kingdoms, each with its own sovereignty, and territorial integrity and ruled by different kings, before the arrival of European colonialists. The British were the first to combine the three kingdoms under one administration in 1833. On independence in 1948, the British handed the entire island to the majority nation, the Sinhalese.

The Tamil war of liberation concerns the right of Tamils to exist on the island as equals, with Justice and Dignity. Since independence the Sinhalese have dominated politics and the economy, controlling Tamils militarily and discriminating against, and committing human rights abuses against them.

Till 1956 Tamils opted to live in a united country with the Sinhalese. Then they were prepared to live in one country under one federal system. It was in 1976 (28 years after independence) that they wanted to separate because of continuous abuse.

The Tamils have a distinct language and territory, over 5,000 years of history, and their own religion and culture, fulfilling the requirement to nationhood.

Would it not be better for the two nations to live in peace on the island, rather than having two nations at war?

Background

When the first colonial power came to Ceylon in the 1505, there were three separate kingdoms in the country. The Portuguese first conquered the maritime Sinhalese Kingdom and, more than 100 years later, the Tamil Kingdom. The Dutch took over from the Portuguese, and eventually the British took over from the Dutch. The first British Colonial Secretary to visit Ceylon wrote the much quoted Cleghorn Minute in 1799, which describes the people living in the country and the

boundaries of their places of habitation. Sinhalese historian Paul E. Peiris has said that when Vijaya, the mythical founder of the Sinhalese race, came to Ceylon, Tamils were already there, and referred to the existence of five ancient Hindu temples or Eeswarams in various parts of the country.

It was in 1815 that the British conquered the Sinhalese Kandyan Kingdom. All three colonial powers administered the three Kingdoms separately until, in 1833, they were united under one administration by the British for their convenience.

The Sinhalese as well as the Tamils, have all the attributes of nations or peoples, which, according to the covenants of the United Nations, have the right to self-determination.

Independence from Colonial

rule.

Britain granted independence to Ceylon in 1948 and implemented a unitary Constitution with a second chamber (the Senate), Section 29 which gave a modicum of protection to minorities, and appeals to the Privy Council of Britain against decisions of the Supreme Court of Ceylon. The Westminster type of first-past-the-post voting system gave the Sinhalese, with 74% of the population of the island, an in-built majority in Parliament.

One of the first initiatives of the independent government was the Citizenship Act, under which almost a million Indian-origin Tamils* lost their citizenship, resulting in the reduction of Tamil representation in Parliament by about 40%.

* The Tamil community is made up of Tamils who have lived in the North East for thousands of years and Tamils brought in the 1800s by the British to work on the tea & rubber plantations of the central highlands.

Sinhala hegemony

Directly after independence the Sinhalese started exercising their control in every sphere of activity. Discrimination in employment, education, development, and state-assisted colonization of the Tamil homelands by Sinhalese became state policy. Discrimination and efforts to change the demography of the Tamil areas continue to this day. The Sinhalese population in the Eastern Province, an important part of the Tamil homeland, a little over 4% in 1924, is currently estimated to be over 30% and growing due to the latest maneuvers. Tamils make up 12% of the island's population, but hold only 5% of government jobs.

Tamils tried to get redress after independence by democratic and parliamentary methods, as well as by Gandhian satyagraha [non-violent protest].

Over the years Tamils have regularly been the victims of pogroms by Sinhalese hoodlums either aided by, or watched in silence by the armed forces, who are 99% Sinhalese and the police who are 95% Sinhalese.

Tamils first tried to live together in a unitary form of government with the Sinhalese community. When the Federal Party stood for elections in 1952, Tamils overwhelmingly voted for the Tamil Congress which supported a unitary state.

After much discrimination and oppression, Tamils voted overwhelmingly for the Federal Party in 1956. Two parliamentarians who stood for separation in that election were soundly beaten. At that time, therefore, Tamils preferred a Federal form of government to separation.

In 1956 a bill to make



Sinhalese the only official language of the country was passed in parliament over Tamil protests. This was followed by islandwide pogroms against Tamils in 1956 and 1958. The Prime Minister described the permanent posting of the armed forces in the North East after 1960 as an 'army of occupation.' The national flag was chosen with a prominent Sinhala lion and the national anthem is in Sinhalese.

Two pacts to provide autonomy to the Tamil areas, signed between the Tamil Federal Party and the Sinhala party in power at that time, were abrogated unilaterally by the respective governments following protests by the Sinhala party in opposition in 1957 and 1965.

In 1972 a new constitution was enacted without Tamil participation. The new constitution made the country a Republic, made Buddhism the foremost religion and eliminated the Senate, appeals to the Privy Council, and Section 29 which had given some protection to minorities.

Due to their inability to obtain any redress, and continued discrimination and numerous anti-Tamil pogroms, in 1976 all Tamil parties joined together and passed a resolution asking their Parliamentarians to seek the formation of a separate Tamil state in the Homelands of the earlier Tamil Kingdoms. This was the Tamil people's mandate to their representatives.

At the next elections in 1977, and ever since then, this mandate has not been changed.

The Government enacted a new Constitution in 1978 creating an all-powerful executive president. Again the Tamil representatives did not participate in the constitution's drafting. President Jayawardena said that under this constitution he had the power to do anything except change a man into a woman. The UK's Daily Telegraph quoted Pres. Jayawardene as having said "I do not care what the Tamils think, but my Sinhalese people will be happy." He also introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act,

described by International Jurist Paul Seigart as the worst act of its kind in the world, including apartheid South Africa.

The majority Sinhalese government passed the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution in 1983 which

made even speaking of separation an offence. Following this, any reference to the Government of Sri Lanka refers to the Sinhala majority government. The Tamil representatives in Parliament went into exile in India.

The years that followed have made life intolerable for the Tamils of the island with the security forces doing whatever they want with impunity. The country has been under emergency rule for most of the time since the early 1980s, with almost unlimited powers given to the security forces to terrorise and subjugate the Tamils.

A third of the Tamil population has fled the island and another third have been displaced from their homes, often many times. A hundred thousand Tamils have been killed or disappeared. The Tamil areas are now the poorest on the island and are ruled by military or ex-military governors with the help of the armed forces.

State-sponsored colonization for demographic change

Successive Sinhalese governments have carried out demographic changes in the Tamil homelands at will and the Tamils have not had the political power to prevent such abuse. State-aided colonization of Tamil areas has settled Sinhalese in newly irrigated lands and also in lands from which they have ethnically cleansed Tamils and Muslims.

Settlements have been specifically placed between the Northern and Eastern provinces of the Tamil homeland to break up the contiguity between them. Names of places and streets are being changed to Sinhalese names, new Buddhist temples are being built and new Buddha statues erected. Gerrymandering of areas colonized by Sinhalese has significantly reduced Tamil representation in parliament.

