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A parfait media publication
Monsoon Journal
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Canadian Ministers and Representatives praise Tamil community at Toronto event



"One of the schools in my area is called L'Amaroueux Collegiate; probably the best honour you can get is to be valedictorian. 3 of the last 4 valedictorians in that school were from the Tamil community"

Hon. Gerry Phillips, MPP
 Minister of Government Services
 MPP Scarborough-Agincourt



"You are through your efforts, through your excellence, creating jobs, creating employment and economic activity"

Hon. John Tory, MPP
 Leader of the Ontario PC Party and The Official Opposition MPP for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey Scarborough-Agincourt



"I bring greetings this evening to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of the Tamil Community to this country"

The Honourable Monte Solberg MP
 Minister of Human Resources and Social Development

...find more pictures on Pg 24

Prime Minister Harper announces agreement to create the Canadian Museum for Human Rights

Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently announced that the government has reached an agreement with four public and private sector partners to establish the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

The museum, which would be the first national museum built outside the National Capital Region, will portray, promote and celebrate the history and evolution of human rights in Canada.

"Rights only flourish in free, democratic societies like Canada, where the principles of fairness, pluralism, and justice are embedded in the history of the country and the values of its people, as well as the laws of their governments," Prime Minister Harper said.



The Government's partners in the project are the Province of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, the Friends of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and the Forks Renewal Corporation. The federal commitment of \$100

million is contingent on its partners raising \$165 million towards the cost of the museum.

"Never before has there been a collaboration of this scale to develop a national museum, but if ever there were a Canadian cultural institution suited for a private-public partnership, it is this one, because human rights can never be the exclusive preserve of the state," added the Prime Minister.

The Canadian Museum of Human Rights, the vision of the late I.H. "Izzy" Asper, will be established in downtown Winnipeg at the Forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, which has long been renowned as a place where Canada's diverse First Peoples traditionally met to resolve their differences peacefully.

Canadian dollar up to 11-month high



The Canadian currency on Monday May 7th reached to its highest level since last June, thanks to the country's booming housing market and a takeover news.

The Canadian dollar jumped almost half a cent to close at

90.76 U.S.cents, up 0.47 U.S. cents.

The Canadian dollar has gained 5 percent in the last five weeks. It is not far off the 29-year highs set a year ago when the currency topped 91 U.S. cents.

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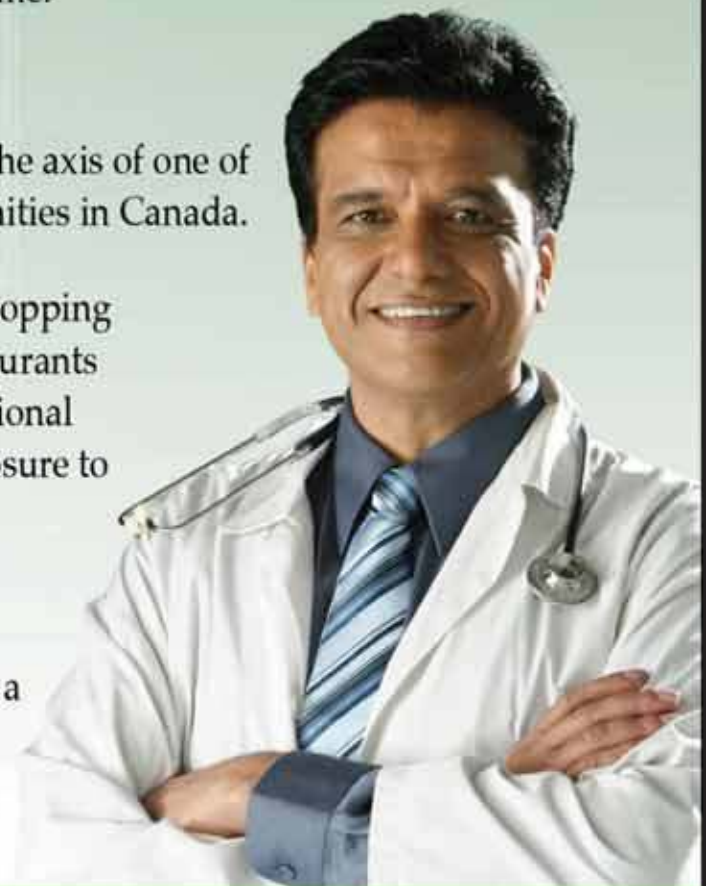
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NEWS FEATURES

US Favors Maintaining Global Ban on Tiger Products

By Stephanie Ho

The United States favors maintaining a global ban on products made from tigers, which have been hunted heavily in China and India for their skins and for use in traditional medicines. A House of Representatives subcommittee examined this and other issues in advance of a major meeting of the international convention on endangered plants and animals, which will be held next month at The Hague.

In compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), China in 1993 imposed a ban on products made from tiger parts. China's action is significant, because it is the world's largest consumer of tiger parts, which are used in traditional medicines that treat such illnesses as rheumatism and arthritis.

The issue will once again be highlighted at a meeting next month of all CITES members. Chinese businesses have been urging Beijing to overturn the 1993 ban to allow domestic trade in tiger parts, from cats bred in captivity, for use in traditional medicine and for clothing.

U.S. Department of Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary Todd

Willens testified to Congress Thursday that the United States supports the ban and will actively work to persuade the Chinese government to leave it in place.

"We will definitely speak on this whether it is discussed in the meetings and in the plenary," he said. "And we will continue to work with all parties who have an interest in this to make sure that this issue is taken care of and we do not have an overturning of the current ban."

The president of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Lixin Huang, testified that since the ban, Chinese medicine practitioners have been able to successfully treat patients without using tiger products. But she pointed to the growing popularity of Chinese medicine around the world as bad news for tigers, if the ban were overturned.

"Chinese medicine serves a very large population, 1.4 billion people in China, as well as Chinese medicine is now used worldwide," she noted. "Therefore, if this trade is opened, the demand will be tremendous and a threat to the wild tigers is huge."

Huang added that she believes the only interest group urging the Chinese government to



[Photo By Chris Martin BAHF, Courtesy of www.worldwildlife.org/tigers/]

lift the ban are owners of tiger breeding farms, who stand to gain economically. She said the two largest such farms in China are in Harbin and Guilin, and have as many as 2,000 tigers in captivity.

Another issue expected to feature in CITES debates next month is the worldwide ban on trade in ivory.

Michael Wamithi is from the International Fund for Animal Welfare, a non-governmental organization based in Kenya. In his testimony, he urged

Washington to strongly support a proposal to uphold the ban on the global ivory trade.

"An ivory trade moratorium, as proposed by Kenya and Mali, would suppress demand on ivory and provide parties with the necessary time to tighten up enforcement and bring illegal ivory trade under control through enhanced action plan," he said.

Following a CITES meeting in 2002, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa were found to have sufficient controls in place to adequately monitor their elephant

populations, and were allowed to have one time sales of ivory.

The Department of Interior's Willens said he believes legal ivory sales can work, but only, "if done in the right way, with the right government and the right constraints." He said he believes creating a legal market for ivory drives out illegal poachers and creates new advocates for the elephants.

"And it has been proven in a number of countries that legal sales have been a great driver of conservation, where you never had conservation on ivory before, and you only saw the illegal market before," he explained. "And now they see the legal market and see that it is a resource to be protected."

Meanwhile, Willens expressed concern about a lack of clarity in the CITES secretariat's overall proposed budget, and said the United States is likely to propose mechanisms to increase budget oversight and accountability.

He also expressed concern about the possible disappearance of several marine species, including sawfish, pink and red corals, and two kinds of sharks.

[VOA]

Press Freedom Day Spotlights Plight of 'Citizen Journalists'

Scores of journalists and free press advocates gathered at U.N. headquarters Thursday May 3rd, to show solidarity with Alan Johnston, and to call for his immediate release. The BBC Middle East correspondent was captured seven weeks ago while on a reporting assignment in Gaza City, and his fate is unknown.

BBC World Editor Jon Williams urged Johnston's captors to free him. He said the kidnapped correspondent represents dangers facing journalists around the world.

"The best way to protect journalists is for civilized societies to say, "No more, enough". We need journalists as independent voices, eyes and ears of audiences around the world. Without them, the world is a poorer place," he said.

Press Freedom Day also featured a discussion of the evolving role of journalism in the internet age, in particular the phenomenon known as blogging. Bloggers, who post information online, have revolutionized journalism. So-called 'cyber dissidents' are becoming a potent force on the World Wide Web, challenging the information monopoly traditionally held by many governments.

But that challenge has been raised at a cost. Offending 'citizen journalists' have been silenced in many countries, jailed in others.

Tala Dowlatshahi of the group "Reporters Without Borders"

called China the world's worst prison for cyber-dissidents. But she said other countries, including Vietnam, Syria, Tunisia, Libya and Iran are also jailing offending bloggers. "Parliaments in these countries, along with the local cyber-police, closely follow the latest technological developments. When instant messaging, such as MSN (Microsoft) Messenger became the rage, China asked these firms to automatically block some key words, making it impossible for Chinese users to talk about the Dalai Lama, and Taiwanese independence," he said.

Chinese cyber-journalist Frank Xie of the Boxun News web site says China's bloggers have to be careful about what they post online, because the Beijing government keeps a close eye on internet activity.

"The sad thing about Chinese bloggers is they are actually under self-censorship because they are keenly aware of what they are facing. Their activities on the internet are closely monitored by the 30-thousand plus in the internet police," he said.

Citizen journalist Nora Younis is well-known and widely quoted among the growing internet community in Egypt. She says the number of bloggers in Egypt has grown from one in 2003 to more than 10-thousand today, and is doubling every six months.



She says 'citizen journalists' have played a role in casting a spotlight on social injustices, and also on vote fraud in Egypt's recent elections. "Bloggers posted video of vote rigging inside the poll stations. Bloggers were also able in Egypt to bring the issue of sexual harassment in the streets of Cairo and they were able to force it on mainstream media, which in the beginning did not respond to claims of sexual harassment in Cairo streets," she said.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a Press Freedom Day statement saying it is alarming that journalists trying to shed light on suffering of others become targets themselves. He noted that 150 media professionals lost their lives in the line of duty last year, and said it is the world body's job to be an unflinching defender of press freedom.

[VOA]

Ontario Liberal Party to Celebrate South Asian Heritage

The Toronto leadership of the Ontario Liberal Party is coming together under one roof to celebrate the

vibrant cultures of South Asia during South Asian

Heritage Month. The McGuinty Liberals are holding an exciting evening fundraiser on May 24th called SIGHT, SOUND & SPICE.

This event will be a night full of South Asian music,

food and celebration with Toronto Liberal Leadership in attendance. Acclaimed DJ Zahra will spin uplifting music from Punjab to Tamil Nadu, Kashmir to

Sri Lanka and Bombay to Bengal. South Asians and Torontonians of all sorts will be in attendance at this unique and electrifying fundraising event.

As a warm up to SIGHT, SOUND & SPICE, Deputy Premier George Smitherman hosted a media lunch where featured guests Attorney General Michael Bryant and Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne also spoke. The Sight, Sound, & Spice event is being billed as a landmark moment for South Asian heritage in the City of Toronto.



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From the Publisher's Desk ...

Ensuring safety of embattled NGOs

The crackdown on NGOs [non-governmental organizations] is on the increase worldwide.

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky says that "in spite of international commitments, we are witnessing a crackdown by some governments on NGOs and other civil society actors".

She said recently that "A number of governments have passed or are selectively applying laws against NGOs and civil society groups in an attempt to restrict freedom of expression, association and assembly," hinting mainly about Russia and China.

The eyes of the international community continues to see legislation and restrictions that bring negative effects on the NGO operations in countries that people need their services utmost. Press reports say that authorities in these countries such as Russia and China

Exhibit negative attitudes and sometimes harass, NGOs involved in human rights monitoring and groups advocating

for political rights.

In China only a few truly independent NGOs are permitted. Only those with a government sponsor and registered with the government have legal status.

While the situation is such in powerful UN Security Council members such as Russia and China, in Sri Lanka - aid groups have expressed grave concern at increasing restriction of their operations in the country and have noted that even diplomats monitoring human rights on the 'divided' island are facing government pressure.

The campaign during the recently concluded Cricket World Cup by Amnesty International under the slogan "Play By The Rules," about HR matters in the country was characterized as partisan and the AI was accused of backing 'terrorist Tigers,' by sections of the government of Sri Lanka.

When Canada's former Justice Minister and UN Ambassador Allan Rock presented findings about Government complacency in child soldier recruitment, he

was seen as a "White Tiger" with partisan agenda, by the Sri Lankan hardliners.

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) recently released the report of its observer of the inquest into the killings of 17 aid workers in Sri Lanka in August last year. Senior British barrister, Michael Birnbaum QC, found significant flaws in the investigation carried out by the local police and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Sri Lanka. Earlier, admitting independent observers into the country to investigate into the killing of aid workers too was dragged by the government.

The U.S. has formulated ten principles for how NGOs should be treated by governments. Among these are that NGOs should be permitted to carry out work in an environment free from harassment, intimidation and discrimination; NGOs should be able to receive financial support from domestic, foreign, and international entities; and laws regulating NGOs should be applied apolitically and fairly.

In Sri Lanka and many

other countries the NGOs are far away from this ideal treatment by the host countries.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry Lowenkron recently characterized 2006 as the "year of the pushback" on democracy promotion and democracy and human rights activists.

The Monsoon Journal urges the International Community to be vigilant about Governments not only of those powerful nations such as Russia and China but also Sri Lanka - that often escapes the radar of international scrutiny on the treatment of NGOs.

It's paramount that the safety and reputation of the NGOs and their workers are not under any threat; from governments of nations that not only disregard the rights and safety of their own citizens, but now increasingly pose a threat to the groups that are on noble missions serving those suffering masses.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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Hindu College Colombo, Alumni Association of North America is pleased to announce our up-coming event "The 2007 Annual Dinner Dance" to be held on May 26th, 2007 at Woodbine Banquet Hall.

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MAY 31 - JUNE 2, 2007

The Centre for South Asian Studies of the University of Toronto and the University of Windsor will host an interdisciplinary Tamil Studies Conference in Toronto from May 31-June 2, 2007.

The disciplines represented range from Anthropology, Archaeology, Diaspora Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature, Political Studies, Psychology, Public Health, Religion, Sociology and Theatre Studies. Over 40 scholars from universities including Columbia University , University of California (Berkeley), Massey University (New Zealand), French Institute of Pondicherry , McGill University , University of Toronto , University of Batticaloa and the University of Peradeniya will participate in this important conference.

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Mother's Day

S.Raymond Rajabalan

Mother's Day is a holiday honouring mothers, celebrated on various days in many places around the world. This day is celebrated on the 2nd Sunday of May in the United States and Canada.

History

In the United States, Mother's Day was copied from England by social activist Julia Ward Howe after the American Civil War with a call to unite women against war. She wrote the Mother's Day Proclamation. In the UK, the day now simply celebrates motherhood and thanking mothers. Different countries celebrate Mother's Day on various days of the year because the day has a number of different origins.

One school of thought claims this day emerged from a custom of mother worship in ancient Greece. Mother worship — which kept a festival to Cybele, a great mother of gods, and (mythology), the wife of Cronus; was held around Asia Minor and eventually in Rome itself. The Romans also had another holiday, Matronalia that was dedicated to Juno, though mothers were usually given gifts on this day.

In most countries, Mother's Day is a new concept copied from western civilization. In many African countries, the idea of one Mother's Day has its origins in copying the British concept, although there are many festivals and events celebrating mothers within the many diverse cultures on the African continent that have been there centuries before the colonials arrival.

US history

Julia Ward Howe wrote the Mother's Day Proclamation in 1870, as a call for peace and disarmament. An excerpt follows:

From the voice of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with Our own. It says: "Disarm! Disarm!

The sword of murder is not the balance of justice."

Blood does not wipe out dishonor,

Nor violence indicate possession.

As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war,

Let women now leave all that may be left of home

For a great and earnest day of counsel.

Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.

Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means

Whereby the great human family can live in peace.

Howe failed in her attempt to get formal recognition of a Mother's Day for Peace. Her idea was influenced by Ann Jarvis, a

Julia Ward Howe

young homemaker who, starting in 1858, had attempted to improve sanitation through what she called Mothers' Work Days. She organized women throughout the Civil War to work for better sanitary conditions for both sides, and in 1868 she began work to reconcile Union and Confederate neighbors.

When Jarvis died, her daughter, named Anna Jarvis, started the crusade to found a memorial day for women. The first such Mother's Day was celebrated in Grafton, West Virginia, on May 10, 1908, in the church where the elder Ann Jarvis had taught Sunday School. Grafton is the home to the International Mother's Day Shrine. From there, the custom caught on — spreading eventually to 45 states. The holiday was declared officially by some states beginning in 1912. In 1914 President Woodrow Wilson declared the first national Mother's Day, as a day for American citizens to show the flag in honour of those mothers whose sons had died in war (with specific reference to The Great War, now known as World War I.



British history - Mothering Sunday

Mothering Sunday, commonly called "Mothers' Day" in the United Kingdom, has no direct connection to the American practice. It falls on the fourth Sunday of Lent (exactly three weeks before Easter Sunday). It is believed to have originated from the 16th Century Christian practice of visiting one's mother church annually, which meant that most mothers would be reunited with their children on this day. Most historians believe that young apprentices and young women in servitude were released by their masters that weekend in order to visit their families. As a result of secularization, it is now principally used to celebrate and

give thanks for mothers, although it is still recognized in the historical sense by some churches, with attention paid to Mary the mother

of Jesus as well as the traditional concept 'mother church'.

Whatever, the origin of Mothers day it is a noble act to honour mothers not only on a specific day of the year but each and every day of the year.

A mother is the truest friend we have, when trials heavy and sudden, fall upon us; when adversity takes the place of prosperity; when friends who rejoice with us in our sunshine desert us; when trouble thickens around us, still will she cling to us, and endeavor by her kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and cause peace to return to our hearts.

~ Washington Irving

NEWS FEATURE

Canada finalising FIPPA with India: Flaherty

Canada is in the process of finalising the Foreign Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement with India by the end of this year to accelerate investment flow between the two countries, a Canadian Minister has said.

"The agreement, designed to protect investors by defining their legally binding rights and obligations, would give a new impetus to Indo-Canada economic relations," Canadian Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said on Thursday.

The agreement would intensify investment flows to the mutual benefit of both the countries by creating a favourable environment, Flaherty said while addressing the 3rd Annual Corporate Partnership Dinner of the Canada-India Business Council here.

He said, Canada's long term objective was to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India and it would be possible only after Doha round of talks.

India already has FTAs with Sri Lanka, Thailand and Singapore and is in the process of signing it with European Union (EU) and other countries.

The Minister said Canada was committed to building a new strategic partnership with India, based on equality and mutual trust to achieve common goals.

Flaherty said, his country has formulated a global commercial strategy to boost trade and investment and "India is at the top of our list."

Commending contributions of about nine lakh Indo-Canadians



to the country's economy, he said under the new immigration policy, certification of professional credentials would be done at the country of origin so that foreign trade professionals do not face any problems in getting jobs in Canada.

Besides, Flaherty said, foreign students would be allowed to work and apply for a permanent resident status in Canada without going back to their home country.

Describing Canada as "Energy Super Power," the Minister said the country had huge reserves of oil, gas and uranium.

"Canada believe in the free exchange of energy products based on competitive market principles, not self-serving monopolistic political strategies," he said adding the country wanted to help India meet its power needs and might consider leasing of nuclear power plants.

Speaking on the occasion, India's High Commissioner to Canada R L Narayan said: "We believe that it would be mutually rewarding for India and Canada

to work together towards a strategic partnership. India is committed to strengthen bilateral relations with Canada."

Canada-India Business Council's President Kam Rathee said "Canada should engage with Indian decision-makers deliberately, continuously and strategically. The most effective place to start was Government to Government." Building a relationship at the top sets the right tone of commitment and partnership, he added.

Sun Life Financial's Chief Executive Officer Donald A Stewart his company was investing considerable efforts in India, which proved to be a tremendous choice for it. "We believe that it would be right choice for Canada too," he added.

Flaherty also presented 'Canada-India business of the year award' to Sun Life's Senior Executive Gary M Comer Ford for his outstanding contributions in promoting Canadian investment in India.

[PTI]

Government interference 'impeding science reporting'

By Kimani Chege

Government interference is impeding reportage of public-funded research in developing and emerging countries, say journalists.

In a session at the World Conference of Science Journalists in Melbourne, Australia, delegates were told that governments are interfering with science reporting in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Governments in these regions tend to guard information about "charismatic mega scientific" research projects large and expensive public-funded research programmes in areas such as nuclear energy and telecommunication.

According to Sri Lankan science journalist Nalaka Gunawardene, the big projects often drain public research funds, and any journalist who questions their viability is branded an enemy of national development.

"These projects are beyond both public and parliamentary veto as they involve sensitive state information. Whoever questions how they are done, let alone criticises them, is met with state force," he said.

Gunawardene said these projects are driven by "government ego" in Asia, where senior officials

develop an abrasive approach to the media.

He noted that while the public funds research, they rarely receive information about its outcomes. He gave the example of the Sri Lankan government, which had prior warning of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 but decided not to alert the public.

He said that scientists in Sri Lanka are intimidated by government control. Referring to the tsunami, he said "scientists knew the threat but they could not disclose it as the government had not given an approval".

Talent Ngwande, a SciDev.Net correspondent from Zambia, said that most governments in Africa police what goes to the media and any article thought to be anti-government is blocked.

"Its very sad to see a minister of information going through the newspaper before it goes to print, removing any 'offending' articles. It gets worse when it's a science article," said Ngwande.

"The good thing with science journalists is that we are like bacteria, always mutating to adapt to the current challenge," said Christina Scott, SciDev.Net's sub-Saharan Africa regional consultant. "This gives us hope."

[Source: SciDev.Net]

Ram Sethu issue: VHP serves ultimatum

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad has threatened to launch a nation-wide agitation if the Centre did not change before May 13 the current alignment for the Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project which would destroy the Ram Sethu or Adams Bridge in the Palk Straits.

Participating in a demonstration organized recently in Rameswaram to protect the Ram Sethu, VHP International President Ashok Singhal said all Hindu organisations and saints would unite to oppose any move to destroy one of the "most

important and holy monuments" for the Hindus -- Ram Sethu.

The MPs and MLAs would be asked to raise the issue in the Parliament.

"Like we have vowed to construct a temple at the Rama Janma Bhoomi we vow to protect the Ram Sethu," Singhal said.

Around 1,500 people, including women, participated in the demonstration.

He disagreed with the view that Ram sethu was not a structure built by human beings but a natural formation and maintained there was enough historical evi-

dence even in government Administration reports, and Department of Earth Science's report to show that it was a man-made structure.

Claiming that the Centre had fallen a prey to America's "conspiracy" to make the Palk Strait, now shared only by India and Sri Lanka, international waters, he said the site had more than 3.60 lakh tonnes of thorium that could be used for making power for another 100 years for the entire country. [PTI]

UNESCO offers to set up Chettinad Heritage Museum

UNESCO has offered to set up a 'Chettinad Heritage Museum' in Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu recognising the unique style of architecture in the region.

A draft action plan to set up the museum has been put forward, Minja Yang, UNESCO India director, told reporters on Friday in Karaikudi, about 90 km from here, on the conclusion of a three-day workshop on Chettinad Architecture.

The project will be taken up if the district administration sends a

proposal for the project, he said.

"The uniqueness of the Chettinad houses was that they could be museums by themselves," he said.

District collector M A Siddique said that the district administration would extend support to the project.

Museums on themes including Chettinad marriage, rituals, community functions, arts, crafts and wood-works would also be set up, he said.

Chettinad region rose to fame

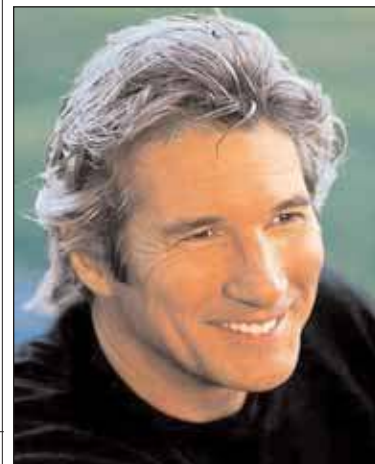
in the 19th century as home to successful traders and financiers who spread their wings throughout Southeast Asia. They built palatial houses, often over raised mounds, with elegant halls and huge courtyards.

Economic decline and migration led to the abandonment of many of the houses. Around one-third of them have been destroyed while only less than 10 per cent of the remaining houses have been occupied.

[PTI]

Hollywood Actor Apologizes for 'Obscene' Kiss in India

Hollywood movie star Richard Gere apologized Friday for upsetting people when he kissed Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty at a recent AIDS awareness event.



Gere issued a statement, saying it was never his intention to offend the people he called his "friends in India." He also offered his sincere apologies.

Gere's message comes one day after a magistrate court in the northern city of Jaipur ordered his arrest, in response to a complaint by a local citizen.

The complaint accuses Gere of violating India's strict public obscenity laws. Shetty also has been summoned to appear in court May 5.

Gere was in New Delhi promoting AIDS awareness when he

hugged and repeatedly kissed Shetty on the cheek. The incident sparked outrage from some conservative groups in India.

Legal experts in India have



ridiculed the arrest warrant.

Soli Sorabjee, a former attorney general of India, said - "the order is unsustainable and makes us look ridiculous."

He told the Times of India newspaper that "judicial magistrates should not behave like Taleban moral police."

Under Indian law, a person convicted of public obscenity faces up to three months in prison, a fine or both.

Richard Gere frequently visits India to promote health issues and the cause of Tibetan exiles.

[VOA]

The World's Growing Nuclear Club

India can offer some lessons on non-proliferation in a new nuclear age

By Humphrey Hawksley

Behind the heightened tension with Iran lies a wider problem that world leaders must swiftly and substantively grasp. The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), drawn up in 1968, needs to be re-written to make it both workable and acceptable to nations who view it as outdated and unfair.

Over the next generation, as the scramble for energy gathers pace, many more governments will announce plans to build uranium-enrichment facilities. Some will be friendly to US interests, some hostile. Some may switch alliances with time.

In recent years, India and the deeply unstable Pakistan have both declared their nuclear-weapons programs. Neither was a signatory to the NPT. North Korea joined, but left. Iran is a member, but stands accused of breaking the rules. Israel is not, and remains secretive and undeclared. Iraq signed back in 1969, then totally ignored it.

So, if the present version of the NPT is proving too hit and miss to survive the next half century of nuclear aspirations, what will replace it?

Into this conundrum comes an agreement between India and the US that, if used properly, could show us the way ahead. After more than 30 years of sanctions because of its nuclear program, India is now being allowed into that select club of declared and accepted nuclear powers.

On the technical side, India will be able to sell and buy civilian-use nuclear products on the international market. On the political side, the agreement heals a wound between two huge democracies by giving India some recognition of national dignity – which

is, in part, also what Iran is seeking.

Thirty-seven years ago, when Iran was an ally of the US, American warships were confronting not an autocratic Islamic state in the Gulf, but a young socialist democracy in the Bay of Bengal. India, then viewed by Washington as over-friendly with the Soviet Union, was defeating Pakistan over Bangladesh and needed to be brought into line.

The hostile insertion in 1971 of the USS Enterprise carrier group into India's backyard failed to turn the tide in Pakistan's favor. But it did create an anti-American sentiment in India that is only healing today.

It also gave India added grit to develop its own nuclear weapons. In 1974, having bought technology under the guise of using it solely for peaceful purposes, India carried out a nuclear test and was put under sanctions.

India's Tarapur nuclear complex, three hours drive outside of Mumbai, tells what has happened in the interim. Tarapur comprises a weapons-research center; a Soviet-style closed-city with schools, shops and sporting facilities for the scientists, engineers and their families; and four reactors, two designed in the 1960s and two this century.

The first two, known as Taps 1 & 2, were opened in 1969 and built by the American multinational General Electric (GE) in a turn-key operation that included parts, maintenance, training and uranium-fuel supply. Four years later, after the test, the US government instructed GE to withdraw all support.

Far from being deterred, India pushed its nuclear program with even more urgency. It fuelled the reactors by buying uranium first

from France, then Russia and, according to some engineers at Tarapur, even briefly from China.

India bypassed sanctions and created a world-class nuclear program. The control room of Taps 1 & 2 looks like an immaculately preserved example of 1960s technology, while the ultra-modern Taps 3 & 4 that opened in 2005 are evidence of what a determined nation can do if it decides to go it alone.

Visitors wear anti-dust cotton coverings over their shoes, and once inside they watch screens monitoring movements deep inside the radioactive area of the plant. Even under its new agreement, this will remain a place closed to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

At present, India has 17 reactors with five under construction. Of those, 14 will be "safeguarded," or open to IAEA inspections. Eight will remain closed so they can be used for weapons and other research.

With its billion-plus population and booming economy, India's plan for the next 20 years reflects much of the developing world's appetite for secure energy. To meet its galloping demand for power India expects to buy 25 more reactors from Russia, the US and France, as well as build several itself.

That alone is about 5 percent of the more than 400 power-generating reactors in the world today and evidence of boom years ahead, not only for India, but also for the whole global nuclear industry.

The climate-change debate coupled with unpredictable access to fossil fuels has prompted the nuclear industry to brush off the Chernobyl stigma and declare

itself safe, inexpensive and carbon-free. America's GE, for example, is gearing up to supply the Tarapur complex again, as well as bidding for involvement in India's new reactors.

Of course, it is not just India. A walk through General Electric's massive warehouse at its fuel plant in Wilmington, North Carolina, shows the momentum sweeping the nuclear industry along. Reinforced metal boxes containing uranium fuel rods are stacked as if in a supermarket waiting to be shipped out to clients.

"This one's going to Japan, this to Mexico, this to within the US," says Andrew White, president and CEO of GE's nuclear business, "Over the next 20 years we hope to be involved in 60 or 70 new plants depending on the technology."

China's nuclear plans mirror those of India, and nuclear energy is due to dramatically increase in Europe, where it makes up 30 percent of power, and America, where it comprises 20 percent. Developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America are all looking to create their own nuclear programs to provide energy – and there lies the problem.

Egypt, for example, currently a champion of non-proliferation, has two research reactors aimed at creating an independent nuclear-fuel cycle. It could prove to be a matter of Western concern. Like Iran before, the Egyptian regime risks falling to extreme Islamic anti-American forces.

Both Brazil and Argentina once pursued covert-weapons programs. Some years from now, the increasingly left-leaning Latin America might produce a hostile

leader, who would expel IAEA inspectors and send us once again into frighteningly familiar territory.

It is doubtful that global diplomacy can survive scenarios whereby every time a government is accused of stepping out of line, the UN Security Council is called upon to implement sanctions and US carrier groups steam toward hostile coastlines.

More than any other nation, India has the credentials to immerse itself completely in this dangerous conundrum and put forward fresh guidelines to extract us from it. India has persistently condemned the NPT for being discriminatory, arguing that the nuclear-armed UN permanent five cannot forever dictate what other nations do. This view is shared throughout much of the developing world, and as that sentiment grows, it will be more and more difficult to keep a lid on it.

A solution may be many years away, and getting there will be difficult. It will have to include both technical elements, such as guarantees of fuel supplies, and political ones involving perceptions of national dignity and fairness.

India's elevation to nuclear acceptability comes with a price. It cannot simply accept its new privileges and stay quiet. India went against all odds to create its nuclear program. It must now take up a new challenge to create a nuclear roadmap for the next century. [Courtesy: <http://yale-global.yale.edu>]

[The writer, a BBC correspondent and Asia specialist, is an author, most recently of "The History Book." His reports on India's nuclear program will be broadcast April 16 on the BBC.]

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Britain Suspends Aid Package to Sri Lanka

By Anjana Pasricha

Britain has suspended aid payments to Sri Lanka, because of concerns about the country's human rights record and intensifying violence. The suspension comes a year and a half after new fighting erupted between the Sri Lanka government and Tamil Tiger rebels.

A spokesman for the British High Commission in Colombo says Britain is withholding financial assistance to Sri Lanka until the government meets what he called "agreed human rights and defense spending conditions."

Britain was due to give Colombo \$5.9 million this year as part of a debt relief package. Only half has been handed over so far.

British officials say the remaining money will be given if a series of conditions are met. These include what a statement called "no unjustified increases in military spending and no instigations of hostility."

In recent months, rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticized both the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger rebels for a worsening human rights situation. They noted numerous cases of political killings, tortures, abductions and disappearances since the two sides resumed fighting.

The aid suspension was announced as a group of British diplomats postponed a visit to the rebel-held city of Killinochchi on Thursday May 3rd. They were due to meet rebel leaders in a bid to revive the peace process, but the government asked them to delay the visit, apparently for security reasons.



The head of Colombo's Center for Policy Alternatives, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, says the government does not appear to be in a mood for efforts to revive the peace process.

"It does seem diplomatic efforts are not coming to anything at all because I think the two parties are firmly committed to prosecuting military offensives against each other and looking to effect a balance of power on the ground, but at the same time there has been renewed efforts by countries to revive the diplomatic pressure and the peace process," Saravanamuttu says.

The Sri Lankan government also recently barred the Norwegian ambassador from traveling to Killinochchi to talk to the rebels. Norway helped broker the now-defunct 2002 truce, and has continued to serve as a mediator. The 2002 truce had raised hopes for an end to the quarter-century conflict, but more than 4,500 people have been killed in the last year and a half.

[VOA]

Fast to draw attention to the plight of Tamils in North-East Sri Lanka

Dr. Sri B. Sri-Skanda-Rajah, a peace activist, concluded a six-day fast in Toronto on Apr 21st, drawing attention and seeking help to stop the "genocide of

and empathy for the pain and suffering inflicted on the Tamil speaking people in the NorthEast of Sri Lanka."

The fast began on Sunday,



Tamils in the Tamil homeland comprising the North and East of Sri Lanka", TamilNet reported.

Statements about the fast added that, "it is intended to be a cry for help, and it is not a 'hunger strike' or a protest; it is undertaken in strictly 'Gandhian' style to demonstrate a deeply felt concern

15th April and ended on Saturday 21st April 2007 at an ecumenical and multi-faith prayer in Scarborough.

In the picture V. Thangavelu, a Canadian Tamil activist seen together with Mrs. Thangavelu, giving Dr. Sri Skanda Rajah lemon rice and milk to end the fast.

International, local groups condemn violence against journalists in Sri Lanka

International and local media rights groups observing UN World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, condemned a spate of murders, abductions and intimidation of journalists in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's Free Media Movement (FMM), citing statistics for the past 12 months, said that seven journalists had been killed, two were missing, three media personnel had been arrested while four had been attacked. At least three journalists had fled the country, while eight had been threatened or harassed, the group said.

Washington-based Freedom House said spiraling violence against the media had prompted it to downgrade the island nation from having a "partly free" media to "not free" in its annual 'Freedom of the Press' survey, released to mark the 3 May occasion.

"Sri Lanka's... status was downgraded to 'Not Free', to reflect new official restrictions on media coverage as well as a rise in attacks against journalists – particularly ethnic Tamils – and media outlets in the north and east, where the government and the Tamil Tiger rebels effectively resumed their civil war," the report said.

It pointed out that in Sri Lanka the murder of journalists "had emerged as an alarming pattern" against a backdrop of impunity

"with half-hearted or ineffective efforts being made to punish those responsible."

Call for bigger UN role

Deploing the escalation of violence directed at the media, the FMM renewed its demand for the UN's special rapporteur on freedom of expression to visit, and for the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to expand its presence in the island.

"As a direct consequence of the increase in hostilities between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), fundamental rights, including the freedom of expression and media freedom, have severely deteriorated over the past year," the FMM said in a statement.

The group also criticized the suppression of Tamil journalists who work in difficult conditions in the conflict-torn north and east and are at the mercy of both the security forces and armed groups.

US stance

Displaying the growing concern in the international community, the US ambassador in Sri Lanka, Robert Blake, called on the Colombo government to step up protection for the island's journalists.

"Last year, Sri Lanka had the honour to host the United Nations'

observance of World Press Freedom Day. But in the year that has followed, Sri Lanka has seen newspapers shut down, broadcasters taken off the air, and journalists from all communities murdered, abducted or intimidated," Blake said.

His statement said that Sri Lanka as a democracy had to "protect and reap the benefits of a media that is vibrant and truly independent and provides a voice to all without censorship or fear of reprisal."

The call comes three days after a journalist, Selvarajah Rajivarman, 25, working for the Tamil newspaper, "Uthayan" in the strife-torn northern Jaffna peninsula was shot dead by unidentified gunmen near his office.

"Culture of impunity"

The FMM blamed both the government and the LTTE for "being unable or unwilling to put an end to a culture of impunity that has cost some journalists and rights activists their lives and places others at severe risk."

Apart from acts of violence aimed at journalists, the media in Sri Lanka is also being strangled by administrative, legal and economic pressures, including government regulations, unofficial censorship and hate campaigns by state officials, the FMM charged.

[IRIN]

War ruined Lanka's hopes of being another Singapore

– Ronnie De Mel

If not for the ethnic conflict that has ravaged the country, Sri Lanka would have been another Singapore, says Ronnie De Mel, Economic Advisor to the President of Sri Lanka and a former Minister of Finance.

Elaborating on comments he made in a 1977 budget speech about the strength of the Sri Lanka rupee, he said at that time, the country had seen a growth rate of 8.3%, the 'highest in the whole of Asia and probably the highest in the world.' At that point in time, he said there was no China and India so there was justification for his hope. "Unfortunately, my hope was never fulfilled."