Large areas in the North East have been declared High Security Zones, including a third of the agricultural area in the Jaffna Peninsula, and almost the entire coastline of a community whose main protein source is fish. Restrictions on movement, agriculture, fishing and commerce, along with corruption by the occupying army and the destruction of war have reduced the economy of the

North East to a shadow. The population survives on remittances from family members abroad.

Anti-Tamil pogroms

It was after anti-Tamil pogroms 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1981 and the pogrom of genocidal proportions of 1983 that the Eelam War started.

In the run-up to her first presidential elections Chandrika Kumaratunga catalogued the problems faced by Tamils and said "so much so, that almost 800,000 Tamils left the country as external refugees and over a million remain as internal refugees displaced a multiple number of times". This number is quite a big percentage of the around three million indigenous Tamils.

Since then, more of the same has happened. Abductions, torture, rape, killings, disappearances, carpet bombing and shelling from the seas have become part of the life of Tamils. These abuses have been carried out with impunity by members of the armed forces, special task forces, police, home guards and pliant paramilitary forces.

Tamil aspirations

At the India-sponsored talks in Thimpu, Bhutan in 1985, all Tamil militant groups and all Tamil political parties jointly spelt out their aspirations openly. If there is to be a solution, anything short of that will never be acceptable.

The Thimpu Principles are:

(a) Recognize Tamils as a nation.

(b) Recognize the concept of a Tamil homeland and

(c) Recognize the right to self-determination of the Tamils.

The 13th Amendment to the Constitution, introduced after the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 that

recognized the existence of the Tamil homeland and provided some autonomy for the provinces, has still not been implemented in full. The merger of the Northern Province with the Eastern Province has recently been declared invalid by a pliant Supreme Court. In addition, Tamil may have been declared an 'official' language, but the policy has not been implemented in practice.

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Muktupath Meditation - a path towards utter freedom - IX

Destiny and Destination

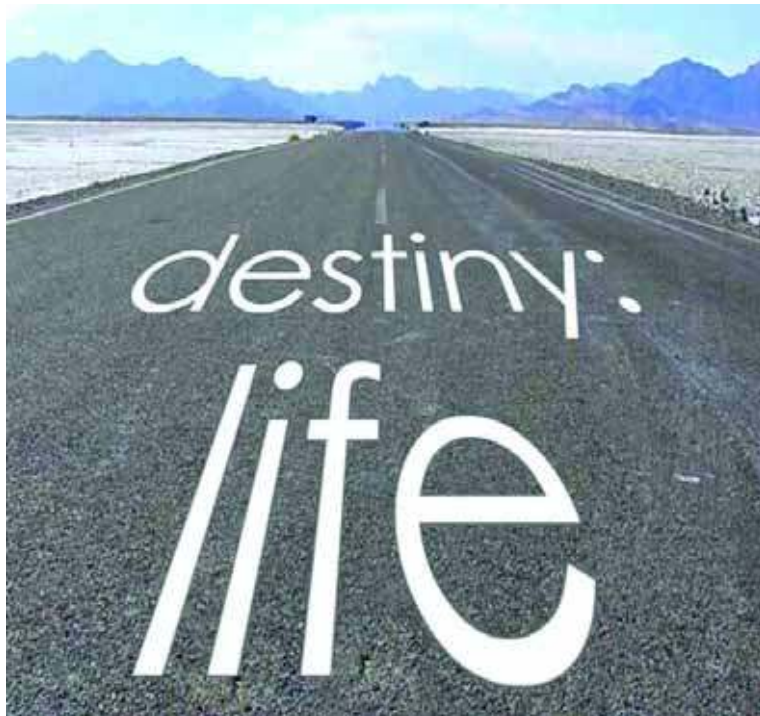
Prof. Saran Ghai

To reach to the destination, combination of efforts and support of destiny, both are needed. Without destiny I would not say that we can not achieve our destination but on the contrary, if both - i.e. the efforts and the destiny work together, achieving the destination becomes comparatively easier and surer.

Question arises here that what is destiny and how one can know that destiny would support him? We know it very well that destiny is not like a diploma or a certificate of an educational qualification which supports us in our efforts of obtaining a job. Destiny is also not like a reference letter which we need to produce in order to achieve a job. To me, destiny is an unseen support from an unknown power house. Destiny, as a matter of fact is like the blowing air, if we move in the direction of the air, we find it easier to walk and if we move against the direction of the air, we find it way difficult to walk. Explaining destiny is as simple as that.

Here you may ask how would we know whether destiny is going to support us in our efforts in a particular line of action. Should we always first go to an astronomer or an astrologer or a numerologist or a palmist to find out if in a particular course of action, destiny would stay in our favour or will go against? My simple answer to this question is - NO.

Our job is to first initiate our



efforts. Later if we find that we are not that successful as we should be or not successful at all, first of all we should find out what mistakes we are doing. What is going wrong in our course of action? Are we dedicating our hundred percent into the task or there is some kind of lack of efforts? If we realize that there is something missing from our side, we should work in that direction. If we find that we have given our hundred percent still we are not successful, then we can think about, may be, it is our destiny which wants to take us to some other direction and we are investing our efforts in a wrong direction.

Even in this case, before we

decide to finally give up, one more time we should study the whole project in hand from very beginning to the current end, trace out the reasons and causes of its failure and one more time apply efforts. If still, we find that we are at a stage of failure, it is better to give up as here it is nothing but our destiny, which is not approving our project or line of action.

There are examples that people succeeded even though every thing was against them, but such cases are rare and certainly double efforts would have been applied to achieve their ambitious goal. My suggestion is why to work double if you can find an easier way out. Just take the things easy and find out an other

way outs.

Some readers may point out that I am suggesting to retreat from their ambitions. No, I am not. I am just suggesting that if the main road is stuck, take an alternate route and reach your destination. Take your destiny with you instead of fighting with your destiny.

I do remember the words of Hitler that impossible word is in the dictionary of fools. He had a point and we must adhere to it. We should leave the impossible word in the dictionary of fools, why we want have that word in our dictionary? Yes, I agree, that word is most unwelcome in our dictionary too. But, we got to be wiser than Hitler. We have to through away the letters I and M from the spelling of IMPOSSIBLE and choose the word - POSSIBLE instead and keep in our dictionary.

Some people who are too much into astronomical and astrological calculations and decide their moves after discussing movement of their stars and planets also fail themselves as their actions mismatch with the requirements of their task. I would like to explain this point in this manner: Suppose you are to take a flight for your important business meeting. Time of flight is nearing but your stars at the moment suggest you should not go out of your house till next 4 hours. What would you do? Sit home and let the flight go, let the meeting fail or you would take your flight, attend meeting and be



professional. There lies the point. Requirement of fulfilling your task has to be given priority over the movement of stars. Here, if your meeting goes successful, who would you give credit for, your efforts or your destiny? On the contrary if you attend the meeting but it fails, who would you blame, your efforts or your destiny?

So, just be very clear in your mind. Keep your efforts on. Keep moving. Give your best. At this point if destiny favours you, success becomes surer. If it does not, you can not sit home doing nothing. You have to do your job for your living. You have to work. You can not let the word - IMPOSSIBLE come into your dictionary. Let it remain in the dictionary of fools. You be wise. Get on, move on.