De Mel said that since 1983, Sri Lanka's economy has been moving backwards and attributes the decline to the ethnic conflict that has ravaged the nation. He recalled that in 1978, Lee Kwan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore was invited by then President J.R. Jayawardene to come to Sri Lanka to offer some advice as to whether the country was going down the right economic path. "Before us, Lee Kwan Yew was the only person to liberalize an economy with the exception of Chile was done under a



military regime," De Mel said. "There was opposition from various people in Sri Lanka who were advocates of a closed economy. All newspaper groups opposed me.

All were against it and there was some confusion and a fair amount of doubt even within the Cabinet."

After a week long visit by Yew along with six members of his Cabinet, final discussions were held at the President's house in Nuwara Eliya where Yew expressed great enthusiasm. "I popped a question and asked him if we went on like this without any break, how long will it take for Sri

Lanka to get to Singapore's level?" The answer was 10 years but Yew told former President Jayawardene that it is imperative that the ethnic conflict be settled.

De Mel said that after 1983, the problems that arose have severely prevented Sri Lanka from 'being one of the Tigers of Asia.' The problems never ceased even though there have been periods of ups and down but by and large, as long as there is no peace, it will always be difficult to get stable economic growth of over 8% and sustain it over a long period of time.

[sundaytimes.lk]

Antiterrorism Laws Used to Muzzle the Press in Sri Lanka, says HRW

The Sri Lankan government is abusing antiterrorism legislation to clamp down on journalists who expose human rights abuses, official corruption, or otherwise question the government's handling of the civil war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Human Rights Watch said today. Standard Newspapers Ltd., which publishes a leading Sinhalese-language weekly Mawbima and the English-language weekly Sunday Standard, stopped operations on March 29. Sixteen days earlier, the government froze the company's assets, citing suspected links to the LTTE.

On February 27, the police's Terrorist Investigation Division arrested the company's spokesman and financial director, Dushantha Basnayake, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and has detained him without charge since then. The law grants security forces sweeping powers of arrest and provides for detention up to 12 months without charge.

"The government is using antiterrorism legislation to silence

the press," said Sam Zarifi, Asia research director for Human Rights Watch. "As the war heats up, the government is clamping down on criticism and dissent."

Tamil-language media have often come under government pressure, but the closure of Mawbima is the first time in three decades that Sri Lankan authorities have shut down a Sinhalese-language newspaper.

Over the past year, Mawbima had reported on government corruption and human rights violations. The newspaper's journalists had questioned the government's role in the spiraling number of abductions and enforced disappearances as fighting between the government and LTTE escalated.

The owner of Standard Newspapers, Tiran Alles, is a close associate of two former ministers, Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera and Ports Development Minister Sripathi Sooriyaarachchi. Both ministers lost their jobs in February after criticizing the government's

human rights violations.

According to press reports, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse accused the two sacked ministers of using Mawbima to plot against him during an executive committee meeting of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party on February 11. Two days later, the government froze Standard Newspapers' assets.

On November 22, agents of the Terrorist Investigation Division arrested Mawbima reporter Munusamy Parameswary, also under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, accusing her of "helping the LTTE and a suspected suicide bomber." On March 22, the Supreme Court found no reasonable grounds for her detention and ordered her release.

"The government's moves against Mawbima are a disturbing blow to press freedom in Sri Lanka," Zarifi said. "Increasingly, critics of government policy are being treated as traitors and enemies of the state."

The pressure against

Mawbima and the Sunday Standard illustrates the deteriorating conditions for media freedom in Sri Lanka. At a press briefing on March 29, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse pushed journalists to support the military in its fight against the LTTE. "Media should not highlight the lapses of our security forces which may be advantageous to the enemy," he said.

On September 20 the Ministry of Defense sent a letter to media institutions requesting that "news gathered should be subjected to clarification and confirmation." The ministry has not instituted any formal censorship, however. Both the president and his brother Gothabaya Rajapakse, the defense secretary, are known to call newspaper editors directly with complaints about their coverage.

All sides in Sri Lanka's civil war have interfered with and sought to restrict the exercise of free speech and freedom of the press, Human Rights Watch said. In the areas under its control, the LTTE

does not allow a free press. In other areas it has intimidated, attacked and sometimes killed journalists critical of their policies or actions.

The Karuna group, which split from the LTTE in 2004 and has been fighting alongside the government, has also interfered with the media, Human Rights Watch said. Since August, in the areas where it operates in the East, the Karuna group has blocked the sale of the Tamil-language dailies Virakesari, Thinakkural and Sudar Oli, which are critical of the armed group. In Batticaloa district, the only Tamil-language papers available are the state-owned Thinakaran and Thinamurasu, which are run by the Eelam People's Democratic Party, another Tamil political party that is part of the Sri Lankan government. The Karuna group has issued death threats to newspaper vendors and distributors in Trincomalee, a strategic north-eastern city that houses a major government navy base.

[HRWNews]

Boosting food and livestock production in conflict-hit Jaffna

When heavy fighting between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) erupted at several locations on the Jaffna peninsula in August 2006, it led to the closure of the A9 highway. The single road into the area, the A9, was an economic and humanitarian lifeline for Jaffna's residents. Everything from food, basic commodities, pharmaceuticals, petroleum, even reconstruction materials, was soon in short supply.

The shortages have had a serious impact on all economic activity throughout Jaffna and on the nutrition of residents and displaced persons alike, according to the humanitarian community.

Prior to the road closure, say district officials, 150 to 180 trucks a day plied the road to Jaffna bringing goods to the district's 650,000 residents, some 40,000 of whom are currently displaced by the fighting. While transport ships, supplemented by cargo flights, have tried their best to keep up with Jaffna's essential import requirements, most months it has been challenging to meet the district government's targets.

Import bottlenecks

According to a situation report from the Jaffna District Secretariat in early December 2006, bad weather and logistical bottlenecks at Jaffna's ports were reducing the volume of imports. In November, according to the report, there were significant shortfalls in Jaffna's monthly import requirements. Only about 60 percent of all food targeted to arrive could be delivered and only 40 percent of medical supplies. No fertilizer, poultry or livestock arrived. In recent months, with increased ship arrivals and better logistics, the overall supply situa-

tion has improved somewhat and market prices have declined.

Nonetheless, since August 2006, two of Jaffna's economic mainstays, fishing and agriculture, have been particularly hard hit with substantial losses in employment, productivity and income, according to the District Secretariat.

The fishing industry was damaged largely due to strict security provisions on fishing - curtailing it completely in some areas of the Jaffna coast, and severely limiting it in others.

Agriculture hit by road closure

As for agriculture, one of two principal growing seasons in Sri Lanka, the 'maha', which runs from September to January in Jaffna, experienced a sharp decline in production, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), although precise figures are unknown. The principal reason for the drop in productivity, according to FAO, was a lack of fertilizer, seeds and other inputs, including fuel for tractors, because of the A9 closure, and the inability of cash-short farmers to hire the labour they needed. A winter drought made matters worse.

The livestock industry has suffered as well. Many animals were killed during the 2006 conflict. Subsequently many farmers, with savings depleted, were forced to sell off their livestock to make ends meet.

UN project launched in December 2006

According to Rita Ricciardi, FAO area emergency and rehabilitation coordinator in Sri Lanka, FAO responded to the crisis in late December with the launch of a US\$375,000 project, funded by the OCHA-managed Central



Emergency Response Fund (CERF), to help revive a segment of Jaffna agriculture. Working with the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the Department of Animal Production and Health (DAPH), the project targets Jaffna farmers and internally displaced families hosted by them to help boost crop production.

A principal goal of the project, according to FAO, is to provide this community with a better supply of vitamin-rich vegetables and other crops and to enable them, if surpluses are available, to earn some income through crop sales in the market. A total of 4,560 Jaffna families were selected by the DOA, with the assistance of NGO implementing partners, CARE, Caritas and Sewalanka.

In early January 2007, according to Ricciardi, FAO started flying in agricultural inputs by UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights. Each family received either a mixed vegetable seed kit or one for other field

crops. The seeds were distributed in time for the Jaffna mid-season planting in February and also for the 'yala' season that begins this month and runs through August. In all, 12 metric tonnes of green gram, cowpea, black gram, sesame and ground nut seeds were distributed as well as 530kg of vegetable seeds.

All the farmers were also given agricultural training by the Department of Agriculture and by CARE to ensure good cultivation and high yields; and some 600 participants, mainly women, were trained in sound nutritional and food processing practices.

Livestock medicines, vaccines

Boosting agricultural productivity was not the only goal under the FAO-led project. The Department of Animal Production and Health was provided by FAO with livestock medicines and vaccines to treat some 10,000 livestock in order to increase milk production, as milk was in short supply in the Jaffna markets.

Solar powered refrigerators were also given to store the drugs in. DAPH veterinary staff are currently in the process of vaccinating the livestock.

Poultry

Another component of the agriculture project - one instigated at the request of Jaffna residents - was support to restock the poultry population. The number of layers and broilers in the district had seriously declined, leading to a shortage of eggs and chickens in the market, according to FAO. Many residents and internally displaced families who were out of work and economically pinched sold off their birds in order to purchase essentials. In addition, says FAO's Ricciardi, "there is a huge demand for poultry because fishing has been banned."

FAO has helped rehabilitate in Jaffna a large capacity incubator at the Department of Animal Production and Health (DAPH) in which some 4,000 eggs, provided by World Vision Sri Lanka from Colombo, will soon be hatched. Half the resulting chicks will be given to Jaffna residents and IDPs for back-yard poultry production. The rest will be used by DAPH to increase both chick production and egg production for consumption.

While the Jaffna agricultural, livestock and poultry project is small-scale in terms of the overall needs of Jaffna residents and the IDP community, Ricciardi says: "It's an important model project that can be duplicated in other conflict areas to both increase nutritional status and family income."

[IRIN]

Can "Autonomous" Quebec in Canada inspire "Eelam" within United Sri Lanka?

By D.B.S. Jeyaraj

Canada's Francophone majority province of Quebec went to polls a month ago on March 26th to elect a Provincial government. The Quebec Liberal party running Quebec since 2003 came first as expected. In fact Quebec premier Jean Charest called an election a year before it was due in anticipation of a major success. Charest's liberals who got 46% of the total vote and 76 of 125 seats in 2003 did not fare that well as hoped 4 years later in spite of an early election.

There were three major upsets. After 129 years the French - majority province elected a minority government to power. The Liberals with 33.1 % of the popular vote got only 48 seats in a legislature of 125. The last time this happened was in 1878. Secondly a third force came to the forefront in Quebec with the Mario Dumont led Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) winning second place with 41 seats and 30.8% of the vote. Thirdly Quebec's separatist party the Parti Québécois (PQ) suffered a major reversal and was pushed to third place with 36 seats and 28.3 % of the popular vote.

When the Quebec national assembly was dissolved prior to polls the legislative tally was something like this. The Liberals had seventy - two seats; the PQ forty - five seats and the ADQ just five. There was one Independent and two vacancies. The Liberals have come down to earth from 72 to 48 while the ADQ has soared to dizzying heights from 5 to 41 an eightfold increase. The PQ came down to 36 from 45. Its popular vote of 28.3% was the lowest got by the PQ after 1970.

At time of elections being declared the Liberals were way ahead. But soon the PQ was running neck to neck. As campaigning continued the ADQ also surged ahead. Opinion polls suggested that all three parties were near equal in the three - way race. A poll taken on the eve of elections for a Canadian newspaper and TV station saw support for the PQ at 31% , the liberals at 30% and ADQ at 28%. A late resurgence saw the ADQ move ahead of PQ and run close to the Liberals.

The ADQ increased its votes from 18.1% in 2003 to 30.8% in 2007. The PQ dropped from 33.2 in 2003 to 28.3% this year. The Liberals were down to 33.1% from 45.9 in 2003. It is not difficult to gauge where the ADQ got its new votes from. According to analysts the ADQ cashed in on voters discontented with both the Liberals and PQ.

The new youth vote also went substantially to the ADQ it is said. Many voters it is said knew fully well that the ADQ would not form a government but went ahead and registered votes for it as a protest against the traditional way

of politics in the Province. Still the ADQ is now on the threshold of power and eagerly awaiting the next poll.

"The sense is that at least in Montreal it was a protest vote rather than an affinity to Dumont or the ADQ" says Antonia Maioni, political science professor at Montreal's McGill university." now what the ADQ has to do is to perform" she told Canada's "Globe and Mail" newspaper.

Ever since the PQ emerged as a big player in the seventies Quebecois politics has seen a see - saw struggle between the parties espousing secessionism and those opposing it. Interestingly those defending Canada's territorial integrity are generally called Federalists while those wanting to separate are loosely termed Sovereignists.

This is because the Quebec versions of English dominated national parties like the Liberals and Conservatives advocated a greater strengthening of Federalism as a means to contain French separatism and preserve Canada's unity whereas the separatist PQ couched its secessionism in the demand for a Sovereignty - Association. Thus Federalists are for unity and Sovereignists want separatism within the Quebec context.

This is in striking contrast to Sri Lanka where those advocating Federalism are charged of conspiring to break up the Country and those riding the high horse of patriotism claiming to be safeguarding Sovereignty. So Federalists in Sri Lanka are unfairly described as separatists and those rigidly upholding Sovereignty are praised by fellow travelers as patriots preserving unity.

This is because political discourse in Sri Lanka has been clouded with confusion on questions like federalism, devolution, power - sharing, sovereignty etc. A strong, powerful majoritarian lobby equates unity with unitary and refuses to see the merits of unity in diversity. The concept of shared sovereignty is anathema. So Federalism and Sovereignty acquire diametrically opposite meanings in Quebec and Sri Lanka.

This columnist was part of a Sri Lankan media delegation study tour of power sharing in Canada during February - March this year. It was organized by the Forum of Federations in Ottawa and the Canadian High Commission in Colombo. We were in Montreal and Quebec city in early march when the election campaign was in progress. Hoardings and posters were everywhere.

This columnist tried on a modest scale to find which way the wind was blowing. Questions were put privately and in a few instances publicly to the various academics, public servants, pro-



Andre Boisclair, of Parti Québécois (PQ)

fessionals and journalists about who they thought was the favourite in electoral stakes. The proverbial franc was proffered for Francophone thoughts on the topic to others like waiters in restaurants, stewards, hotel clerks, taxi drivers, tour guides, coach drivers, souvenir shop attendants, shopkeepers etc also in order to fathom their opinion.

In a sense amateurishly limited "opinion polls" like this depend on who you talk to and where. Generally opinion was divided between the Liberals and PQ as favourites. Montreal was more for the liberals while Quebec city preferred the PQ. The ADQ seemed a non - entity in both Cities when compared to support for the other two.

I remember a taxi driver in Quebec point to posters with Liberal candidates resting their chins on their palms and derisively remark "if they cant even hold their heads high without propping it up how can they help keep the heads of Quebecois high"? A sophisticated coach driver from Montreal rooting for the Liberals dismissed the PQ and ADQ as a "bunch of red necks from rural Quebec". The Anglophones and allophones (Non - English, non - French) felt the Liberals were riding high.

It was indeed the Liberals who came first but the real winner was the ADQ. It is now the formal opposition in Quebec. It has set its sights on winning the next election. This party led by its youthful leader Mario Dumont was a dark horse when the race began. The ADQ was expected to fare better than 2003 but not to this extent. Besides there had been false hopes in 2003 where the ADQ was expected to do very well but ended up with only five seats.

This was another instance of distortions caused by the "first past the post winner" voting system. This time however there was greater equity between votes polled and seats won by all three parties. The ADQ performed well beyond expectations. It won in rural Quebec, dented urban areas and even impacted on the "English Island of Montreal in the



Mario Dumont led Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ)

French sea of Quebec".

Apart from winning in 41 seats the ADQ came second in another 44. While its victory margin was very narrow in seventeen seats the party also came quite close to winning in another twenty - one.

The ADQ now holds significant power in the National assembly. The minority Liberal government is dependent on it to stay in office. No party wants fresh elections in a hurry. But the ADQ will not be content to languish in opposition for long. It would like to gain power and form a government of its own in the future. It has a dynamic and ambitious leader now called "Super Mario" who will not play second fiddle for long.

University of Sherbrooke Political science teacher Jean - Hermann Guay told the "Globe and Mail" newspaper "The ADQ is very close to power. This is not a chance victory".

"The potential for growth for the ADQ is even stronger than we would have thought" University of Montreal political scientist Louis Massicotte told the same newspaper.

Laval University professor of Political science and a former ADQ president Guy Laforest told "Globe and Mail" that the party had performed much better than expected. "they had a game plan for 95 ridings (electorates) and managed to be competitive in 90 out of 95 ridings" Laforest reportedly said. He further said "they accomplished a feat unique in Quebec or Canada. I dont know of a team so small, so poor and with so little resources achieved such an impressive result in an election. "

Last month's hustlings saw the traditional political tussle between Federalists and Sovereignists in Quebec undergoing a seismic change. The right of centre ADQ has beaten the separatist PQ to third place and emerged a close second to Quebec's federalist Liberals. A third political force has risen in Quebec. More significantly the ADQ has brought into Quebec politics a third element - Autonomism.



Paul Chomedey, sieur de Maisonneuve (February 15, 1612 - September 9, 1676) was a French military officer and the founder of Montreal, Statue in Montreal

The ADQ campaigned among other things on a platform of Autonomism. This policy is derived from concepts like autonomy or autonomous. It is a sort of middle way between the Federalist and Sovereignist schools of thought. The ADQ is not for separatism. It does not want Quebec to secede. But it wants radical forms of power - sharing between Ottawa and Quebec. The idea is to obtain greater powers and autonomy for Quebec within a united Canada.

Against that backdrop Dumont's success has been hailed as progress in English Canada. The PQ is seen as routed along with its plan of holding another referendum to determine Quebec's status within or "outside" Canada. Since Dumont has denounced separatism the Federalists like to depict the ADQ as being in their camp. From that perspective the PQ or secessionists are outnumbered in Quebec.

But the French nationalists are not of the same mind. To them the ADQ is a party strongly opposed to the current federalist status quo. The PQ claims resonance with the ADQ objective of empowering Quebec and enhancing its strength. In that sense the ADQ success is seen as an overarching victory for the forces of Quebecois nationalism.

Thus both sides perceive the ADQ to be one of "theirs" and combine the vote blocs to argue that together either side holds nearly two - thirds of Quebec votes. It is a variation of the "door being half - open or half - shut" premise. In this case it is a "two - thirds shut or open" argument.

The irony is that the ADQ owes its success greatly to the disillusionment among traditional Liberal and PQ supporters. The voters wanted a change in the decades old federalism vs sovereignist debate. The ADQ with its vision of a middle - way option "autonomism" signaled just that. Trying to draw in the ADQ to their respective folds therefore seems clumsy rather than astute politics by the Federal and Sovereignist schools.

Relating a personal anecdote may be appropriate at this juncture. During our study tour the question of Quebec came up frequently while interacting with offi-

cials, academics, experts and opinion makers in English Canada. Many of them seemed a little impatient of it all and appeared not to take the issue too seriously. One "quip" purportedly sourced to an Anglophone stand-up comic was often related to us as being illustrative of Quebecois sentiments.

"We want a strong and Independent Quebec within a united and powerful Canada" went the line evoking appreciative mirth among those quoting it. The one-liner portrayed Quebec separatism as an inherent contradiction. It was as if the Francophone nationalists want to both keep and eat their croissant. This "joke" was often repeated as being indicative of Quebec's bonafides or lack of it on sovereignty. It was also demonstrative of how some sections in rest of Canada were dismissive of Quebecois aspirations.

Some of us quoted this "joke" to a few Francophones while in Quebec province. They were not as amused as their English counterparts. Many politely declined to comment. A few smiled mechanically without any sign of seeing the humour in it. But it was a young academic from Laval University who provided meaningful insight during a lunch time conversation.

Initially he exploded angrily. "This is no joke" he remonstrated as his face reddened. "The 'Anglaise' do not understand our depths of feeling on this matter and by making fun of us are insulting us" he exclaimed. Later he mellowed and apologised for his outburst even as we explained profusely our ignorance in this and expressed regrets over being insensitive.

He then went on to explain in detail that the line "Independent Quebec within a united Canada" aptly summed up much of what many Quebec nationalists felt about the whole question. This was no contradiction in terms as perceived by some in English Canada but a much preferred serious option to many in French Canada.

"Many people here want to be very self-reliant and Quebec to function independently but they do not want to break from Canada either. This does not mean that they accept the present status quo but it also does not mean they want to go separately either. What they want is to be a strong Quebec inside Canada. But if this does not happen then some other course like full independence may become desirable".

With the wisdom of hindsight it seems to me now that the young academic was actually articulating the mindset of what was the ADQ's constituency. A whole lot of reasons are available for the ADQ's sweeping gains. Chief among them is this desire on the part of many Quebec nationalists for the province to remain within Canada yet acquire much more powers and privileges. Dumont himself subscribes to this view. Thus the "Autonomist" cry struck a responsive chord among voters.

An autonomous Quebec with-

in Canada was exactly the kind of "soft" nationalism many Quebecers wanted at this point of time. They were disillusioned by the recurring phenomena of referendae on the sovereignty question. Besides the sovereigntist option is a leap into the unknown. Many are reluctant to take that plunge. The vague evasiveness of the PQ on certain aspects of this question has not helped much either.

The PQ contested this poll on the most radical platform of its history where its leader Andre Boisclair pledged to hold a referendum immediately after the poll. Liberal premier Jean Charest counted on people being wary of another referendum and voting for him to prevent it.

What has happened is that the ADQ provided a third alternative to people who did not want to choose between federalism or sovereignty. They did not want a secessionist referendum but also did not want to be seen as accepting Ottawa's writ. Dupont's autonomist platform of "affirmation without separation" reaped the harvest.

Dumont's cry for autonomy is not anything new. Maurice Duplessis, the former Union nationale party premier of Quebec proposed "autonomism" as political credo in 1956. He argued for devolution of powers from Ottawa for Quebec and wanted to minimise Federal incursion into Provincial matters as far as possible. It is to Dumont's credit that he has revived "Autonomism" as viable political ideology to this extent of success.

The ADQ leader Mario Dumont is a political animal of great charisma. Born on May 19th 1970 in Cacouna, Quebec, Dumont obtained a degree in economics from Concordia University in 1993. A protégée of Quebec's former Liberal premier Robert Bourassa, Mario Dumont was president of Quebec Liberal's youth wing in 1990-92. The Meech lake accord ushered in during former Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney envisaged special status for Quebec as a "distinct society" within Canada. That and also the damage control exercise of Charlottetown failed due to opposition by some Provinces of "English" Canada.

This disappointment led to Dumont breaking from Liberals and forming together with Jean Allaire the ADQ in 1994. Later Dumont took charge of the party. He was first elected to Riviere-du-loup riding in 1994 and was re-elected again and again in 1998, 2003 and 2007. He was the lone ADQ legislator till 2003 when ADQ got five seats with nearly one-fifth of the vote. He is married to Marie Claude Barrette and has three children Angela, Charles and Juliette.

Though Dumont is against sovereignty now there was a time when he supported it. During the 1995 referendum on the question Dumont was on the side of the Sovereigntists. He is a staunch nationalist whose vision coincides greatly with much of rural Canada. The 36 year old Dumont

leads what has been virtually a "one-man show" in the past. He inherits with this election a caucus of young, untested colleagues who share his vision.

The last election was testimony to his vision and political acumen. By appealing to both ends of the spectrum with appropriate tactics Dumont has created a new, third constituency incorporating elements from both schools of thought. With both sides claiming the ADQ "soul" as theirs, it remains to be seen as to how Dumont will steer his ship through uncharted waters without veering to one or the other bank.

"He (Dumont) incarnates a nationalism that isn't sovereigntist" Jean-Hermann Guat of Sherbrooke University told "Globe and Mail". It's nationalism that wants to see Quebec preserve its powers but not necessarily break away from Canada. It's a more prudent kind of nationalism. Mr. Dumont plays both sides and in that sense, he resembles a lot of Quebecers", he said.

Laval University professor Guy Laforest described Mario Dumont thus to "Globe and Mail". He (Dumont) is a Quebec nationalist leader. Some people in English Canada don't like it and they would want him to embrace the concept of 'one nation, one country' but that will never happen".

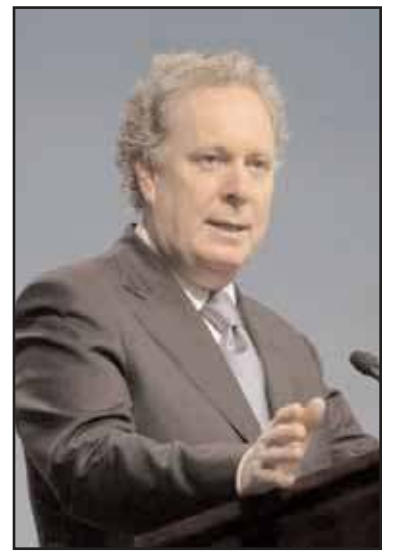
This strong assertiveness of Nationalism is what worries some. While articulating the soft nationalistic cry of "autonomism" Dumont has mixed his campaign with hard rhetoric about identity politics too. "we cannot defend the Quebecois identity with mushy words that no one understands. We cannot defend the Quebecois identity with one knee on the ground" he once famously said.

Two controversial aspects of his political agenda is the proposal to encourage more children among Francophone in Quebec and his emphasis on "reasonable accommodation" where the onus is on new immigrants and visible minorities to assimilate in Quebec. People are also concerned about the ultimate implications of the ADQ goal of "an autonomous state of Quebec within Canada". How will it evolve in the future? Will the dream turn into a nightmare?

Others however are skeptical of Dumont. They feel that he has changed positions in the past and so is likely to do so in the future too. It would all depend on which



Quebec Assembly at Night - Photo By MMarsolais



Quebec premier Jean Charest

stance would yield the most dividends politically is the cynical view. Of course practical politics does not make a virtue out of consistency but it appears that some are missing the "idealism" in Dumont's constituency.

The future would therefore depend on how Dumont performs and retains his support base while maximizing it further. If voters from Federal folds are to be drawn in the platform has to be more accommodative and flexible. If PQ votes are to be attracted a greater amount of hard-line radical policies are necessary. Laying the emphasis on one or the other is likely to repel support from contrarian blocs. How these contending factors will play out in the political arena and how "super" Mario Dumont creates a seemingly new "autonomist" school of thought will determine the ADQ's future in Quebec politics.

How Dumont will negotiate an "autonomist" political future for Quebec will help greatly in resolving the simmering crisis of Canada. The ADQ will be the new experiment of exploring the potential of greater autonomy for Quebec within Canada. The concept of an "independent Quebec within a united Canada" is an alluring challenge.

Its success or failure could impact on Sri Lanka too. The Quebec demand for secession had a demonstrative effect in Sri Lanka as it was a rare if not unique instance of secessionism within the so-called first world. Later attempts to contain these separatist tendencies through Constitutional accommodation were made. They too were inspirational as possible models of Conflict resolution to emulate in Sri Lanka.

Now the advent of the ADQ

has re-introduced another path which could be followed in Sri Lanka if found successful in Canada. While granting that the experience of one country may not be appropriate for another there is no need to reject anything outright without trying to elicit lessons either.

The federalist-sovereigntist debate in Canada has received fresh impetus through the third factor of autonomism. In Sri Lanka a war rages while the feeble debate is about unitary versus separate. The third alternative of a federal or quasi-federal Constitution in place of both the one-state and two-state theories is yet to take off. The unitarists emphasising sovereignty depict "federalism" as a recipe for secession. Ironically the separatists perceive advocates of federalism among Tamils as traitors accepting Sinhala hegemony.

In this dark tunnel one can only imagine a tiny glow of light in the form of "autonomism" in Canada. If the ADQ could achieve something tangible for Quebec within Canada it could be an experience to draw on for Sri Lanka. If an autonomous Quebec is possible within a united Canada would it be too poetical to conjure up visions of an "autonomous Eelam within a united Sri Lanka"?

Given the current climate of brutal conflict and passionate opposition to the very concept of devolution such notions seem fanciful. One cannot extend the silver lining to cover the dark cloud. But then was it not Alexander Pope who wrote of "hope springing eternal in the human breast"? And then there is always the inspiring myth of Sisyphus and his rolling boulder!

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CANADA'S NEW GOVERNMENT URGES PERMANENT RESIDENTS TO RENEW VITAL DOCUMENT FOR TRAVEL

In July 2007, five-year Canadian permanent resident (PR) cards will begin expiring. The cards are a vital document for Canadian permanent residents who travel internationally because they are necessary to re-enter Canada. Canada's New Government is advising Canadian permanent residents to check the expiry date on their card if they plan to travel outside Canada after July 1, and to apply for a new card before it is too late.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada is launching a comprehensive web, media and poster campaign to remind Canadian permanent residents that they must have a valid PR card to return to the country if travelling internationally.

"We want to help Canadian permanent residents who are planning to travel outside the country," said the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. "That's why we are taking the initiative through this campaign to help inform Canadian permanent residents of the need to renew their cards before travelling outside Canada."

The PR card confirms the holder's permanent resident status in Canada. Permanent residents who travel outside Canada must show the card before boarding commercial transportation (plane, train, boat or bus) when returning to Canada. Without a

valid PR card, permanent residents will not be allowed to board, and will need to make alternative travel arrangements at their own expense and inconvenience. Permanent residents who have obtained Canadian citizenship no longer need a PR card.

"We're encouraging people to plan ahead," said Minister Finley. "Permanent residents should check the expiry date on their cards and apply for a new one well before they travel."

The PR card was introduced on June 28, 2002, for new immigrants to Canada with the implementation of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The cards are valid for a five-year period. In exceptional circumstances, some cards expire after one year.

The PR card increases Canada's border security by improving the integrity of the immigration process. It also provides cardholders with secure, convenient proof of their permanent resident status when re-entering Canada.

Permanent residents can obtain a new card by completing the application kit available online at www.cic.gc.ca or by calling 1-888-242-2100. Applications are currently being processed within 6 to 8 weeks of receipt at the Case Processing Centre in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

**Courtesy: Minister's Office
Citizenship and Immigration
Canada**

Tamil youth posthumously awarded medal for bravery in Canada

The Royal Canadian Humane Association (RCHA), Canada's Bravery Awards Association has posthumously awarded a Silver medal for 11-year old Tamil youth Birunthan Muralidaran drowned in a pool on Dec 11, 2006 while trying

the council recently passed a resolution expressing their condolences to the families of Birunthan and his friend Kishoban.

Birunthan who attended Woburn Collegiate Institute, while playing with some of his friends



to save his friend from being drowned in the same pool in Toronto.

The medal will be presented by honorable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario province and patron of RCHA during the yearly Investiture ceremony to be held May 25.

Meanwhile, David Miller, the Mayor of Toronto and members of

noticed Kishoban Alekeswaran, 15, drowning and jumped into the frozen pond to save his life. However Birunthan's effort failed and he lost his life. His friend survived but subsequently he too died a few days later.

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"Growing the Canada-India Partnership" by David L. Emerson, Minister of International Trade

A strong bilateral relationship is about more than exports, imports and investments. It's also about the "human links" that keep these relationships alive — the networks of people who, through their regular contacts with counterparts across borders, and around the world, draw nations closer together, and drive bilateral success.

Canada's relationship with India is a prime example.

It's a relationship grounded in our shared Commonwealth heritage, in our commitment to democratic values, in the over 900,000 people of Indian descent living in Canada, and in the thousands of daily interactions between Canadian and Indian companies, investors, and researchers, that are pushing our economic relationship into the future.

I'm travelling to India this week to strengthen this network. Building on the success of our trade mission to India last month, I'll meet with people from across the spectrum of the Canada-India partnership, from both the government and business sides, including India's Commerce and Finance Ministers.

The message I'm carrying is clear: when it comes to commercial opportunities, Canada and India have much to offer one another.

India is widely recognized as one of the most competitive, influential and fastest-growing economies on the planet. And Canada has much to offer as India continues its ascent.

We've developed a targeted market plan that focuses on key sectors where Canada has a proven track record: sectors like infrastructure, information and communications technologies, life sciences, mining, financial services, and agriculture and agri-food. These are sectors where Canadian capabilities match Indian demand.

Infrastructure is a good example. India's dramatic growth has placed a heavy burden on the country's existing facilities and infrastructure. It's a burden that is constraining both the expansion of India's economy, and the ability of its citizens to access and



Canadian International Trade Minister David Emerson meets with Kamal Nath, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry. They discussed opportunities for strengthening the Canada-India commercial relationship, including signing a Foreign Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement (FIPA) in 2007.

enjoy the benefits of its newfound success.

Canada can help. We have experienced and reputable companies involved in every aspect of construction, architecture, design, engineering, telecommunications and energy distribution.

Science and technology is another focus. In 2005, Canada and India signed an S&T Co-operation Agreement. Both countries are now engaging top-notch scientists from the academic, government and private sectors in focused areas of research. The Agreement provides an excellent opportunity for researchers from both countries to work together to develop and commercialize tomorrow's technological breakthroughs.

To continue making these links and building these networks, Canada's New Government is moving forward with a focused, results-oriented Global Commerce Strategy — a plan to get Canadian companies and investors more involved in the world's most important markets, including India.

Under this plan, we are accelerating our efforts with India to develop an investment promotion framework that will boost two-way flows of capital by giving investors in both countries an added level of predictability and protection. Beyond this agreement, which both countries have committed to conclude in the coming months, we need to look

at other opportunities for stronger commercial links. In my view, a high-quality Canada-India free trade agreement should be our long-term objective.

As part of our Global Commerce Strategy, we're expanding our presence in India, to ensure that Canadian businesses and investors are well-served in this important market for years to come. We will also continue working with our many partners, like the Indo-Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canada India Business Council and CEO organizations in both countries, who have already made such a tremendous contributions and who stand ready to help push our bilateral relationship to new heights.

Markets like India hold immense promise for Canada. As a trading nation, we must ensure that our exporters and investors have the tools they need to be successful in the world's most dynamic, diverse and influential markets. At the government and business levels, we need to be actively involved in these markets, aggressively building the business networks and the human links that will drive Canada's success into the future.

This Government is absolutely focused on creating opportunities to do exactly that, to grow the Canada-India network, and to make Canada a partner of choice for international business and investment.

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No to U.S Double Standards in "War on Terror" Environmental Groups Worldwide Mark Earth Day, Raise Awareness About Global Warming

Statement of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist)

The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) condemns the U.S. government for releasing the terrorist Luis Posada Carriles on bail on April 19, 2007. Posada Carriles is notorious in Latin America for his admitted acts of terrorism, especially against Cuba, including the 1976 in-air bombing of Air Cubana Flight 455 over the Caribbean which killed all 73 passengers. He has been held in prison in El Paso, Texas for just over one year on minor charges related only to his entering the U.S. illegally and lying to Homeland Security. The U.S. government refuses to acknowledge Posada Carriles' terrorist activities with the necessary legal action it is obligated to undertake. This must not pass! The U.S. must not be permitted to cover-up its own nefarious role in fomenting terrorist acts against Cuba by harbouring this terrorist.

Trained by the CIA, Posada Carriles' resume is thick with terrorist activities spanning Latin America, from the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, to involvement in the Iran Contra scandal, as well as many assassination attempts against Cuban President Fidel Castro, including one in 2000 in Panama City, where he was

arrested with over 200 pounds of explosives.

Posada Carriles escaped from a Venezuelan prison in 1985 where he was awaiting trial for the plane bombing. He served time in Panama but was pardoned by outgoing right-wing President Mireya Moscoso in 2000 and resurfaced illegally in the U.S. in March 2005, openly sauntering around the streets of Miami where he made a formal bid for political asylum from the U.S. government.

An emergency stay temporarily barred his release from April 12-17. At that time Cuban experts had predicted the possibility that even with the emergency stay Posada Carriles would be freed with the complicity of the U.S. government prior to his trial date of May 11.

Following the April 6 ruling of Judge Kathleen Cardone granting bail, the international condemnation of the double standard applied by the U.S. government in the case of Posada Carriles has increased, demanding justice.

The double standard in the U.S. treatment of Posada Carriles is especially evident in light of the five Cuban patriots who are imprisoned in the U.S. The Cuban Five undertook to prevent terrorist acts such as the ones Posada Carriles has engaged in from

being launched against Cuba from U.S. soil by reporting on the activities of anti-Cuban terrorists in the U.S. to U.S. authorities. For this they have been unjustly imprisoned by the U.S. government under exceptionally punitive and vindictive conditions. It is a surreal situation which only makes sense if considered in the context of the desperate attempts of the U.S. state to smash the Cuban revolution and all that it represents in terms of concrete assistance to the peoples of the world and as a beacon to all who are striving for liberation, self-determination and new arrangements in all spheres of life.

The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) condemns the release of Posada Carriles on bail and U.S. double standards in its "war on terror." Posada Carriles must be extradited to Venezuela to be brought to justice and the Cuban Five political prisoners must be immediately released from jail.

All out to make the International Day of Action on May 11 demanding Posada Carriles be punished for his crimes a success!

Courtesy: The Marxist-Leninist Daily
Website: www.cpcml.ca
Email: editor@cpcml.ca

Environmental Groups Worldwide Mark Earth Day, Raise Awareness About Global Warming

Environmental groups and governments around the world observed Earth Day on April 22nd with events aimed at protecting nature and raising awareness about global warming.

In cities in the United States and Canada, citizens and politicians participated in tree-plantings and environmental cleanups.

The non-profit Earth Day Network said hundreds of millions of people were expected to take part in more than 170 countries.

The group says the annual holiday celebrates a milestone this year, because China's leadership has mandated that all local governments do something to mark Earth Day.

In the United States, environmental groups are urging people to take steps to decrease the amount of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere - by driving less, driving more efficient vehicles and replacing conventional light-bulbs with energy-saving fluorescent bulbs.



At a White House Correspondents' dinner in Washington Saturday, singer Cheryl Crow and movie producer Laurie David got in a heated argument with President Bush's advisor Karl Rove. The pair said they urged Rove to take a new look at global warming, but Rove says they intended to insult him and they succeeded.