- Continued...

(Prof. Saran Ghai is an Author, Editor and Publisher of a number of Books, Magazines and Newspapers. He is a Palm Reader and a Numerologist too. Prof. Ghai publishes a monthly magazine titled "Premyug" (The era of love) covering Meditation, Wellness, Naturopathy, Yoga, Palmistry, Astrology, Numerology, Astronomy, Reiki etc. in English-Hindi. To Subscribe "Premyug" please e-mail -

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Sri Lanka and the Tamils ...

Continued from Page 40

Terrorism or freedom struggle?

Tamil youth took to arms in the late 1970s to

A. Liberate their homeland in keeping with the mandate given by the people.

B. To fight against state terrorism.

It is incorrect to brand these youth as the terrorists in this conflict. Of the civilian deaths thus far, it is widely acknowledged that 95 % have been Tamils killed by the armed forces or their paramilitary proxies.

Throughout the centuries, liberation fighters have been fighting for freedom, including George Washington. History is replete with people who were first called terrorists, and later 'His Excellency.'

It was Patrick Henry of Virginia who first said "Give me freedom or give me death."

It suits the Government (GoSL) to brand Tamil freedom fighters as terrorists, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on US targets by Al

Qaeda. The GoSL has wasted no time in demonizing their antagonists and has deceived the international community with false propaganda and downright lies.

Tamil fighters are freedom fighters, not terrorists.

They are not asking for one inch of territory outside of the Tamil Homelands and have not threatened any international interest.

Their fight is to allow the Tamil people to exercise their political rights within their traditional homeland.

Democracy or majority rule?

We all think we know what democracy is. Is it not democracy when a people almost unanimously decide to be free and get back their land that they lost to colonial rulers?

The GoSL tries to persuade the world that they are a democratically elected government, but the Parliament of Sri Lanka has and will always have a permanent Sinhalese majority. If the island

had been a homogeneous country, a party in power at one time could be voted out, and be in the opposition and vice versa. In a heterogeneous country such as Sri Lanka, Sinhalese representatives are elected democratically by the Sinhalese Nation (people) and, similarly, the Tamil representatives are elected democratically by the Tamil Nation (people). Because of the population of the two communities, there can never be a Tamil president, prime minister or commander of the military.

All Party Representative Committee

Tasked with finding a solution to the 'ethnic conflict,' today's APRC is representative only in name. The major Tamil party with 22 Parliamentarians was not even invited to participate. At best, the APRC is a Committee of Parliamentarians of the Southern parties. The Committee's report has been postponed numerous times. Few expect recommendations that will be productive or original, and consider the APRC another in a long line of attempts to cover up efforts at a military solution with a political fig leaf. Under pressure from India in

2008, the President set up another All Party Conference with the same goal and again excluding the main Tamil party.

Future Peace Talks and Negotiations

Requests for peace talks, whether from the GoSL or other countries are purely cosmetic. What is there to negotiate? On what basis will there be any talks or negotiations? Tamils should know that before starting negotiations.

Many clauses of the 2002 Cease-Fire Agreement, and other agreements reached with this government and the previous one were never implemented. Would the talks be based on the Interim Self-Governing Authority submitted by the freedom fighters and the counter-proposal of the previous government, or will this government give a new outline of what any talks will be based on?

If the talks are to impose the GoSL's solution on a weakened Tamil people, one could forget about progress occurring. It is essential to hold talks, if any, under the auspices of an international organization or major country which should guarantee any

decisions made.

Tamils want Justice, and total Equality in every respect, with Dignity.

If Tamils cannot have such rights, they would want a separate sovereign country.

Two States in Peace instead of One State at War

In the last few decades, several new countries have been established, such as East Timor, Kosovo, the Czech and Slovak republics, Eritrea, Bangladesh, and the many successor states to the Soviet Union. Seventy countries have less people and 60 countries less land area than the proposed state of Eelam.

N.B. Anyone interested in the figures of the latest casualties, human rights violations, rapes, forced disappearances, abductions, killings, etc. of the Tamil community can get the information provided by the Tamil Center for Human Rights of Paris to the sixth UN Human Rights Commission meetings in Geneva.

Courtesy:

Sangam! Association of Sri Lankan Tamils in the USA
www.sangam.org

Monsoon Events

Chinese New Year Spring Carnival in Toronto at Rogers Centre from January 23 to 25

Fun-filled Chinese entertainment gala shows and over 200 exhibitors will be the main attractions in this year's Chinese Carnival at the Rogers Centre from January 23rd to 25th to welcome the Chinese New Year 2009. This was announced by Ricky Chan, President of Entertainment Trends at a Press Conference held last week.

The Gala concerts will feature popular international singers from China, Hongkong and Taiwan. All nationalities in Toronto are being invited to join the carnival so that they can better understand and enjoy the Chinese traditions and practices. The organizers expect more than 50,000 to attend the carnival from Metro Toronto and the neighboring areas. The festivities which start at 5.00 p.m. will go on till midnight during the carnival days. Traditional Chinese food, clothing, toys and other items will be on sale at the carnival. There will be special bus services arranged from Scarborough, Markham, Mississauga and Richmond Hill to the Rogers Centre. Free parking spaces will also be provided.

Associated in the Press Conference were representatives from Rogers, Chinese Cultural Centre and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office. Mr. Bobby Sahni, Manager, Multi-Cultural Marketing was one of the representatives from Rogers and briefed the Press about the association of Rogers with the Chinese Spring Carnival.

Seen here are some pictures taken at the Press Conference.

Come Help Celebrate the 41st Annual Richmond Hill Winter Carnival with And Visit the Viking Village!

The Richmond Hill Winter Carnival is celebrating its 41st year on February 6th, 7th, and 8th 2009. For the past 41 years this event has been run by community volunteers and generously funded by local sponsors. Free outdoor activities take place all weekend long at Mill Pond Park in Richmond Hill located at the corner of Mill and Trench Streets just north of York Central Hospital. We welcome you all out for a weekend of activities and excitement.

Some of the highlights at this upcoming event will include skydivers landing on the ice, performances by Lou Moore Band, amateur band contest, junior and senior elementary school hockey finals, and the Sunday morning pancake breakfast. Some other notable weekend activities include a children's midway, pony rides, rock climbing wall, Viking Village, Muskoka wildlife shows, arts and crafts, face painting, ice carvings, stage entertainment, skating on the pond, and many more sites and activities.

Entry to Carnival is free, for \$2 visitors can purchase a Carnival button and be eligible for dozens of prizes including an Ipod, Canadian Tire Power Tools, a flat screen TV, a digital camera and a candle package from Party Lite. A children's bike draw will be held on both Saturday and Sunday. Complementary shuttle busses will be provided from strategic locations, please visit www.wintercarnival.net or call the Carnival hotline at 905-771-7700 for details. Info by: Raymond Baksi, Richmond Hill Carnival Committee Communications.