The first Earth Day was marked in the United States on April 22, 1970. Twenty million people took part in protests around the country that day to demand the government combat widespread pollution.

[VOA]

Sun's Atmosphere Sings

By Jeanna Bryner

Astronomers have recorded heavenly music bellowed out by the Sun's atmosphere.

Snagging orchestra seats for this solar symphony would be fruitless, however, as the frequency of the sound waves is below the human hearing threshold. While humans can make out sounds between 20 and 20,000 hertz, the solar sound waves are on the order of milli-hertz--a thousandth of a hertz.

The study, presented this week at the Royal Astronomical Society's National Astronomy Meeting in Lancashire, England, reveals that the looping magnetic fields along the Sun's outer regions, called the corona, carry magnetic sound waves in a similar manner to musical instruments such as guitars or pipe organs.

Making music

Robertus von Fay-Siebenburgen and Youra Taroyan, both of the Solar Physics and Space Plasma Research Center at the University of Sheffield, and their colleagues combined information gleaned from sun-orbiting satellites with theoretical models of solar processes, such as coronal mass ejections.

They found that explosive events at the Sun's surface appear to trigger acoustic waves that bounce back and forth between both ends of the loops, a phenomenon known as a standing wave.

"These magnetic loops are analogous to a simple guitar string," von Fay-Siebenburgen

explained. "If you pluck a guitar string, you will hear the music."

In the cosmic equivalent of a guitar pick, so-called microflares at the base of loops could be plucking the magnetic loops and setting the sound waves in motion, the researchers speculate. While solar flares are the largest explosions in the solar system, microflares are a million times smaller but much more frequent; both phenomena are now thought to funnel heat into the Sun's outer atmosphere.

The acoustic waves can be extremely energetic, reaching heights of tens of miles, and can travel at rapid speeds of 45,000 to 90,000 miles per hour. "These [explosions] release energy equivalent to millions of hydrogen bombs," von Fay-Siebenburgen said.

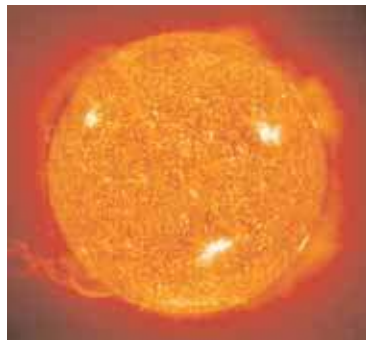
"These energies are plucking these magnetic strings or standing pipes, which set up standing waves--exactly the same waves you see on a guitar string," von Fay-Siebenburgen told SPACE.com. The "sound booms" decay to silence in less than an hour, dissipating in the hot solar corona.

Solar physics

The musical finding could help explain why the Sun's corona is so hot.

While the Sun's surface is a steamy 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit (5,538 degrees Celsius), plasma gas in the corona soars to more than 100 times hotter.

"How can the atmosphere



above the surface of the Sun be hotter if nuclear fusion happens inside the Sun?" von Fay-Siebenburgen said. If astronomers can get a clearer picture of what's going on inside these magnetic loops in the Sun's atmosphere, they have a better chance of finding the answer.

Another recent study using images from Hinode's telescope revealed twisted magnetic fields along the Sun's surface, which store huge amounts of energy. The magnetic fields can snap like a rubber band; when they do, they might release energy that could heat up the corona or power solar eruptions and coronal mass ejections, the researchers say.

[Courtesy: space.com]

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Vesak

Buddhist, celebrate Vesak festival, on the full moon in May. This year the month of May has two full moons. It is the first full moon on the May 2nd is celebrated as Vesak. This day is the anniversary of Siddhartha Gaudama the founder of Buddhist religion was born, gained enlightenment and finally died. Lord Buddha was the Protestant of Hindu religion and reformed the religion so much it ended with an entirely new face and was called Buddhism. The Sanskrit word root budh denotes both to wake up and to know. Thus he was called the Buddha meaning the awaken one, and his religion which lays the path to become Buddha became Buddhism. Swami Vivekananda refereed to Lord Buddha as the greatest Hindu reformer. When Hinduism was at its lowest ebb after the ages of Upanishad, he championed reform to the religion. The Hindu society at that time was corrupt with cast, where empty rituals and sacrifices were given greater importance. Lord Buddha rebelled against this hypocrisy and said "All this must stop. This is not religion". He observed that "The teacher, but points the way, the work has to be done by your self". He believed it to be utter foolishness to expect to gain anything by getting some one else to perform some ritual and sacrifice. Especially at that time the Hindu priests performed many rituals where helpless animals were sacrificed.

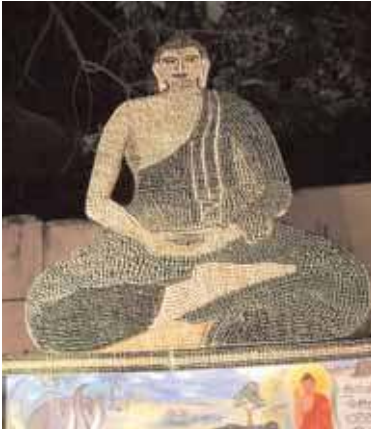
Birth

Siddhartha Gautama was born to Suddhodana, king of Sakiyas around B.C.560. Gautama was his Sir name. At sixteen he married a beautiful neighboring princess, Yasodhara, who bore him a son named Rahula.

When Siddhartha was born his father summoned fortunetellers to find out what the future held for his heir. All assembled agreed that this was no usual child. There was but one ambiguity. If he remained with the ways of the world, he would unify India and become her greatest emperor, a chackaravarthi. If on the other hand, he forsook the world, he would become not a world conqueror but a world redeemer. Faced with this option, his father who himself was a king determined to steer his son toward the former destiny.

The excursions

But after three excursions with his charioteer Channa, he realized how hopeless human life is. On his first excursion, he saw a frail old man. When he asked Channa what made the old man so weak and feeble, he was told that this was the eventual fate of all human beings, including him. On the second journey, he saw a sick person; the response to his inquiry was that illness could strike any one at any time, even the strongest and healthiest is not excluded to this fate, and there was nothing could be done to prevent it. The third time he left the palace he saw a corpse being taken to the cremation ground. When he asked what it was, he



heard about death – an every day event in human life, said Channa, since death itself was inevitable.

Siddhartha decided to go beyond the unhappiness of this worldly life which was full of miseries and sorrows. He left his home, wealth, dominion, power, father, his beautiful wife and the only infant child Rahula. He lived among many hermits, and performed severe austerities. He performed control of breath and fasting. Little by little, though, Siddhartha, who was by now all skin and bone began to understand that he was not getting anywhere. Though he gained many psychic powers he was getting no nearer to his goal of perfect understanding of human misery.

Middle Path

At this time Siddhartha remembered a childhood incident where some dancing lasses were passing joyfully singing. His memory of the song brought real help to his troubled mind. The song itself had no real deep meaning in it, but for him it was a message full of profound spiritual significance. The song it self was;

Fair goes the dancing when the Sitar is tuned,

Tune us the sitar neither low nor high,

And we will dance away the hearts of men.

The string overstretched breaks, the music dies,

The string over slack is dumb and the music dies,

Tune us the Sitar neither low nor high."(1)*

He realized that he should not go to extremes in torturing the body by starvation, and that he should adopt a middle path.

One day he was seated under a large banyan tree with its trunk as support to his back, close to the hermitage of Kassapa. From there he could see a panoramic view of the river and the land beyond. He was lost in thought and was meditating. He realized how futile it was to find the solution by the problem. It was early in the morning, he saw a beautiful woman accompanied by two similarly beautiful women coming towards them.

The three women were dumfounded to see the handsome figure of Siddhartha seated under the tree. The woman was Sujatha, the daughter of a very rich merchant. She was in the habit of visiting this majestic banyan tree every morning on the full moon to offer obligations of milk rice to the Gods inhabiting in the tree. Seeing the handsome figure of Siddhartha she thought that the God had appeared in person to receive her obligations.



She was yet afraid, but gathered enough courage to go near Siddhartha and made her offering. On his part Siddhartha thought it was his wife Yasothara had come disguised with two of her maidens to entrench him. He accepted the offering without looking up thinking he should not give any room for temptation. Siddhartha partook in his meal of milk rice and went down to the river Neranjara to wash the bowl. It was the dry season and the river was flowing low. He waded to knee deep and washed his hands and face on the ice cold water flowing from the tall Himalayas. When he put the bowl down to wash, it started flowing down. He had to rush to grab the bowl. It struck to him that the whole world is going with the tide. If he too goes with the tide he cannot find the true reason. He thought 'If I too go with the tide I cannot find the true reason. I cannot depend too much on tradition. I need not follow any teacher. I should be able to find the solution to the problems of existence on my own, on my own striving, on my own exertion'. With this thought he crossed the river and came to a high ground where there was a majestic Pipul (Bo tree) tree in the centre of a grove. He sat down under the cool shade on that Vesak full moon day with strong resolve not to get up till he realizes the true cause of human misery. The rest was history as people would say.

Four noble truths

He realized the four noble truths and the eight fold path to reach nirvana, to be away from all suffering. The first noble truth was that life is Dukkha, usually translated as suffering. It was not a case of pessimism, but realism. Even when one gets what he wants he is aware that he cannot have it for ever; so he suffers not only in the anticipation of the desire but also in anticipation of their loss. If he does not get what he wants he suffers, this time from dissatisfaction and thawed longing. It was Lord Tennyson who sang well the situation

What am I?

An infant crying in the night;

An infant crying for light;

And with no language but a cry, A fundamental built in anxiety and suffering is part of human experience, in other words. If we set goals for ourselves and fail to reach them, we become miserable; and if we do reach them, we want more. Enough is never enough.

The second noble truth goes deep into the roots of the first one which is the dukka or sorrow. He based this on the sense of ego.

Vaikasi Visagam

By Kumar Punithavel.

The Tamil month Vaikasi is in the tail end of the early summer season. The full moon of this month in South India and north Sri Lanka will shine bright, in clear night sky giving a hallowed enchanting beauty under the Visagam star. Saivaites, Vaishnavites and Buddhists hold this day in high esteem. While for Saivites it is the day of the descent of Lord Muruga, for Vaishnavites it is the Periaalvar Jayanthi and for Buddhists it is the day of nativity, enlightenment and Maha samathi of Lord Buddah.

The descent of Lord Muruga was in answer to the prayer by deva's to rid of adharma caused by three assura brothers, Soorapatman, Singamuhasuran and Tarakasuran. These brothers obtained great powers through intense penance and were harassing deva's. The deva's appealed to Lord Shiva for help. Tradition has it that Shiva emitted six sparks of fire from the third eye, which were carried by Agni and Vayu to Ganga which pushed them into Saravnapoikai which was filled with lotus and reeds. In the lake the sparks became six divine children and were nursed by six Karthigai maidens. These children were embraced by Lord Shiva's divine consort Shakthi and became one with six faces and twelve hands and thus descended Lord Shanmugan.

The legend further states that he went to war with the assuras and vanquished the three demons with the lance (Vel) given to him by his divine mother. He then took Indran the king of deva's daughter Thevayanai as his consort. After that he took Valli Amman the daughter of a hunter as his consort too.

The great Tamil epic Kanthapuram gives the story of Lord Murugan. Kanthan is another name for Murugan. The word Kanthu in Tamil means to be tied or bundled. As the six babies were bundled into one by his divine mother he got this name. Another explanation given is that instead of killing the evil assura soorapathman he tied his ego and made him to become a peacock and used it to carry him!

Kanthapuram is a classic example of a great allegory in Tamil Hindu literature explaining the Tamils theological philosophy Saiva Sadandam. Effulgence of

In its simplest form it is the thirst or desire (tanha) is the cause for dukka. This thirst can be described as a fundamental nature. We are in-wired with longing for something outside our selves. It can be gross manifestations like greed, lust and miserliness to more subtle and seemingly benign like wanting to do good to the world or to know the truth. He realized the truth as mentioned in 'Laws of Manu' Ch4: 160; everything that depends on others (gives) pain, everything that depends on oneself (gives) pleasure.



divine in the lake with its lotus flowers and reeds symbolically refers to what happens to each of us. As light and life this reality abides in us. The six faces of Shanmugam represent the six facets of ours. These are body, breath, senses, mind, intelligence and ego.

As per Siddandam pasam or bondage that prevent us enjoying the divine experience of bliss. Pasam literally means rope. It keeps the soul down to evil and prevents it from attaining beatitude. Passam is of three kinds. They are Anavam, Kanmam and Mayai.

The three assuras in the Kandapuram refers to these pasams. Killing of the assuras with the vel refers to getting rid of this pasam with knowledge.

The vel or lance is sharp in the edge then broad and finally long or deep. Knowledge too should be sharp, broad and deep! His taking Theivanai Amman as his consort after the war full action refers to the Kiriya Sakthi, meaning power of action. His taking Valli Amman because of a great penance of love and desire refers to Icha Sakthi. Icha Sakthi means power of desire. When we see at the sanctum sanctorum, the statue of lord Murugan standing between Valli Amman and Theivanai Amman having the Vel in his right hand, it should remind us for our successful life we must have desire, knowledge and action! Let us all celebrate Vaikasi Vsakam as the day when God in his infinite kindness came down as Lord Murugan.

Buddhist, celebrate Vaikasi pournami as Vesak, the day Gaudama Buddha was born, gained enlightenment and finally attained Maha samathi.

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The third noble truth defines the way to get out of this. The key to escape Buddha said, lay in control (nirodhana); control over the craving or thirst (tanha) for attachment. If attachment was first rooted out, he said, and then the thirst itself would be extinguished. Once that is achieved, a state of nirvana could be reached, a state in which there would be no further suffering.

The fourth noble truth takes the form of what is known as the Holy or Noble eightfold path: They are 1. Right understanding.

continued in next page

Welcome to the Sri Vidya Temple

The Sri Vidya Temple is located on 23 acres of land in upstate rural New York. Sri Rajarajeshwari Devi is installed as the principal deity of the temple and is worshipped as the universal mother. All aspects of the temple layout have been influenced by scriptural text; as the temple expands, the Vedic sciences are consulted to ensure that it meets the requirements of a South Indian shakti temple. The temple was founded in May 1998 by Sri Chaitanyananda (Aiya), his wife Sri Gnanamba (Ammam), and a small group of selfless devotees.

The temple is unique in two aspects; it is a teaching temple where the mysteries of pooja, the associated mantras and rituals are readily taught to interested devotees, it is also the only temple in North America where devotees are encouraged to actively participate in the rituals as exemplified by all devotees being provided with an opportunity to give a milk abhisekham to the Devi and the surrounding moorthies. Those devotees who wish to proceed beyond abhisekhams to conducting actual poojas and homams are welcomed and initiated by Aiya and taught these complex processes including the related mantras over a period of time that is conducive to their own personal spiritual development. The focus on teaching is further illustrated by the regular workshops conducted by Aiya on mantras, rituals, poojas, etc as well as the



annual summer camp for children that over a one week period expose them to the fundamentals of Tamil culture and basics of Sanatana Dharma popularly and erroneously referred to as Hinduism. In essence, the temple opens the door on those mysteries that were traditionally limited to a particular segment of the population and allows all devotees regardless of gender, caste or creed to participate in the worship of Devi in accordance with the rituals laid out in the South Indian and Tantric traditions.

The focus on teaching had had its benefits. The Sanatana Dharma scriptures state that learning and chanting of selected mantras provide considerable psychic benefits including a greater spiritual awareness and identification with the deity in the form that is most desirable to the individual worshipper. Many devotees have experienced this phenomenon and the temple abounds with indi-

vidual experiences that are as varied as they are awe-inspiring.

The temple holds two festivals per annum in May and October/November, the latter coinciding with Navarathiri. Festivals are a gathering of spiritual and social energies. They create an intensified atmosphere which leads to, for most devotees, a greater spiritual awareness of God. We like to take this opportunity to invite all of you to the up-coming festival commencing May 18th. Further details are provided below. You may also access the temple website at www.srividya.org for details on the festival as well as considerable information on the temple, the type of worship that is practiced, the schedule of Aiya's workshops and the up-coming summer camp. Thank you for taking the time to read this and we look forward to seeing you at the temple.

Kandeepan

Vesak Continued from previous page

2. Right orientation or thought.
3. Right speech.
4. Right action.
5. Right livelihood.
6. Right effort.
7. Right mindfulness.
8. Right Concentration.

Lord Buddha was different from other religious leaders in that he was skeptical about the concept of God as a personal being who created the universe by deliberate design. This made many people believe he was an atheist. But he did believe in a God head in his declaration; "There is, O monks an unborn, neither become nor created nor formed... Were there not, there would be no deliverance from the formed, the made, the compounded (2)*. This is in line with the tradition of Hindu Philosophy of Advaita.

Lord Buddha was totally against speculation of any sort. He was not prepared to speculate about where we came from or where we are going. He had a famous parable about a poisonous arrow; If a man is wounded by a poisonous arrow and taken to the surgeon should he first find out who shot the arrow, what cast and creed the archer was or ask what material the bow string was made. Should he find out what material the arrow was made and what type of poison he had on the arrow? Before knowing the answer to all these questions the man would die.

Similarly it is not the view that the world is eternal, that it is

finite, that the body and soul are distinct, or that the Buddha exists after death, that a religious life depends. What ever the views on these matters may be, there is sickness, old age and death. There is sorrow grief and lamentation..... I have not spoken to these views because they do not conduce to absence of passion, or calm and Nirvana he said.

He observed that he had explained about suffering, the cause of suffering, the destruction of suffering, and the path that leads to the destruction of suffering for this is useful. He totally refused in idle talk about how world was formed or created. What sort of a person God is etc.

He refused to use Sanskrit as his language of teaching. He wanted to guide every man to realize liberation and guided them in their own language, and wanted to reach their goal in their own effort. He said "Buddha's only point the way. Work your salvation with diligence". He cared for no cast or creed. He observed "Let persons of intelligence come to me, honest, candid and straightforward; I will instruct them, and if they practice as they are taught, they will come to know for themselves that supreme religion and goal, the of Buddha hood.

Reference:-

(1) Lord Buddha by Swami Sivananda. (2) The Worlds Religion by Huston Smith

By Kumar Punithavel

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Sri Rajarajeshwari Peetam

Sri Vidya Temple Society, Rush, New York, U.S.A The Annual Festival (May 18, 19 & 20)

The annual festival of the temple will be held over the May 18th, 19th and 20th weekend (Victoria Day long weekend). On May 18th the festival commences at 9:00 AM with the usual welcoming ceremony for the Sri Vishnu Durga as she arrives from St. Catherine's. The "Vaancha Kalpa" Maha Ganapathi Homa followed by the Pancha Suktha Abhishekam to the Devi are also part of the first day celebrations.

The Maha Ganapathi Alankara Utsavam will take place in the evening, culminating in Ganapathi taken around the temple in procession. The 19th will feature Chandi Homam commencing at 5:00 AM and followed by Abhishekam, Alankaram and Annapavadai for the Devi.

The evening's at 6:00 PM, the Chapparam procession where the Devi is conveyed around the temple constitutes, for many, the highlight of the festival. The last day of the festival commences at 9:00 AM

with the Sri Dattatreya Utsavam that includes a 1008 right handed conch Abhishekam, the Pancha Suktha Abhishekam and culminates with Sri Dattatreya taken around the temple in procession. At the end of the recital, the Bhairava Bali will signify the conclusion of the festival.

Festival attendees this year will enjoy live carnatic music performances by famous artists.

On Saturday May 19th evening devotees are treated with famous vocalist Srimathy Shankari Senthilkumar (California) accompanied by famous instrumentalist will provide a melodious rendition of classical and light music. Sponsorship opportunities are available for the daily Annadhanam, flowers, fruits, milk etc., as well for individual Abhishekams and Poojas. Please visit the web site or contact the temple for further details.



Temple Contacts:
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Monsoon Arts



Glossy magazine on politics and the arts

by K.S. Sivakumaran

A few weeks ago, a glossy and lush monthly magazine in Tamil called 'Sarinihar' (On Equal Basis) was launched in Colombo.

This 100-page journal is full of colour photographs and illustrations, new to Lankan Tamil journalism. It is basically a left-inclined political journal with space for alternative thinking contributed by both Sinhala and Tamil speaking Lankans. One would not call it a 100% political journal either as it incorporates within its pages a coverage on Sinhala and Tamil films.

As a person more interested in the arts than in politics of the country (which again is in a muddle), I naturally went over to the 13 pages allocated to the arts as I opened the beautifully designed magazine of 12 x 06. I found it to my satisfaction that there were excellently written film reviews by the knowledgeable G. T.

Keethaaranaathan, who has also translated into understandable and elegant Tamil two of the articles written by a Sinhala intellectual (Sunila Abeysekera) and another by one Ammu Joseph an Indian journalist who writes in English in India.

The films reviewed were 'Sankara' directed by Prasanna Jayakody and 'Ammawarune' directed by Lester James Peiris and 'Veyil' directed by Vasanthabalan. While I do not subscribe to GTK's stance on two of the films, I agree with him on what he says about 'Sankara'. His review of the film is more detailed than what I wrote about it in the Sunday Standard some months back.

Commentary on the arts includes a profile on the late poet S.Vilvaratnam by Dr.S.Yogarasasa of the Eastern University (with illustrations of his poems by G.Kailasanathan, a notable artist

hailing from Yaalpaanam and other illustrations are by Nirmalavaasan)

There are also obituaries on Eliyathamby Ratnasabapathy of the EROS fame by R.Cheran and Ajith Samaranayake by K.S.Sivakumaran.

The magazine includes poems by S. Jeyashankar, Harold Pinter (translated by M. K. M. Shakib), Parakrama Kodithuwakku (translator's name not given), Ilavaalai Wijendiran, Simonthi, Anaar and Avvai.

Moving away from these pages to the front section of the magazine one finds faithful recordings of the political climate in the country with justifiable commentaries from the Lankan Thamilan points of view.

The names of the editor or editors are not given, but one assumes that at least two of them are involved in the content and production of the magazine. In

fact, 'Sarinihar' was in existence as a fortnightly tabloid receiving wide acceptance as an organ of alternative views funded by an NGO that comprised people of the calibre of the late Charles Abeysekera, Kumari Jayawardena, Uyangoda et al. It folded up in February

2001 and the editors, one of whom was reckoned as Sarinihar Sivakumar, started a new newspaper (fortnightly) called 'Nihari' with the sponsorship of Victor Ivan's 'Raavaya'. It was in circulation for sometime and then wound up due to lack of funds. Now 'Sarinihar' is reborn in the magazine format.

Apart from the editorials there are a few political observations by an unsigned writer. A signed commentary by Naasamaruppan, notes on three journalists arrested or abducted, translations of articles by Victor Ivan and Sunanda Deshapriya.

Other articles are by Prabha, Siraj Mashoor, and S P. Nirmanysan. Interviews published in 'Raavaya' and another set of interviews conducted by 'Sarinihar' on current political matters with eminent public figures are also published. Sivakumar has translated an interview with the Maoist Prasanda.

The magazine includes a translation of a short story in Sinhala written by Sumika Perera. The translator's name is not given.

The magazine is worth Rs100/- per copy and it is available at Sarinihar, housed at 66 / 4, Sri Dharmarama Road, Ratmalana. Email: sarinihar@gmail.com.

The magazine is published once in two months.

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Indian star's popularity leads to tax on foreign actors in Sri Lanka

By P.K. Balachandran

Indian star's popularity leads to tax on foreign actors. The Sri Lankan film industry's overwhelming acceptance of the Bangalore lass, Pooja Umashankar, seems to have rung alarm bells among Sinhala nationalists, who fear that the local film industry, already under threat from Bollywood and Mollywood,

will be swamped by Indian stars, technicians and directors.

The government has slapped a tax ranging from LKR 150,000 (\$ 1366) to LKR 250,000 (\$ 2277) on Sri Lankan films which use foreign talent. But industry insiders suspect that the new measure was triggered by the rising popularity of Pooja who stormed into the Sinhala movie scene with the

box office hit Anjalika last year.

Sri Lankan audiences were thrilled to see a Sinhala movie where the main star was singing and gyrating as beautifully and excitingly as a Bollywood nymph to the tune of Sinhala songs. After the runaway success of Anjalika, Pooja had signed two more films Piyambanna Mang Asai and Yahaluwo which audiences are waiting to lap up.

"It is not a secret that all this fuss and the new tax regulations came because Pooja was nominated in the Best Actress category at the recent Sarasaviya Film Festival and came third in most popular actress category," says Tusita de Alwis, publicity manager of Ceylon Theatres, in a survey conducted by media.

"Jealousy plain and simple is behind all this," says Inoka Sathyangani, director of Sulang Kirilli which had won several international awards. "We are

now in a global village and we should not be erecting walls between us," she told Hindustan Times.

Since the tax was the brainchild of the "non-performing" National Film Corporation (NFC) Sathyangani feels that it might have done it only to show that it existed. "At any rate, government should first ask itself whether its tax on foreign TV serials had helped the Sri Lankan TV industry. The truth is that it has not. Cheap Indian directors are now brought in to direct Sinhala serials," Sathyangani pointed out. "And what is 250,000 rupees for a wealthy producer?"

"NFC's thought control and talent control are totally against the current world trend," said Prasanna Vithanage, an internationally known film maker, whose latest film Hand Ball is being directed by Uberto Pasolini. Ranjan Ramanayake, the macho



hero of Sinhala films, has cast Mumbai's Ardeen Khan in the female lead in his new big budget action film Leader.

However, not all deride the measure. "It will help protect the up and coming Sri Lankan artistes," Nita Fernando, the veteran actress, tells media. Scriptwriter Yolanda Weerasinghe points out that in the West, foreign artistes could be employed only if suitable locals were not available. Sri Lankan artistes should get organised on this, she adds.

[Courtesy: Hindustan Times]

Music Concert by 'German Kannan' on June 3 in Toronto

Mr. Sritharan, a resident of Germany will perform at Isaiyarangam's Isaikku Aethu Ellai, on June 3rd at Centennial College auditorium, Ashtonbee campus at 6:30 PM.

Sritharan, also known as 'German Kannan,' is proud to take part in Isaiyarangam's Isaikku Aethu Ellai, which brings out new dimensions in music. There will be four new songs and three previously rendered songs each sung in various ragas.

Sritharan learned classical music since childhood and has

been awarded several medals throughout his youth. His success and his achievements made him realize that there couldn't be a future for him that didn't include music. While in Sri Lanka, he sang for many well-known composers such as 'Yarl Kannan' and others.

After moving to Germany, he created a recording studio, taught himself to play keyboard and started composing songs for the dawn and hope of the new country. He has composed hundreds of songs and hundreds of music dramas which have been repro-

duced by many dance teachers throughout the world. His caliber of rendering music is unique and commendable.

Those who are real lovers of music should take opportunity to see this partnership between Isaiyarangam and 'German Kannan.'

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Scarborough Parent Conference:

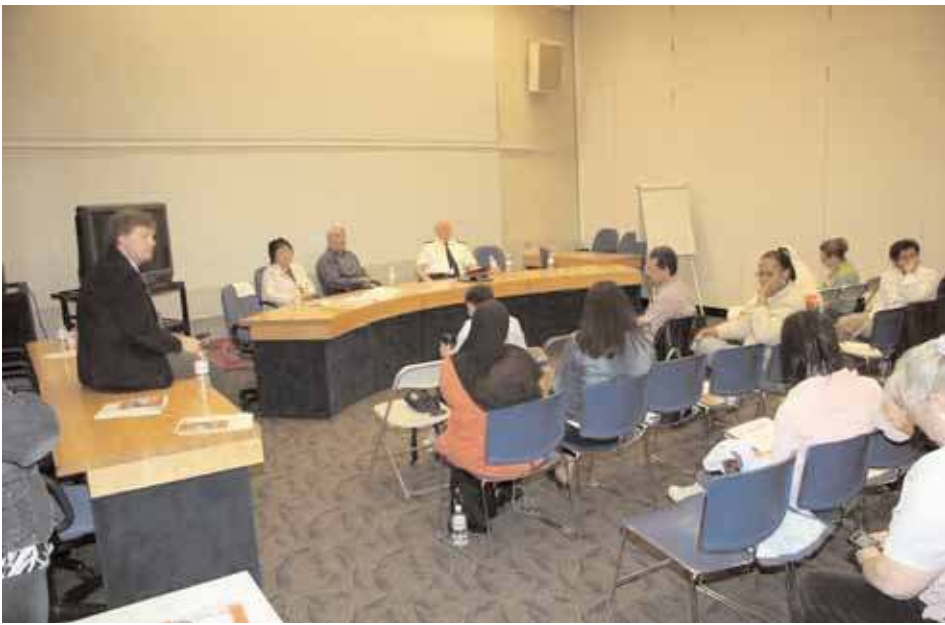
A conference organized by parent for parents

The Scarborough Parent Conference (SPC) on Saturday May 5th at the Scarborough Civic Centre attracted almost 300 participants, mostly parents, and the supportive presence of TDSB trustees, principals, superintendents, and other staff. A number of community organizations also provided resource people for the exhibitor booths and some workshops. It was dynamic to see the diversity of parents seeking out information, asking the very relevant questions that affect us all, and responding to the various presentations and addresses. This conference was organized by parents and for parents.

The SPC committee in its planning made intentional efforts to reach out to newcomer parents. There were some specific ways that this conference achieved its outreach goals. Aside from the translation of the registration flyer in Tamil and Chinese specific to those target groups, involvement of the ethnic media to communicate the message in a variety of lan-

guages and the important presence of 8 settlement workers throughout the day were all part of the success of attracting a good cross-section of ethnic parents. Additionally, an outreach workshop called, "Why can't newcomer parents and teachers of their children talk to each other" was offered. The workshop designed by Dr. Mehru Ali, Ryerson University, perfectly met the needs of our parents on the topic of communication with teachers especially when there are language and cultural differences.

We believe it takes a village to raise our kids and therefore the village of parents needs to be engaged and well informed. We know from all the documentation, that parent involvement improves student success and with our diverse community in Scarborough and Toronto, we have to make real efforts to ensure that all parents have the opportunity to participate in informative sessions like this parent conference.



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Monsoon Health



Researchers find Health Benefits in moderate Coffee Drinking

By Art Chimes

Coffee has a long and fascinating history, but sometimes it has been cited as a cause of disease. However, new research suggests there may actually be health benefits to coffee, when drunk in moderation.

Legend has it that an Ethiopian shepherd noticed his goats were more lively after eating coffee berries, so he tried some himself. Around the year 1100, coffee cultivation began on the Arabian peninsula.

Dr. Lenore Arab of the University of California medical school in Los Angeles, says that in the 16th century, coffee was regarded with suspicion by the Christian establishment, then led by Pope Clement VIII. "The pope was asked to condemn coffee because the Muslims were consuming it, and they thought it must be the drink of the devil," she said. "But he actually decided after trying it that this was a wonderful beverage and he actually blessed the coffee and decided that this was very useful because it kept the monks awake during their long vespers [evening prayers]."

Concerns have lingered however, that coffee poses health risks. Loaded with caffeine, coffee

is a natural stimulant. Drinking too much can make you feel edgy, nervous, jittery. Coffee can raise your blood pressure, and caffeine is slightly addictive. But recent research has found that moderate coffee drinking -- a few cups a day -- can actually have some beneficial effects, and might even help reduce the risk of some serious diseases.

Dr. Rob van Dam of the Harvard School of Public Health has been studying the link between coffee, both regular and decaf, and diabetes. "I think about 16 prospective studies around the world have now looked at coffee consumption in relation to Type II diabetes, and they consistently show that people who drink more coffee -- [we're] talk[ing] about four or five cups a day -- have a low risk of diabetes. We're also looking at what components of the coffee could be responsible for that. I think so far we have very consistently seen that associations are the same for decaffeinated coffee and caffeinated coffee," he said.

Van Dam was among several coffee experts who spoke this week at the Experimental Biology conference here in Washington. He says a big challenge to researchers is separating out the



effect of coffee from other risk factors, such as weight, diet or exercise.

"That's a very important consideration in this type of research," he explained. "We see actually that people who drink more coffee are less health conscious, and they have a worse diet, and they smoke more, and they tend to have a somewhat higher body mass index. So actually, when we control for these factors more completely, we see a stronger effect, rather than a weaker effect."

Van Dam says some research has identified components in coffee that might be responsible for the effect. If that's confirmed, special coffee blends rich in those components might be marketed for diabetic consumers.

There have also been reports over the years that coffee might cause cancer. Some two decades

ago, a study suggested a link between coffee and pancreatic cancer. But UCLA epidemiologist Dr. Lenore Arab says hundreds of studies since then have shown that coffee drinkers are less likely to get certain types of cancer, starting with colorectal cancer.

"There might be a 24 percent reduction with regular and higher consumption of coffee," she said. "There is also surprisingly interesting and consistent results with liver cancer, that is protective to the extent that drinking coffee regularly in Japan appears to be associated with a 50 percent reduction, and there's a dose-response [relationship] in some of the studies. It's gone down as far as a 70 percent reduction in those drinking more than five cups of coffee a day."

Not all cancers respond in the same way. Arab says there are some studies indicating that a pregnant woman who drinks coffee may put her unborn child at greater risk for childhood leukemia. Coffee may also increase the risk of stomach cancer.

Part of the challenge facing researchers is quantifying coffee consumption. Blend, brewing method and strength are some

variables. Espresso, for example, is quite different from filter coffee. Also, a "cup" is the standard measure, but there is no standard cup. One restaurant may serve a 150 ml cup, while at many American coffee shops, a cup three times that size is only called "medium." And according to James Coughlin, a scientist and consultant to the industry, the chemistry of coffee itself is enormously complex.

"I'm a chemist and a toxicologist, and I've studied the chemistry of coffee in very good detail. There's at least 2,000 components, individual chemical components, in coffee, which makes it difficult when we're looking at some of the positive beneficial health effects. We're trying to figure out what's in there that could be contributing to that story," said Coughlin.

Experts recommend that like so many other things, coffee should be enjoyed in moderation. Drink much more than a liter a day, they say, and you may have to balance some of coffee's benefits with a risk of irritability, nervousness, and perhaps an upset stomach.

[VOA]

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A leading Nutritionist comments on the benefits of Peanuts

Nutrifit Sport Therapy, Inc., headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, was founded in 1992 by Page Love, a leading expert on sports nutrition and eating disorders in the southeastern United States. She answers to frequently asked questions about Peanuts on the website of the National Peanut Board:

Q: In today's meal preparation there seems to be some misconceptions about fat in foods. What is the recommended amount of fat per day?

According to the new USDA food pyramid guidelines, for a healthy and adequate intake of fat, you should aim to have at least a minimum of one teaspoon of fat per meal and snack (three to six times per day).

Peanuts are a good source of unsaturated fats. In fact, they are 85 percent unsaturated by content and are cholesterol free. Peanuts do not contain trans fat and have 52 percent monosaturated and 33 percent polyunsaturated fat content.

The fat in peanuts is needed to help maintain our immune system with a natural anti-inflammatory function to fight disease and infection. And unsaturated fat is a component of cell membranes, called phospholipids, needed for cell growth and daily repair in most of our body's cells.

Q: I want to make sure that I offer meal options for people who are looking for a heart-healthy



diet. Do peanuts fit the bill?

Absolutely, peanuts have recently received the qualified heart health claim from FDA which states, eating 1.5 ounces of peanuts and most other nuts as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease.

Q: How can I make sure that I am providing flavorful foods that also provide balanced energy for the day?

Protein is what you're after. And peanuts and peanut butter are a good and flavorful source of protein. Protein provides energy, and peanuts meet 12 percent of the recommended daily allowance for a one ounce or two teaspoon portion eaten daily. In addition,

the essential fat in peanuts is a needed source of daily energy as secondary backup to carbohydrate energy.

This makes peanuts and peanut products key ingredients for center of the plate, as well as small plate offerings. It also serves as a plant-based protein option for those who seek vegetarian cuisine.

Peanuts are also a source of fiber, providing two grams of fiber per two tablespoon serving. Fiber is not only helpful for gastrointestinal health, but also helps to provide satiety and fullness longer. This is good for everyone, especially those working to control their weight.

[www.nationalpeanutboard.org]

Vitamin D May Help the Elderly Maintain Strength

By Rose Hoban

Vitamin D is an essential human nutrient. It helps our bodies absorb calcium and turn it into bones and teeth. What's unique about the nutrient is that most of the vitamin D we need is manufactured by the human body as a result of exposure to the sun. Just fifteen minutes of sunshine on the arms and hands is enough for most people. But as people age, they produce less vitamin D in response to sunlight.

Denise Houston is a nutrition researcher who teaches at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She says deficiencies of vitamin D could accelerate physical decline in older adults.

"There have been a few other studies that have looked at this and found an association between vitamin D measured in the blood and physical performance and muscle strength," Houston says.

Houston took data from a large study done in Italy of about a thousand adults over the age of 65. She compared the subjects' physical performance to the levels of vitamin D in their blood. Houston says seniors with too little vitamin D were weaker overall. "We found differences in both a physical performance battery, which includes things such as walking speed, chair stands and a balance test, as well as differences in grip strength -- which is a good predictor of disability and future mortality."

Houston says that even

accounting for other factors that might affect human strength, the data still points to an important role for Vitamin D in the mobility and strength of older adults. "We did try to control for other variables that might impact disability and physical function," she explains, "including age, or physical activity, body mass index, their



kidney function -- since that actually converts the vitamin D that we get from the food and the sun into the active form that's used by the body. And we still found an association between their vitamin D levels and their physical function and strength."

Houston notes there are few sources of vitamin D in food - usually it's contained only in fortified milk and other foods such as oily fish. So, Houston says, if seniors are not consuming enough vitamin D and they're not getting it from the sun, they're at risk. Her research appears in the Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences.

[VOA]

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RJ Multi Litho Inc.