(from left to right): Mr. Keith Brown, Director of Operations, Ontario Place, Mr. Stephen Siu, Assistant Director (Public Relations), Hong Kong Economic & Trade Office (Canada), Ms. Susan Gordon, Vice President, National and Regional Marketing, Rogers Wireless, Mr. Ricky Chan, President, E-Trends, Mr. Bobby Sahni, Manager, Multicultural Marketing, Rogers Cable, Dr. Ming-Tat Cheung, President & Chairman, Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, Mr. Louis Chu, Director, E-Trends

Award Ceremony of CanTYD

Canadian Tamil Youth Development Association celebrated the annual award function in December 2008 and selected the following for outstanding achievement under various fields and categories. Listed below are the Award Winners for 2008.

Overall:

GRADE 9- Kesavan Ganeshalingam

GRADE 10- Janithaa Sathiyaseelan

GRADE 11- Sobika Easwaran

GRADE 12- Vijayabharath (Vijay) Jeyapalan

Academic:

GRADE 9- Niro Francispragasam

GRADE 10- Janithaa Sathiyaseelan

GRADE 11- Sobika Easwaran

GRADE 12- Keerthana Kamalavasan

Visual Arts:

GRADE 12- Thiviya Sehasothy

Unique Distinguished:

GRADE 12- Ryan Nesharatnam

Athletic:

GRADE 11- Lashaayan (Lash) Kugathan

Community :

GRADE 11- Darsi Panchalingam

Most Improved:

GRADE 12- Parthiban Indubalan

GRADE 12- Mayuran Sriharan

Lasantha ...

Continued from Page 27

Four Phases

Professionally, my relationship with him has been of four phases. The first was our working together at "The Island"; the second was when he started "The Sunday Leader" and I wrote for the paper from Canada.

Since I was editing my own Tamil weekly at that time I couldn't continue for long. But it was illustrative of Lasantha's innovative outlook and confidence in me that he thought I could write a regular column on Sri Lankan politics from Canada for a Sri Lankan newspaper.

The third phase was when I began functioning in 1997 as the "Roving correspondent" of "The Sunday Leader" writing the "searchlight" column. The fourth phase was in 1999 when I started writing under my own byline for his paper. This went on till September 2007.

The important point in writing for "Editor" Wickrematunge was the absolute freedom he allowed his

columnist. He has never bluepencilled me. Except for rare requests he has never asked me what I was going to write upon. There have been only two occasions during an eight year stint that he asked me not to write on two matters. One was about a Tamil politician and the other a Sinhala Army general.

Particular Empathy

What endeared him to me most was his utter lack of racist consciousness. In this he was influenced by his father and Kotahena upbringing. The ward contested by Uncle Haris is multi-ethnic. So too is Colombo north. This resulted in Haris Wickrematunge having very good rapport with the Tamil, Muslim and Burgher communities in the area.

This rubbed off on Lasantha too I guess. Besides the cosmopolitan St. Benedicts College environment also was conducive. As a result Lasantha was one who had no racist or chauvinist thinking in his psyche. He was fully

aware of the problems faced by the minority ethnicities in Lanka. He had particular empathy for the Tamil predicament.

This worldview and mindset was reflected in his journalism and the general editorial thrust of his paper. The newspaper was boldly critical of majoritarian hegemony and strongly supportive of the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people.

This policy was not hypocritical based on attracting sales. It came from the heart. This naturally made him and the paper popular with readers from the minority communities who recognized a kindred soul.

On the other hand racist and chauvinist elements among the majority community resented this. They hated Lasantha vehemently.

Unlike many who pursue military solutions to political problems while paying lip service to the concept of a political settlement, Lasantha genuinely believed that there is no military solution to the Tamil national question. He boldly took on those militaristic proponents thereby incurring their anger and hatred.

Investigative Skills

Another facet to his journalism was his investigative skills. I am not underestimating the talents and efforts of his staffers but it was common knowledge that the pivotal force in all exposures done by the paper was Lasantha himself.

In the days of old, newspapers worked on an investigation for weeks. One good investigative feature uncovering a corruption or mismanagement came only once a month or twice. But the "Sunday Leader" broke new ground with its investigative articles. It was not merely one per week but a case of three or four in a single issue. From a journalistic perspective this was indeed fantastic.

A little-known fact about Lasantha is that he was a good cricketer like his brother Lal. Lasantha played for the under 16 at SBC and shone. Unlike Lal who was a pacey Lasantha was a left arm leg spinner. But he went off to Britain when he was sixteen. Thus he could not continue his cricket. I used to tease him frequently that he was now bowling his "googlies" and "dhoosras" in Journalism.

Don't cry for me

Lasantha was born on April 5th 1958. He had lived for only fifty years and eight months on this planet. Yet, he achieved many, many things in that short life-span. He changed single-handedly the state of journalism in this country. His name will be remembered when the history of journalism in Sri Lanka is written.

One of Lasantha's favourite songs was "Don't Cry for me Argentina".from the musical "Evita" by Andrew Lloyd-Webber. This was before Madonna singing in the movie "Evita" in 1997.

He would often bawl out the line "Don't cry for me Argentina" in a not so musical voice.

After his demise old memories come back and that line echoes again and again.

I can hear Lasantha singing out there "Don't cry for me Argentina ... but Argentina is now replaced by Sri Lanka.

Farewell Lassie Boy, I salute you my friend, I salute you, Lassie.

[dbsjeyaraj.com]

DBS Jeyaraj can be reached at: djeyaraj2005@yahoo.com.

First among us (Part 1 of a series)

Raymond Rajabalan

So many talented Eelam Tamils have achieved greatness in various fields ranging from Education, politics, sports etc within the past several decades but there appears to be no organized record of all such information

This article attempts to list some such information painstakingly gathered from various sources. This list is only a small beginning and with input from our readers it is hoped that this list could be updated and revised periodically.

The detailed information of only a few of these illustrious Tamils is available and any additional information provided by our readers will be greatly appreciated.

This list includes those who established records in sports, those who first held certain positions in politics, those who were involved in great political milestones, some significant events during the three decades old freedom struggle etc.

Sports

1. Swimming

First Tamil to cross Palk straight

Murugupillai Navaratnasamy on 25th March, 1954 at the age of 40

He swam from Valvettiturai to Kodikarai in South India

The same feat was repeated by his nephew V.S.Kumar Anandan, holder of number of records listed in Guinness Book of records

2. International Sports

(1) Nagalingam

Ethirveersingham

Nagalingam Ethirveersingham won gold medal in the High Jump event at the Asian Games held in Tokyo in 1958. Four years later he won the Silver in the same event at the Jakarta Asian Games.

In boxer dominated contingents to Helsinki (1952) and Melbourne (1956), the Jaffna born high jumper Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham was Sri Lanka's only athlete to the Olympics throughout a decade

(2) Mahadevan Sathasivam

Mahadevan Sathasivam (18 October 1915, Ceylon - 9 July ,1977) or Satha as he was known, was the Sri Lankan cricketer whom Garry Sobers called "the greatest batsman ever on earth," and Frank Worrel called him "the best batsman he had ever seen.". Sathasivam played cricket in the 1940s through the 1960s. Sathasivam was the first, and probably the only, man to



Mahadevan Sathasivam

captain three national teams. He was captain of the Ceylon team in 1948, and then captain of the Singapore team, and finally captain of the Malaysian team.

In 1948 a controversial decision of the Ceylon Cricket Association selected Mahadeva Sathasivam of the Tamil Union to lead the All-Ceylon XI team.

In 1951 Sathasivam was accused of murdering his wife; however, he was acquitted. Nonetheless, he left Ceylon because of the negative publicity.

Sathasivam settled in Singapore where he captained its cricket team, and then later, after that island's merger with its northern neighbour, Sathasivam led the Malaysian team as well.

Those who got their names recorded in Guinness book of records

V.S.Kumar Anandan

Kumar Anandan, son of Vivekanandan of the Engineering Service of the Irrigation Department, Sri Lanka, was from



Nagalingam Ethirveerasingham

Valvettiturai, Jaffna. From his early days, Kumar set his heart on distinguishing himself and becoming an outstanding member of the community.

He had a successful educational career, graduating in Science of the London University. He also obtained the Bachelor of Laws degree in Ceylon and was

an Attorney at Law by profession.

Very soon he commenced his efforts at winning World Records and seeing his name in the Guinness Book of World Records. By 1983, he had secured several records:

Record - Swimming the Palk Strait, from Sri Lanka to India and back, in 51 hours, in the year 1971.

Record - Twist Dance for 128 hours, in December 1978 .

Record - Non-stop cycling for 187 hours, a distance of 1487 miles, in May 1979.

Record - Balancing on one foot for 33 hours, in May 1979.

Record - Ball punching for 136 hours, in December 1979.

Record - Sit ups - 165 in two minutes, in May 1980.

Record - High Kicks - 9100 times, in December 1980.

Record - Walking non-stop for 159 hours, a distance of 296 miles, in August 1981.

Record - Water-Treading for 80 hours, performed at the Anna Swimming Pool in Madras, in August 1981.

He was unfortunate to meet



Suresh Joachim

with a serious motor accident and was in hospital for six months and afterwards he had to be in crutches for another six months. Even after that, he performed Billiards Cue-Levelling and Speed Motor Cycle riding.

But tragedy befell on the 6th of August 1984. A day of disaster for this "Heroic and Restless Life". He collapsed half-way while attempting to swim the 30 mile stretch of the English Channel from Dover to Cape Gris Nez. He encountered heavy and unfavourable currents and collapsed after six hours of valiant defiance. That was the end of a World Record Holder, a restless life who aspired to be Champion Endurance Sportsman of the world."

Suresh Joachim

.Arulanantham Suresh Joachim is a Canadian of Sri Lankan Tamil ancestry who has broken more than 33 world records, in an attempt to benefit the underprivileged children of the world.

In 1991, Joachim first discovered the Guinness Book of World Records. He was then inspired to break them himself, as it was the most obvious way he found for an "average" person like him to become famous.

1st- unknown record name (19 August-29 September 1996)

(42 days), Joachim's first record attempt involved running in his hometown of Colombo, Sri Lanka for at least a little bit every hour for 1000 consecutive hours, totaling a distance of 3,495 km.



Taken in 1984 before the start of Swimming across English Channel

2nd- Farthest distance traveled on escalators (25-31 May 1998)

Joachim traveled 225.44 km, up and down escalators at the Westfield Burwood Shopping Centre, Burwood, and NewBurwood, New South Wales, Australia

3rd- Longest time balancing on one foot (22-25 May 1997)

Joachim balanced for 76 hours and 40 minutes at Vihara Maha Devi Park Open Air stadium, Sri Lanka.

4th- Farthest distance run, whilst carrying a 4.5 kg brick in a nominated ungloved hand in an uncradled downward position

Joachim traveled 126.675 km around the Westfield Hornsby mall on Florence Street in Hornsby, New South Wales, Australia. He was unsuccessful the first time, when the brick slipped and cut his hand.

A broadcast by Joachim on Geethavaani Tamil Radio in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, lasted for a record 120 hours. It was broadcast between 4 p.m. on 23 June and 4 p.m. on 28 June 2003. This record was unsuccessfully challenged a few times by DJ Max Rushden of BBC radio , Cambridgeshire, who was aiming for 121 hours.



His wedding to Christa Rasanayagam on September 6,2003 was held at Christ the King Catholic Church, Mississauga, Ontario. The wedding featured a record 79 bridesmaids, a record 47 groomsmen, and a record 60.09 m (197 ft 1 in) long wedding bouquet, held by the bride.

His next four records were all in Greater Toronto malls. On 28 November 2004, Joachim earned

the record for quickest time reaching 100 miles on a treadmill, in 13 hr 42 min 33 sec at Square One Shopping Centre, Mississauga, Ontario. At the same time, he went the farthest distance in 24 hours on a treadmill, tallying a distance of 257.88 km (160.24 miles) from the 28th to the 29th. With running records in his collection, Joachim participated in the longest dance marathon by an individual. Set at the Dixie Outlet Mall in Mississauga, Ontario, the 100 hour event lasted from 16 to 20 February 2005.

Joachim set the record for the longest ten-pin bowling marathon, at 100 hours. He broke this record at Playtime Bowl in Toronto, Ontario from 8 to 12 June 2005.

On March 17, 2006, he set the world record for a couple dance marathon by dancing 31 hours consecutively with Tiffany Lesko. The dances performed included the waltz, quick step, cha cha, samba, rumba and jive.

(To be Continued)

Comments and additional information from our readers are most welcome

The author can be reached @ rraja47@gmail.com



Legal luminary P. Navaratnarajah Q.C.: A Birth Centenary Tribute

by Maureen Seneviratne

I was privileged to enjoy a close friendship with one of Sri Lanka's most eminent lawyers, the late P. Navaratnarajah, Queen's Counsel, who will go down in the annals of legal history as a counsel par excellence.

In recognition of his outstanding performance at the University College where he read Mathematics and obtained a first Class Honours, he was awarded a scholarship enabling him to proceed to Cambridge University to sit his Mathematical Tripos.

Thereafter, he pursued his legal studies at the Middle Temple where he was called to the Bar in 1934, and in the same year called to the Bar in Ceylon as an advocate of the Supreme Court.

It was in Hulftsdrop that he spent the whole of his professional life, where from a promising junior he blossomed into the eminent Queen's Counsel, despite the fact that when he commenced his career at the Bar, he had none of

the hallmarks of the preferred class. He was comfortable, but had no wealth, influence or elite social status.

He was not only brilliant in legal argument, but an indomitable fighter and his particular force was in his reply to his opponents, for which he reserved his most telling points.