Making Printing Projects a Success...

by Siva Sivapragasam

Modern Businesses are relying more and more on Print Technology to showcase their products and services. In a sense Printers and Graphic Designers are seen in today's marketing strategies as models and Business partners helping organizations to project their businesses better.

Against such a background Messrs.RJ Multi Litho Inc. is well positioned to manage all printing requirements for a modern business. The Company is well equipped with state-of the art technology to fulfill the needs from pre-press to finishing. They offer their clients a complete electronic environment in all aspects of Printing. The pre-press Department provides color scanning and photo retouching, electronic file transfer including FTP site, digital proofing and file manipulation. Most software applications are supported in both MAC and PC environments.

The person behind the success story of RJ Multi Litho Inc. is Rajeev Muthuraman, whose initial knowledge and experience in

his home country helped him to engage himself in the same industry in his country of adoption. Rajeev tasted the first buds of Printing at Aitken Spence, a leading Printing establishment in Sri Lanka.

Born in Manipay- Jaffna, Rajeev had his early education at Manipay Hindu College where he studied upto Grade 10.He later attended St .Patrick's College, Jaffna. As he himself admits it, "I had to drop out of college because of my difficulties with the English language". Later, with the help of Mr.Somasunderam, an Accountant with the National Paper Corporation, Rajeev joined the National Apprenticeship Board to learn Printing. Mr.Muthuraman is thankful and indebted to Mr.Somasunderam even today for the role he played in engaging Rajeev in the Printing industry. In Colombo, Rajeev also ran a tutoring making use of his skill in Mathematics. Like many other young men of his time, Rajeev went to the Middle East to seek better pastures. His hard work in Bahrain rewarded him with a post of Manager in the firm he worked. In 1987, he immigrated to Canada and at first settled down in Montreal. Later he moved over to Toronto and worked in a printing firm.

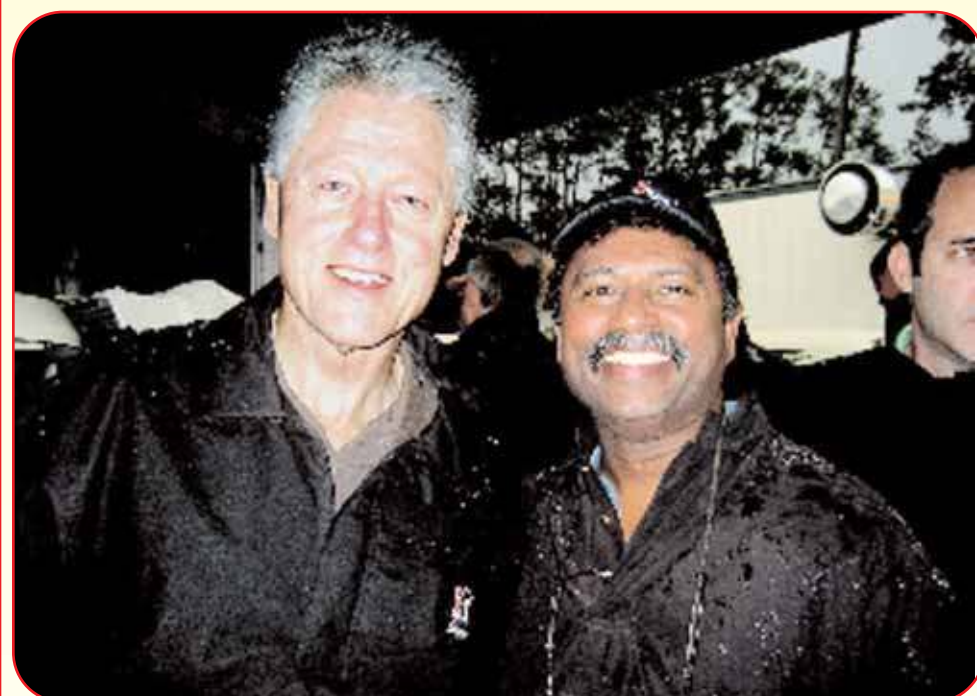
His entrepreneurial skills and a passion to start something of his own drove him to set up his own Printing firm. Initially RJ Multi Litho Inc. was begun only with four employees and one single manual machine. Gradually, with good quality in production coupled with timely deliveries and good prices improved sales for the firm. Today, RJ Multi Litho operates with the most modern technology in Printing, an increased number of machines, 40 personnel in sales and an equal number in it's other Departments. Rajeev has imported an 8 color Komori machine which is capable of printing both sides at the same time and this is the first of it's kind in Canada. Among his customers are leading Corporate clients like Kelsey's, Rogers Cable, Montanas, York University, Sick Kids Hospital, most of the major Banks, Hotels like Delta and Fairmont Princess, Masonite from U.S. The building housing the Printing units is owned by the Company and elegantly furnished and finished. He provides full benefits to his employees and takes pride in the fact that rarely does anyone leave the Company because he provides them the best in the industry.

His partner in business and progress is Frank Barbosa who takes care of Sales and

Quality. He also looks after staff welfare. Rajeev's wife helps him with the Accounting side of the Company. RJ Multi Inc. has recently acquired another Magazine producing Company which publishes periodicals mainly for downtown shows and is titled "Performance".

Apart from his interest in his Business, Rajeev is a keen Golf player and even has a picture taken with Bill Clinton-former U.S. President, at a Golf tournament. Rajeev also devotes his time, energy and money for sponsorship events connected with kids, sports and community cause. Among institutions and causes he has helped financially are the Providence Health Care Centre, Credit Valley Hospital Foundation, Peel Regional Police, Tsunami Relief, Hindu Mission of Mississauga and many others. Rajeev has two grown up children attending McMaster and York Universities.

The success story of RJ Multi Litho Inc. was not offered to Rajeev Muthuraman in a plate of gold. Hard work, a passion for success, dedication, and his own entrepreneurial skills are some of the ingredients that went into the plate.



MONSOON BUSINESS

Canadian Ministers and Representatives praise Tamil community at Toronto event - Continued from Pg 1



Refer page 35 for details regarding the event

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Mexican Cuisine

Mexican food is a style of food that originated in Mexico.

Mexican cuisine is known for its intense and varied flavors, colorful decoration, and variety of spices. Mexican gastronomy is one of the richest in the world: both with respect to diverse and appealing tastes and textures;



and in terms of proteins, vitamins, and minerals.

When Spanish conquistadores arrived in the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan (the ancient city on which Mexico City was built), they found that the people's diet consisted largely of corn-based dishes with chilis and herbs, usually complemented with beans and squash. The conquistadores eventually combined their imported diet of rice, beef, pork, chicken, wine, garlic and onions with the indigenous foods of pre-Columbian Mexico, including chocolate, maize, tomato, vanilla,

and meats in Mexican food. There is also a sprinkling of Caribbean influence in Mexican cuisine, particularly in some regional dishes from the states of Veracruz and Yucatán. The French occupation of Mexico also yielded some influences as well: the bolillo (pronounced bo-lee-yo, with the "o"

as in "bore"), a Mexican take on the French roll, certainly seems to reflect this.

Mexican food varies by region, because of local climate and geography and ethnic differences among the indigenous inhabitants and because these different populations were influenced by the Spaniards in varying degrees. The north of Mexico is known for its beef production and meat dishes. Southeastern Mexico, on the other hand, is known for its spicy vegetable and chicken-based dishes. Seafood is commonly prepared in the state of Veracruz.



avocado, papaya, pineapple, chile pepper, beans, squash, sweet potato, peanut and turkey. The totopo (a salted corn tortilla cooked in a fire oven) may have been created as part of this cuisine.

Most of today's Mexican food is based on pre-hispanic traditions, including the Aztecs and Maya, combined with culinary trends introduced by Spanish colonists. Quesadillas, for example, are a flour or corn tortilla with cheese (often a Mexican-style soft farmer's cheese such as Queso Fresco), beef, chicken, pork, and so on. The indigenous part of this and many other traditional foods is the chile pepper. Foods like these tend to be very colorful because of the rich variety of vegetables (among them are the chili peppers, green peppers, chilies, broccoli, cauliflower, and radishes)

There are also more exotic dishes, cooked in the Aztec or Mayan style, with ingredients ranging from iguana to rattlesnake, deer, spider monkey, and even some kinds of insects. This is usually known as comida prehispánica (or prehispanic food), and although not very common, is relatively well known.

A distinction must be made between truly authentic Mexican food, and the Cal-Mex (Californian-Mexican) and "Tex Mex" (Texan-Mexican) cuisines. Mexican cuisine combines with the cuisine of the southwest United States (which itself has a number of Mexican influences) to form Cal-Mex and Tex-Mex cuisine. Another style of cuisine that is commonly mistaken for Mexican food is New Mexican cuisine, which is, of course, found in New Mexico, USA.

Chicken Enchiladas

with cheddar cheese, sour cream, and corn tortillas.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon plus 1/4 cup oil
- 2 (4 ounce) cans chopped green chile peppers
- 1 large clove garlic, crushed and minced
- 1 large can (28 ounces) tomatoes, drained, reserve juice
- 2 cups chopped onions (2 large onions)
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 3 cups cooked shredded chicken
- 2 cups sour cream
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- 15 corn tortillas

PREPARATION:

In a skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 tablespoon oil. Add the chile peppers and garlic; sauté until garlic is soft but not browned. Break up tomatoes and add to chile peppers along with the chopped onions, 1 tsp salt, oregano and 1/2 cup of the reserved tomato liquid. Simmer uncovered until thick, about 30



minutes.

If it thickens too quickly, add a little more of the tomato liquid or a little water, if necessary. Remove tomato sauce from heat and set aside.

In a bowl, combine chicken, sour cream, and shredded cheese. Heat 1/3 cup oil in a skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Using tongs, dip tortillas in hot oil for a few seconds, just until

they become limp. Drain the tortillas well on paper towels. Fill tortillas with chicken mixture. Roll up and arrange side by side, seam-side down, in a 9x13x2-inch baking dish.

Pour tomato sauce over enchiladas and bake at 350° until heated through, about 20 minutes. This casserole can be frozen then reheated in the oven until hot.

Serves 6.

Chicken Fajita Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons cooking oil, divided
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into thin strips
- 1 onion, cut into thin wedges
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 (7 ounce) can chopped green chilies, drained
- 1 cup whole almonds, toasted
- Shredded lettuce
- 3 tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 1 avocado, sliced

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine 1 tablespoon



oil, lime juice, garlic, cumin and oregano. Toss with chicken; marinate at least 30 minutes. Meanwhile, in a skillet, heat remaining oil on medium-high. Sauté onion 2 minutes. Drain chicken, reserving marinade. Add chicken to skillet; stir-fry until it

begins to brown. Add red pepper, chilies and marinade; cook 2 minutes. Stir in almonds. Serve immediately over shredded lettuce and top with tomatoes and avocado.

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Mano Thillainathan (Scotiabank) and wife, Srimal Abeyawardene-Editor-Sri Lanka Reporter, Thamilar Senthamarai Editor Kanaga Arasaratnam and his wife Rajee



Mrs. Stan, Mr. Stan Antony (Chairman TVI & CMR) & Rahulan Sana of TVI & CMR



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Ken Kirupa (Director-CTCC) and his daughter Dinoba (Volunteer)



Carlton Paul (RBC) & Bab Rafizadeh (Genworth) standing PJ Shanthan (Real Estate), Darish & Silva Nadesan (Both-Senior Mortgage Specialists, RBC)



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Sri Suppiramaniam, Harry Jegathan (VP-PC Riding), K. K. Li (CEO-Yeehong Rehab), Hon. John Tory, MPP and Leader PC, Mrs. Li, Duncan Gabriel (PC Member)



Raja Mahendran (Partner-Homelife GTA), Kathir Subramaniam (Gnanams Studio) & Umesh Sivakanthan (Bowlerama) and friends



Karu Kandiah (Real Estate Broker), Senthil Chelliah (Akhavan Publications), Manuel Jesudasan (Barrister & Solicitor) & Sri Thambirajah (Sterling Mortgages)

Photos by: Giree Gnanendran



Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce

8th Annual

WALK-A-THON 2007

*In aid of
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Sunday, June 03, 2007

8:00 am - 12:45 pm 4 Km. Walk

Kids Town Water Park

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Canadian Tamil community in Toronto raises \$ 100,000 through Walkathon for Centenary Hospital's New Birthing Centre



One Hundred Thousand Dollars were raised last Sunday by members of the Canadian Tamil community in Toronto for the Centenary Hospital's new Birthing Centre through a Walkathon. The Chairperson for the Baby Steps Walkathon was one of the Directors of the Hospital Foundation, Mr. Kula Sellathurai.

Several hundreds of people from the Canadian Sri Lankan community along with their friends, associates and families from all Canadians converged at the Malvern Town Centre last Sunday morning to show their interest and keenness for a Walkathon to raise funds for Rouge Valley System's Centenary Hospital's new Birthing and Newborn Centre.

The new Centre will be a boon to mothers and will better reflect a birthing experience respecting a mother's choice allowing her and her

family to remain in one private room for delivery and recovery.

People from all walks of life and different ages gathered at the Malvern shopping Mall from early morning to take part in the Walk from the Town Centre to the Centenary Hospital. A welcome speech to the people assembled was made by Mr. Kula Sellathurai who spearheaded this Walkathon campaign with other members of the Hospital Foundation. A glimpse of traditional Tamil culture was displayed at the event when several drum and naathaswara artists preceded the procession playing instrumental music all along the Walkathon route.

The Walkathon ended at the Hospital premises where a ceremony was held to thank those who participated and supported the walkathon. The event was sponsored by TD Canada Trust, one of Canada's leading Banks.



Participants at the Walkathon begin their walk towards the Centenary Hospital



Playing of Traditional Tamil Drum and Naathaswaram music precedes the procession



Mr. Kula Sellathurai - Chairperson-Walkathon with Wayne Arthurs-M.P.P. for Pickering, Tom Atkins-Rouge Valley Hospital Foundation, Darryl Robertson, Branch Manager-TD Bank (Markham & Lawrence), two young participants, Sanjay and Sophia Sugumar & Hon. Mary Anne Chambers, MPP, Minister for Children & Youth Services.

Photos by: Ganesh Ganesendran



Mavill Vasantham, organized by Delft Citizens committee in Canada, held at Sir John A. MacDonald Institute auditorium on Saturday May 5, 2007.



Canada-Sri Lanka Business Council elects New Office-Bearers for 2007/2008

Canada-Sri Lanka Business Council elected Ms. Louise Roberge, President of the Tea Association of Canada, as the President of the Council for the year 2007/2008 at the AGM held on April 21, 2007. She takes over from Mr. Kula Sellathurai who was the President for the past two years.

The following are the Directors/Office bearers of the Council for the year 2007/2008:

- President: Ms. Louise Roberge
- Vice-Presidents: Nirantha De Silva & Ganesan Sugumar
- Secretary: Upali Obeyesekere
- Treasurer: Priyantha Gunaratne
- Director, Membership: Nalaka Weerasinghe
- Directors-at-Large: Mohan Perera, Suresh Kumar Subramaniam & Sharmila Perera
- Hony. Auditor: Krishan Suntharalingam CA
- Legal Counsel: Ms. Thushari Suduwelkanda

Sri Lankan Tamil undertakes fast to protest against suffering of Tamils in North-East Sri Lanka

Dr. Sri B. Sri-Skanda-Rajah, a Canadian Sri Lankan Tamil undertook a six-day fast last month to show solidarity and share the pain and suffering of the Tamil people in the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka. The fast undertaken by Dr. Sri was a spiritual exercise that transcended partisan politics.

The six day fast ended with a multi-faith prayer meeting at the Kandasamy Temple in Scarborough. Addressing the people who gathered

at the Temple Dr. Sri remarked that the fast was a simple sacrifice on his part to portray to the people of this country the sufferings of his people in Sri Lanka.

It must be remembered that Dr. Sri, as a young man of 19 saved the lives of nearly 100 Tamils during the 1958 riots in Sri Lanka by giving refuge to them in his home and keeping away the rioters from attacking these innocent people.

Yoga-thon for Schizophrenia

Photos taken at event held on Sunday, April 22, 2007 at CBC Atrium, 250 Front Street W, Toronto



Preetha



Handsatand

SACEM Celebrates 2007 Thondu Malarchi Vizha



Mr. Augustine Jeyanathan, one of the founder members of SACEM, addressing the guests while members of the Canadian Medical Dental Development Association/MIFT led by Dr. C.P. Giri, Dr. Thangaroopan, Dr. Rajendra, Dr. Kirupa, Dr. Umesh Rayar & Dr. Shanthakumar, Dr. Sivanesan (Behind Dr. Shanthakumar)

Volunteerism was the main theme at the 2007 Annual Dinner Celebrations held by SACEM on April 13th at the Nu Royal Palace Banquet Hall. SACEM is an organization run by volunteers who contribute their time and talents to address the concerns of the ever-growing Tamil society in Toronto.

The following organizations and individuals were felicitated and honoured at the function:

- **Canadian Medical Dental Development Association/MIFT**, for the noble spirit of service beyond the call of duty.
- **University of Toronto Tamil Studies Co-ordinating Committee**, for the youth initiative that inspires the total community
- **Tamil Studies Conference**

Organizing Committee for keeping a glow the ancestral Tamil tradition

- **Mrs. Gladys Jeyarane Hoole**, a friendly caregiver to the helpless
- **Mr. Naga Ramalingam**, a pioneer and Leader of health Education in the Community
- **Mr. M. Velauthapillai**, a large hearted, faithful, ever reliable

personality. Mr. Jeyasingh President (2007/2008) extended a sincere thank you to all sponsors and volunteers who helped to make the Function a success. A colorful Souvenir was also published in connection with the event.

(Photo courtesy: Quintus T)

Accreditation Assistance Access Centre opened in Scarborough for Newcomer Professionals & Trades People



Members of the staff of the Centre seen at the official opening event.

The formal opening of a Centre for Information & Accreditation Planning for new comer professionals and Trained people took place on 2nd May in Scarborough amidst a representative gathering.

The Centre has been a long-felt need among new immigrants who wish to obtain professional recognition in Canada. This service is offered to all residents in Scarborough & York at no cost. The program is funded by the Government of Canada under the Employment Ontario programs.

Internationally Trained Professionals/Trades People are considered as those who obtained their Degrees/Diplomas and/or Certificates outside Canada. AAAC will assist

you with the development of your Accreditation Portfolio & Action Plans. In this way, the Centre assists you to achieve your career goals. Clients will be provided an orientation session and later referred to other employment agencies for further assistance. The Centre provides service with optional action plans leading to job access, employment gain and retention.

Among guests present at the formal opening was Mr. Brad Duguid-Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, members of the Media and other dignitaries. The Centre is located at 2100, Ellesmere Rd, #120, Scarborough and can be reached at 416-439-4369.

Manuel Jesudasan's "Vayathu Pathinaaru" (Age Sixteen) Book release function



Author Mahesh Jesudasan (second from Left) is seen with Mr. Kathir Thurai Sam (function organizer), Mr. Pon Kanagasabapathy (former Principal Mahajana College), writer A. Muthulingam and Kavignar Kandavaram

Mr. Manuel Jesudasan is better known to most of us as a successful Attorney-At-Law. But his hidden talent as an able short-story writer was revealed last Sunday when his collection of short stories titled "Vayathu Pathinaaru (Age sixteen)" was released to the public at a function held at the St. Maria Goretti School Hall.