To have him as an opponent was an awesome experience. One knew that one had to deal not so much with shrewd tactics or the cross-examining skill, but with one who ruthlessly stripping the case of camouflage would come clearly and crisply to the essential weakness of his opponent's case and the essential strength of his.

He had a legal mind of the highest order and applied it with painstaking thoroughness to every matter which he had to deal with in a clear discernment of legal principles and a fine sense of distinction which govern their applicability, rarely seen in our

courts. He made an abiding contribution to the development of the law.

In his relationship with his clients, he had a touching concern for the indigent which followed him to his grave. He despised extortion as a way of life. Indeed, it was said of him that he was one of the front line counsel of his time one could retain with no risk of bankruptcy. He was charitable, but his charity was unknown to others. The poorest of the poor had a place in his heart and home.

To the innumerable juniors who worked in his Chambers, he was kind, sympathetic and generous, particularly to those who had neither influence nor affluence to support themselves during the lean years of their career at the Bar.

As a human being, despite his brilliance and erudition, he was simple with the simplicity of greatness. He shunned public office and neither sought nor

cared for public adulation. He was a man of incredible humility—always accessible to the rich and poor alike.

His essential goodness left an abiding impression on all those who were privileged to have known him. He was disappointed and sad when some people who were known to him on assuming high and responsible office lost their bearings. Commenting on such conduct he would remark:

"Why can't they be nice to people on their way up.

They have the intelligence to realize that they

Are bound to meet them on their way down.

When they are on their way down, it is only the good

Will of the people that they take along with them."

When Mr. Navaratnarajah died, not only did we mourn the loss of a great and brilliant lawyer, but of a great friend.

His passing away left a great void in our lives which was not



possible to fill.

But our sorrow was tempered with gratitude that the fates allowed us to number such a man as Mr. Navaratnarajah among our friends.

(This birth centenary tribute for eminent Queen's counsel P. Navaratnarajah was penned by Maureen Seneviratne, herself a distinguished President's Counsel.)

An Eelam Patriot, Maampalam Swamy, Passes Away in the U.S

by Usha S Sri-Skanda-Rajah

It's with a deep sense of loss and sadness that we mourn the sudden passing away of a great Eelam patriot, Maampalam Swamy in New Jersey, USA on 14, December 2008. A passionate advocate of peace, freedom and dignity, whose given name was Thevathasan (Devadasan) Antony, he worked indefatigably to bring to the forefront the prolonged pain and suffering of his people in Tamil Eelam and to draw international attention to the genocide in Sri Lanka. He was a committed humanist first and his compassion extended to all humanity.

Maampalam Swamy will remain a legendry figure to his people, the people he helped to uplift.

Whilst studying Theology in India, he worked to improve the quality of life of the poorest of the poor in Tamil Nadu. Fondly referred to as Kulanthai (Baby) Swamy he is still remembered with much affection and gratitude there, his photo adorning the homes of the many people he had helped. When he visited the area after 35 years, the whole village was ecstatic, giving him a rousing

reception that showed that they never forgot.

Maampalam Swamy was proud of his Tamil heritage. While as an assistant parish priest in the church of "Our Lady of Refuge" in Jaffna, he was one of the pioneers in the Catholic Church who celebrated the "Pongal Festival" held annually in mid January as a "Tamil Festival," integrating this very Tamil custom and tradition into the Tamil Christian way of life. The "Pongal Festival" has now been accepted and adopted as the "Tamil New Year" in Tamil Nadu by all Tamils regardless of their religious background.

He strived to erase the pernicious practice of class and caste divisions prevailing among Tamils. By encouraged the youth to work together through sports and other activities he helping to break these barriers in the Catholic Church where normally separate pews were allocated to the high caste "elite".

When serving in the Mannar district under the government's land alienation scheme for educated youth, Maampalam Swamy not only helped both educated young men and women to obtain land, but also under a "youth

cooperative scheme" he arranged for them to learn agriculture and farming methods to help cultivate the land and was instrumental in improving the lot of Tamil youth.

In 1977 with government help he helped settle internally displaced plantation workers affected by the pogrom against Tamils in a purpose-built village which he helped to create called "Valan Nakar" complete with medical and transport facilities enabling them to live in a peaceful and secure environment.

Maampalam Swamy believed in preserving the Tamil identity for posterity and as an eloquent speaker he clearly articulated these thoughts and ideas effectively. His charismatic personality and sincerity of purpose won him the respect and veneration of the Tamil people. He was committed to democracy and non-violence and was a strong proponent of the concept of the right to self-determination for Eelam Tamils, actively championing the cause of Eelam independence.

While living in the US Maampalam Swamy became a prolific writer, poet and lyricist, his writings were based on the Tamil language, the Tamil freedom



struggle and its history. He wrote "Azham Vizhuthugal" and "Maampookal" and wrote the lyrics and produced the song "Vedda Vedda Thazhaikum" in memory of tsunami victims. As a testament to the love he had for his people and to their freedom he recently released a CD named "Viduthazhaiyin Vasazhil" (at the gateway of freedom) and was in the midst of writing another book at the time of his untimely demise.

Maampalam Swamy returned

to Sri Lanka and to his native Tamil Eelam in the aftermath of the tsunami in December 2004. He served in the worst affected areas, providing counseling and relief to people traumatized by the effects of decades of war and by a massive South Asian tsunami that directly hit the island of Sri Lanka from the East causing maximum devastation to Tamil areas. Since the promised massive international humanitarian aid was not reaching the worst affected people of the North East, he worked ceaselessly upon his return to the US to ensure that any humanitarian aid he and others secured from the Tamil Diaspora reached the actual victims.

A man of compassion and peace equally concerned for the welfare of both the Tamils and Sinhalese, he was deeply troubled by the war in his native Tamil Eelam.

Maampalam Swamy will be sorely missed by not only Eelam Tamils all over the world, but by others he has touched and inspired just simply in his daily life.

His life's work will serve as a beacon of light for all freedom activists and humanists alike.

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Kollywood Film Review

by Anand. J

BOMMALATTAM

The viewers would see nothing that is normally associated to a Bharathiraja's movie. No white-gowned and winged fairies, no sugary sweet songs posing as interludes, no emotional turmoil of brother-sister or love struck couples. Bharathiraja's Bommala-ttam is not what is usually expected out of the legendary director who delivered such fairy tale romances and intense movies with powerhouse performances. Instead, it's a riveting and fast-paced suspense thriller



set in the backdrop of the film industry. Not that the turf is new to Bharathiraja whose thriller Tik Tik Tik is still considered to be one of the most-watched pulp movies of his period.

-Bharathiraja's skill at crafting watertight screenplay is evident as the movie travels at jet pace without a moment of sluggishness in the narrative. Besides, the narrative is smart that is capable of holding the suspense quotient until the truth is unfurled on its own during the course of the movie.-

Much can't be revealed about the movie's plot as it would be unfair; since the movie's watching pleasure largely lies on the idea that the viewer is not informed beforehand - as is the case with most of the suspense thrillers.

-The movie follows the murder and investigation of Nana Patekar's crew members. Nana plays a renowned film director whose crew members are murdered in immediate succession. CBI is summoned for investigation and the truth unravels revealing the identity of the murderer - in the due course scoring out the prime suspects one by one.

-Bommalaattam also provides an insider's look into the world of cinema. Nana asks the female lead of his movie for an 'emerging out of the sea' scene. However she refuses reasoning that her pedicure was done recently and the salt water could damage her cuticles. After much prodding she agrees but with a condition - she will wet her feet only in bottled mineral water. Same way, Vivek and Manivannan's characters also tell a lot about the menaces a crew has to face during outdoor shoots.-

Nana's acting needs no elucidation - he fits perfectly into the shoes of a patient director, who is exasperated at the snootiness of his film's lead and devastated at the murder of his allies. Arjun plays an



intelligent and neat CBI officer and delivers a subtle performance, quite atypical of his usual deliver-a-kick-and-leap-into-the-air roles.

The songs Va Va Thalaiva and Check Check proclaims Himesh's prowess in tuning catchy numbers. Mandy's background score deserves a special mention, especially for its subtlety. Kannan's camera captures the proceedings in perfect angles and assists in enhancing the movie's flow.

On the downside, the movie largely seems to cater to the Hindi speaking audience - given the locale and the milieu in which it is set. Irregular lip-sync of actors also reveal that the movie is in fact dubbed into Tamil after having been shot in Hindi directly.

All said and done, Bommalaattam is a perfectly crafted and executed investigative thriller. The surprise factor being Bharathiraja's tautly woven screenplay - it negates the chance of tedium, even for a fraction of a second.-

Verdict - Bommalaattam - A neat thriller.

GHAJINI

This Hindi remake of the Tamil Ghajini which was again an inspiration from Hollywood's Memento has pleased everyone including the critics with a tight screenplay and a top notch performance from the lead actors.

Aamir Khan, a perfectionist is back with a bang in his Ghajini. And for the first time in his career he has



acted in a South remake. As always the marketing push by Aamir was exhilarating. The marketing done for the movie can be taken as a case study in many business schools as it tried uncharted terrains. With such a brilliant plan converted into hype, it made Ghajini the most sought after title to be released this season. Has it lived up to its humongous expectations? A definite Yes!

The movie is about Sanjay(Aamir), a millionaire, who falls in love with Kalpana(Asin) a model. Kalpana gets into a hustle with a local gunda, Ghajini, who kills her and hits Sanjay with a rod which makes him a short term memory loss patient. Now Sanjay

should fight against all odds to avenge the death of his beloved. How he does it with the help of a medical student Sunita (Jiah) forms the rest of the story.

Audiences who have seen the Tamil version can get a little bored as A.R.Murugadoss has made very few changes to the script and scenes until the last 30 minutes. The screenplay is well laced with interesting events which makes the 3 hours running time well worth the ride. What, When and How are questions you should never ask in any masala movie, but there are a few scenes which does sparkle against its Tamil version. The last 30 minutes for instance is very good when compared to the Tamil version whose climax was literally laughable.

Cinematography by Ravi K. Chandran is a major plus, as the pro has fully utilized the freedom the director has given and come up with stylish presentation of the scenes and innovatively captured



songs sequences. Behka and Ae Bhachu song will surely sparkle in his already sparkling repertoire. His see-saw camera movement at the fag end of the movie is just poetic. Editing is top notch. Stunts are choreographed brilliantly as it relies more on raw power than over the top flying antics. Music by A.R.Rahman gels well with the overall feel of the movie, Ghuzarish, Behka and all the other songs are brilliant compositions from the master musician but the background score is jarring at times, especially the Villian's BG which is certainly not expected from the Maestro.

Aamir lives the role of Sanjay Singhania. If Vikram took a dog as an inspiration for his portrayal in Pithamagan, Aamir has taken a tiger for inspiration. His acting in the pulse pounding climax is a proof of how matured an actor he is; the pain, the intensity, the anger he showed here is so high that we could actually believe that the wound and damage attained by the strong henchmen of the villain is actually possible. As the sophisticated millionaire he is dignified and looks very handsome. His overly debated 8 packs has been flaunted effectively which is quite needed for the movie. Asin has done her role with élan, but the chirpiness in the Tamil version was missing a wee bit in this version but still a strong debut in Bollywood- kudos. Jiah Khan has a meaty role and she has used the opportunity to the fullest. She is a complete natural. Pradeep Rawat as Ghajini has done a brilliant job, much better than the

Tamil Ghajini. Riaaz Khan who again dons the inspector role was over the top most of the time and a complete let down.

Overall the movie is a well packaged action masala entertainer, with some great acting, a tight screenplay, great music and some extraordinary action which makes it a complete paisa vasool. Go for it.

Verdict - Ghajini is a Rajini (victory) for Aamir and it's a fantastic treat for all viewers.

SILAMBATTAM

Silambarasan's new movie is is here. Is it good and does it live upto expectations ? The answer depends a lot on your preferences and tastes. The director had vouched pre-release that he had made a full length entertainer and he has given everything that he believes towards making one. The intentions are spot on, but as the saying goes 'small good deeds are better than large good intentions' and it is the deeds of the director that we are interested in, we don't doubt his intentions.

Silambattam is about retribution, an oft repeated theme in Tamil cinema and a very regular element of Silambarasan starrers. It is all about the feuds within a family that take on unmanageable proportions and result in death and despair for many. An extended family in a village is leading a happy and united existence. The head of the family is a much loved man in the village and in his last days he leaves a large chunk of his property for the welfare of his villagers. Most of the family is happy to abide by the deci-



sion of their godfather, but there are factions that believe that the old man has shown more largesse than is agreeable and decide to oppose it. Push comes to shove and the inevitable sickle takes center stage. As many members of the family are killed, some of them make off with their lives, never to return. But destiny brings back one boy to his roots and when he learns of what has passed, then retribution is the only thing on his mind.

The director has admitted that the plot is not novel. Well, we don't expect a path breaker either. The director has handled the story and screenplay and while it cannot be denied that the plot and the script do show signs of promise and potential, the ultimate realization has been found wanting. Somehow, one gets the feeling of an opportunity that has been wasted. The narration is not sound, though it is difficult to put one's finger on exactly what the weaker points are, lack of application on the director's part



seems to be the culprit here.

Silambarasan has turned in a whole hearted performance. Appearing in two roles for the second time in his career, he makes good use of the scope provided. His role as the villager in the 'flashback' mode must be appreciated, especially his combination with Sneha who also has managed to make an impact with a limited role. Their chemistry is surprisingly good, with machan machan song having come out really well. Sana Khan, paired with the present day Silambarasan, has been largely sidelined by the main plot. Then there is the seasoned Prabhu, the able Kishore, the veterans Nedumudi Venu, Nirosha, Yuvarani etc. But in spite of having such a cast at his disposal, the director has failed to make an impact in many scenes. The talent of these artistes cannot be doubted, the fault has to be with way they were utilized. Santhanam and Karunas shoulder the comedy in the flashback and current modes respectively. There are certain lewd and at times unsavory dialogues that have been passed off as comedy, definitely in bad taste. But Karunas salvages pride for the comedy department with interestingly devised comic situations which blend in with the plot.

Highlights of the movie are undoubtedly Silambarasan's dance skills and the foot tapping tunes. Silambarasan does not disappoint, nor does Yuvan. The Machan Machan song in Ilaiyaraaja's voice is a delight while 'Where's the party' is a typically trendy pub number, thoroughly enjoyable. The action sequences too have been crafted well. But one gets the feeling that director Saravanan has relied too heavily on these elements to carry the weight of the movie, while the execution of a fairly good plot has left a lot to be desired though there are certain scenes (few and far in between) that reflect the director's ability. Saravanan fails to join the list of cinematographers turned successful directors.

Overall, Silambattam is not a bad product, but it could have been a lot better had it not been for the lackluster handling. At the box office, Silambarasan fans might not feel let down by the content and regular additives, but when it comes down to the others, it's a bit of touch and go. Saravanan, Silambarasan and the rest of the Silambattam team will have to wait and watch.

Verdict - Silambattam - No New Aattam.

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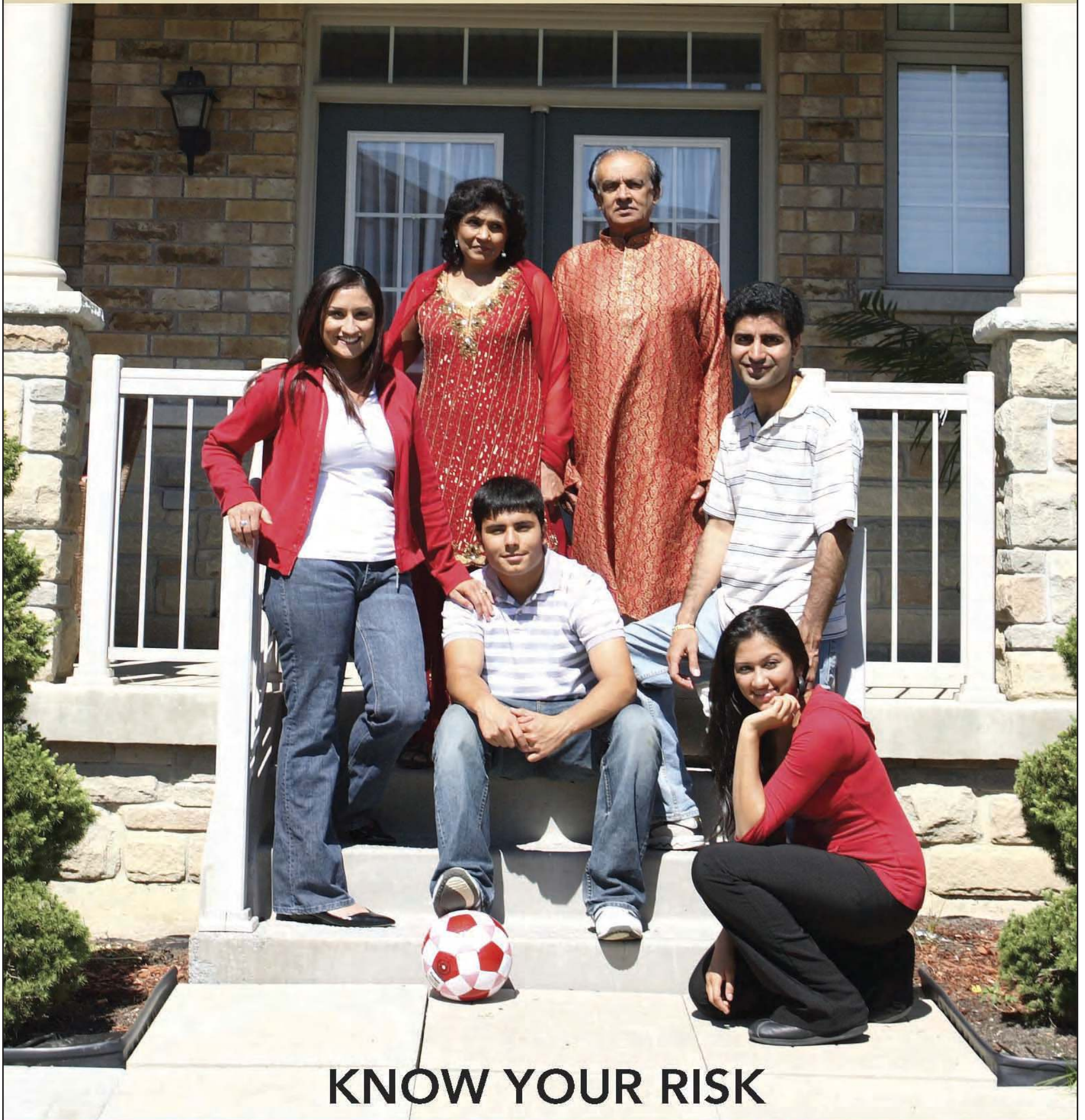
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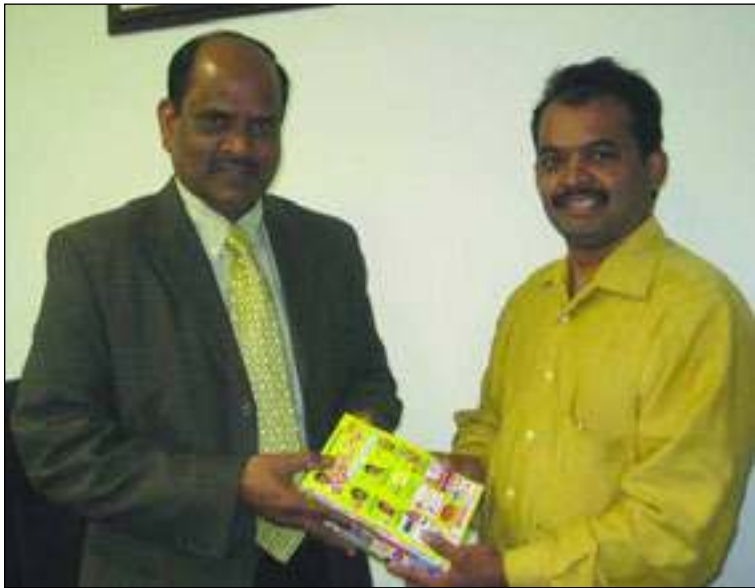


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Senthi's Tamils Guide for 2009 released



Senthi's Tamils Guide for 2009 is released once again in January. President of Athavan Publication Senthi Chelliah presenting the first copy to prominent Lawyer P. Kayilasanathan. Please call 416-615-4646 or visit www.tamilsguide.com for more information.

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