Dr. Indran Asirvatham receiving the first copy from the author Manuel Jesudasan

The central theme running through the list of stories in "Vayathu Pathinaaru" is the experiences of immigrants from Sri Lanka in a new land of adoption where both the culture and climate are different to their country of origin. The collection contains eight different stories written in an easy and lucid style gripping the readers' interest from the beginning. Each story portrays the actual happenings in an average family and how the characters adjust themselves to the changing situations.

The function was well attended and the book was reviewed by persons of eminence versed in short story writing and reviewing. The Tamil cultural bondage and interest woven within the Jesudasan family was seen in the participation of his wife and children who joined him at the function in the welcome address, singing of the National anthem and a dance performance by one of his daughters.

Senthamarai which celebrated its 12th Anniversary last month. The function was held at the Winston Churchill College Auditorium to a well attended audience.

Mr. Kandasamy Sivapragasam, former Chief-Editor of the "Virakesari" Newspaper, premier Tamil Daily in Sri Lanka, was felicitated as a guest of honour at the function. Mr. Sivapragasam in his speech referred to the trying conditions Publishers experience in bringing out a Newspaper uninterruptedly and

the troubled times Journalists in Sri Lanka face today.

Both Senthil and Charlie kept the audience laughing with their hilarious dialogue while Jey Sri and Naresh Iyer rendered popular film-songs. They were ably supported by the Chennai Rhythms Musical group. Dance recitals performed by students of Kalaimaniam under the tutelage of Ms. Kiranjana Chandru were well appreciated by the audience.

12th Anniversary Celebrations of Thamilar Senthamarai Newspaper

South Indian Film star comedians Senthil & Charlie together with popular playback singers Jey Sri and Naresh Iyer were the main attractions at the evening entertainment hosted by popular Tamil Newspaper Thamilar





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WATERLOO REGION NEWS

Waterloo Region Tamils elect new representatives

Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo region got fresh members to its new executive committee. The Annual General Meeting was held on April 22 at the Delta Hotel, Kitchener. A large member turnout was encouraging and excellent.

The Secretary, Mrs. Dharini Sivakumar welcomed all members and read the annual report. The highlight of the report was the Tamil Cultural Nite 2006 and "Curry Leaf" – South Asian Cooking with Flare during the Tapestry Festival in Kitchener. She emphasised the need for all the members to work together to be in the mainstream. The association has been well recognised by the City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, United Way and other Multicultural organisations.

The President, Mr. Suresh Abraham stressed the need to promote our culture and heritage to local Canadians and to our next generation. He thanked the community for giving him the support during last two years and promoting our culture. Mr. Bala Thambipillai, the treasurer read-out the financial report.

The general membership elected the new executive committee for the year 2007/09.

President - Mr. Sivakumar Somasundram (Kumar)

Vice President -

Mrs. Indra Logendran

Secretary -

Mrs. Rajivi Nadarajah

Treasurer -

Mr. Bala Thambipillai

Joint Secretary -

Mr. Prakash Venkataraman
Joint Treasurer -
Mr. Nagul Sundram

Committee Members

Prof. Pala kannappan
Mr. Suresh Abraham
Mr. Dennis Loyola
Mr. Thivaker Athithan
Mr. Rajanikanth Ruthiran
Mr. Ventkat Ramachandran
Auditor: Mr. Ram Ramdoss

Tamil Cultural Association was established in 1989 to represent the Tamil community of the City of Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge and Guelph. A wide variety of members from Sri Lanka, South India and Malaysia represent the membership. It promotes Arts, Culture and Language in the region.



Waterloo Regional community celebrate "Tamil New Year"

For the Tamils whose calendar is based on the solar year, the New Year, falls on the first day of the month Chitthirai (in mid April, usually the 13th or 14th).

The sun, after six months of shining in the Southern Hemisphere, appears over the equator on March 21 and continues its apparent movement north of the equator. South India, is in the Northern Hemisphere and the approach of the sun appears to be the main reason for the selection of Chitthirai (April) as the first month of the New Year.

"Chitthirai Puthandu" – the Tamil New Year in the Waterloo Region was celebrated at the Delta Hotel on Saturday, April

22nd in Kitchener by the Tamil Cultural Association of Waterloo Region (TCAWR). The association membership combines the City of Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge and Guelph. The festival was colourful and traditional – featuring a variety of entertainment programs followed by a sumptuous feast.

The celebration was officially opened by the incumbent president Mr. Sivakumar Somasundram. He made a brief presentation of the activities of the association and welcomed the members. The Secretary, Mrs. Rajivi Nadarajah welcomed all guest and explained the significance of Tamil New Year. Her elo-

quent speech and contents made everyone recollect their memory of the celebrations when they were in Sri Lanka or South India. Additionally, the speech helped the younger generation understand the Tamil tradition, heritage and the significance of our new year.

The program started with Devotional songs and Thiruppugazh by Meera and Lakshmi Sivakumar. It was followed by a Bharatha Natyam performance by Ragavi Gnanasegar and Viveka Uruthirathan.

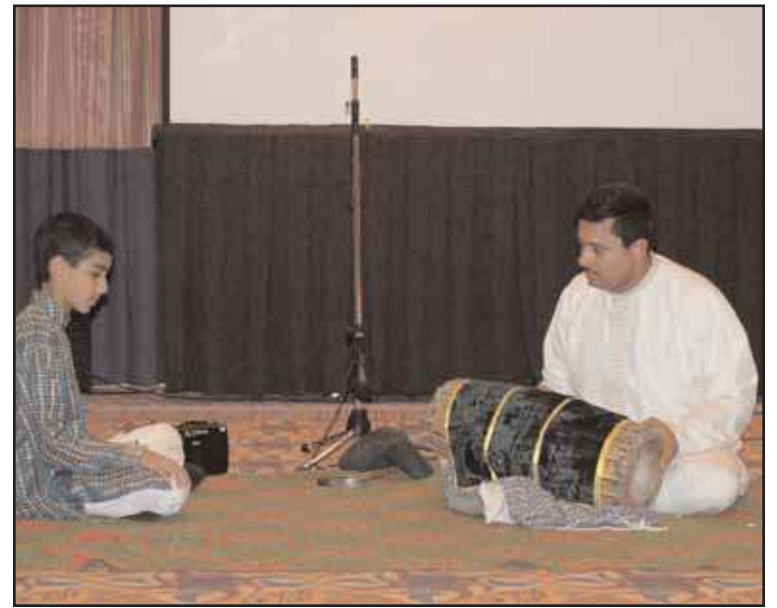
In keeping with the tradition of inviting other communities to participate in Tamil events TCAWR invited the local Rajasthani com-

munity to give a folk dance performance. The dancers were dressed in colourful glass work beaded dress. Their fast movements and rhythm were well choreographed and breathtaking. Next, Nithya and Anjali Abraham performed Piano and Violin. Western music with Tamil culture was a treat to the audience. Selvi Radhika Ravi sang beautifully. Her talent was appreciated by everyone because she does not have a guru of her own. Siva and Prakesh Venkatraman helped her with Miruthangam.

One of the most eye-catching programs of the evening was a dance performance by the Students of Selvi Sureshwaren of

Sri Abiramy Dance Academy of Waterloo. The colourful red and green Bharatha Natyam costume with glittering jewellery and the skill of the dancers made their dance a wonderful way to end the celebrations.

Waterloo region is the home for a large Tamil community outside of GTA. A large turnout of Sri Lankans, South Indians and Canadians reflected the passion and enjoyment of the Tamil culture that is present in our community. The members enjoyed food and a Tamil Movie after the program. The admission for the event was free and fully sponsored by the TCAWR.



U.S. envoy visits Jaffna

The United States will try to help solve some of the problems suffered by civilians living on a war-ravaged peninsula in northern Sri Lanka, a senior U.S. diplomat said on May 9th during a visit to discuss the country's sputtering peace process.

Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher traveled to the

Jaffna peninsula on Wednesday, a predominantly ethnic Tamil area, where he met with local government, military and civic leaders.

"I have had a very interesting visit and spoke to a lot of people about the situation here, trying to understand the difficulties people face," Boucher told reporters.



U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Ambassador Richard Boucher, left, receives a petition from a Tamil woman, Ranganathan Visalalechchime, whose son Ranganathan Ranjan is missing since February, in Jaffna.

[Photo By Vincent Jeyan, Courtesy of AP via Yahoo! News]

Shell raises gas prices in Lanka after LTTE attack

Anglo-Dutch gas firm Shell has raised its retail prices in Sri Lanka by four per cent following an air attack by rebel Tamil Tigers on their storage facility, officials said.

After the increase in prices, which will be effective from May 26, a 13-kg cylinder of Liquefied Petroleum Gas will cost Rs 998, up from Rs 960 at present.

The storage facility of Shell was hit by a Tamil Tiger air attack on April 28. Two buildings were damaged in the attack. The storage tanks, however, were not affected. Shell officials said they had difficulties in distribution of gas because supplies could not be

brought in from the port due to long holidays at the end of April and the start of this month.



In Memoriam: Dr. G.V. Loganathan

The King of Fluids. Dr. L. These are just a few of the names by which Dr. G.V. Loganathan was affectionately known to his students and colleagues. But no matter how they addressed him, they all knew him first and foremost as a brilliant educator.

Born in the southern Indian city of Chennai, the 53-year-old Loganathan began his days as a civil engineer at Madras University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1976, and continued on to get his master's from the Indian Institute of Technology two years later. He then pursued and received a doctorate from Purdue University in 1982 and promptly began his 25-year tenure as a professor at Virginia Tech.

"He was the ideal professor in my mind," said colleague Randel Dymond, associate professor of civil engineering and director of the Center for Geospatial Information Technology. "He gave us a role model to look up to in terms of the way he handled his classes and his students."

Loganathan was known by students and colleagues alike for his high degree of organization and expert knowledge of subject matter.

"He came to class prepared every time," said Todd Hunter, a sophomore civil engineering major. "There was not one class period where he came to class unprepared. He was 100 percent every day."

Loganathan also distributed a genuine concern for the success of his students in the classroom. "He was kind and smiling in doing his best to ensure that every student could follow and understand the materials in class clearly," Juneseok Lee, a Ph. D. student who worked under Loganathan

for five years, said in an email.

"He made everything so obvious," Hunter said. "If anyone was confused, he would stop and go over a problem again from the beginning. He made it so that everyone knew what they were doing and why they were doing it."

Loganathan's passion for knowledge was the driving force behind his teaching.

"The best part about Dr. Loganathan's class was that he didn't just teach the class, he learned from it too," Hunter said.

His excellence in the classroom was rewarded with numerous awards and accolades, including receiving four Certificate of Teaching Excellence awards from the College of Engineering (1992, 1996, 1998, and 2001), Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1998, and the 2006 W.E. Wine Award for Excellence in Teaching.

One of his defining characteristics was his kindness and concern towards all of those he encountered. Dr. William Knocke, Head of the Civil Engineering Department, characterized Loganathan in a tribute speech as "a gentle and humble man who treated all he encountered with respect and compassion."

This assertion was personified in Dr. Loganathan by one instance in particular, when colleague Randel Dymond's father was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

"He volunteered to take over my classes immediately," Dymond said. "He was a true giant." Such selflessness and sacrifice was par for the course for Dr. Loganathan.

On the morning of April 16, 2007, G.V. Loganathan passed away; a victim of a tragic event that has left a mark on this campus of Virginia Tech and all those who call it home that will remain



Professor G.V. Loganathan [April 8, 1954 – April 16, 2007]

Loganathan hailed from Karatadipalayam of Gobichettipalayam Taluk in Erode district in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. He completed his Bachelor of Engineering at PSG College of Technology affiliated to Madras University in 1976. He later did his M. Tech. at Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur and received a doctorate from Purdue University in Indiana.

for years to come. However, Dr. Loganathan left a mark of his own. You have to look close to see it, but there isn't any doubt that it's there. It's right in plain sight. Right there, in the hearts and minds of all of his colleagues, in the thousands of students he taught over his 25 years in Blacksburg, and most of all, in his family. It's as complex as the water distribution systems he specialized in during his career, and as simple as a friendly smile or familiar embrace. His legacy will continue on, so long as there is something to be learned, some problem to be solved and some person to help.

While it does, so too will G.V. Loganathan live on, a brilliant educator, devoted family member and friend to everyone possible. [www.collegiatetimes.com, Newspaper of Virginia Tech University]

Canada's New Government Celebrates Asian Heritage Month

The Honourable Jason Kenney, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), today invited Canadians to join in celebrating Asian Heritage Month during the month of May.

"I invite all Canadians to join in the celebrations, and in so doing, to reflect upon the significant ways in which Asian Canadians have helped shape our nation," said Secretary of State Kenney. "Canada's multiculturalism has been strengthened by those with ancestry tied to a vast and diverse Asian region that spans Central and West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. In 2001, Canada was home to more than 3,000,000 people that have personal ties with this region, and with Canada becoming a home to more Asian newcomers than ever in the past, the contributions of Asian Canadians will continue to grow."

May was officially declared

Asian Heritage Month in 2001. This year, Canada's New Government will launch Asian Heritage Month celebrations on May 3, on Parliament Hill. This event is being presented in partnership with the Ottawa Asian History Month Society.

Secretary of State Kenney will also participate in community screenings of a new documentary, I am the Canadian delegate, produced and directed by Mr. Wesley Lowe. The film documents the life of Mr. Douglas Jung, a World War II veteran, and the first Chinese-Canadian Member of Parliament. "We are proud to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 and the enfranchisement of Chinese Canadians, as well as the 50th anniversary of the election of the first Chinese-Canadian Member of Parliament, Mr. Douglas Jung, who was elected as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party."



Many different organizations throughout Canada have planned an exciting array of activities in honour of Asian History Month. For more information, visit the Canadian Heritage website for a list of activities and events across the country.

http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/multi/asiatic/index_e.cfm

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CANADIAN TAMIL' S CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CELEBRATES 10th ANNUAL AWARDS GALA

April 21, 2007: The Canadian Tamils' Chamber of Commerce celebrated its 10th Annual Awards Gala Ceremony at the Hilton Suites Hotel in Toronto Markham on April 21, 2007. CTCC has fostered entrepreneurship in the Canadian Tamil community for the last 16 years. The Awards Gala is



symbolic of how members of the Tamil community are contributing immensely to the very fabric that makes up Canada's multicultural society.

Several distinguished guests were in attendance. Federal Minister for Human Resources and Social Development, Hon. Monte Solberg, was the Chief Guest. The Guests of Honor included, Ontario Minister for Government Services Hon. Gerry Phillips, Ontario Conservative

Opposition leader Hon. John Tory, and Ontario Minister for Children and Youth Services Hon. Mary Anne Chambers.

Mr. Logan Velumailum, President of the CTCC, welcomed everyone to the event: "This is our sweet sixteen. This night is a celebration of fulfilled dreams and

continuing aspirations. Stories of individual success fill this room in its entirety. We are gathered here today to celebrate your achievements. But equally, this night is to celebrate the Chamber, and all of you who make up this organization."

Hon. Minister Solberg brought greetings from the Prime Minister: "He has asked that I bring greetings on his behalf to recognize not only the Tamil Chamber of Commerce 10th Anniversary

Awards Gala Dinner, as important as that is. But he also asked that I bring greetings this evening to acknowledge the tremendous contribution the Tamil Community to this country, not only for the economic contribution you make to this country, but to the contribution you make as citizens, the cultural contribution you make that makes Canada such a great country."

Hon. Minister Gerry Phillips shared his experiences with the Tamil Community: "One of the schools in my area is called L'Amaroueux Collegiate; probably the best honour you can get is to be valedictorian. 3 of the last 4 valedictorians in that school were from the Tamil community. My own staff I have 10 staff, and 2 of them are from the Tamil community. That's 20 percent. Why do I hire them, because they are the best and brightest".

Hon. John Tory talked about his trip to Sri Lanka. He described the contribution of the Tamil business community to the greater Canadian economy: "You are through your efforts, through your excellence, creating jobs, creating employment and economic activity. That employment and economic activity creates money for the healthcare, and roads and services that the government provides".

Since its inauguration, CTCC has awarded 46 winners in various categories. This year the Chamber recognized six entrepreneurs for service and contribution in the business world. The distinguished award-winning recipients for 2007 are:

Best Entrepreneur: Sinnedurai Jeyakumar, Sriram



Sivagnanam and Sundaramoorthy Vinayagamoorthy, co-owners of Innovative Detailing Services Inc. sponsored by RBC and presented by Regional Vice President Lisa Gallacher.

Young Entrepreneur Award: Bharathy Matheeswaran, co-owner of Alankar Décor, sponsored by Scotiabank and presented by District Vice President Christine Williams.

Award of Excellence: Santha Panchalingam, owner of Santha's

The Scarborough Hospital Foundation Vice President Christine Williams and Hon. Mary Ann Chambers, Ontario Minister for Children and Youth Services.

Best Woman Entrepreneur Award: Logi Mariathan, a highly regarded Bridal Consultant. Sponsored by TD Canada Trust and presented by Senior Vice President Jim Coccimiglio.

Most Outstanding Community Service Person: Dr. Pushpa and Frank Seevaratnam, co-founders



Electrical and Plumbing Services, sponsored by IICI Bank and presented by Vice President Retail Banking Rajesh Ramakrishnan.

Most Outstanding Professional Award: I. Francis Xavier, a renowned and celebrated human rights lawyer and activist, sponsored by CTCC and presented by

of Home for Hope, which has helped rebuild the lives of many Tsunami survivors in Sri Lanka, sponsored by TD Canada Trust and presented by Senior Vice President Jim Coccimiglio.

To see the photos from the event, visit <http://ctcc.ca/photogallery.htm>.



UW students shine in Putnam math and ACM computer programming competitions

WATERLOO, Ont. (Tuesday, April 3, 2007) -- A University of Waterloo mathematics student was the top Canadian in North America's William Lowell Putnam Mathematics Competition, while a UW team placed 12th overall.

In another prestigious competition, the recent ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) International Collegiate Programming Contest, a UW team finished among the top 10 and was the leading Canadian team in the event.

Ralph Furmaniak, a computer science student, was the highest ranking student at a Canadian institution, finishing 11th overall in the Putnam competition. As well, UW math students Tor Myklebust and Xiao Wang received honourable mentions for their high scores.

The Waterloo students competed against 3,640 students from 508 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. Since 1985, Waterloo has been consistently in the top tier of the

Putnam competition. The event tests originality as well as technical competence in the field of mathematics.

The UW team, made up of Furmaniak, Elyot Grant and David Rhee placed 12th overall. They were coached by Stephen New, a professor of pure mathematics. Last year, a UW team placed fifth in the event.

"Once again, Canadian students have distinguished themselves in the annual Putnam Mathematics Competition," says Edward Barbeau, chair of the mathematical competitions committee of the Canadian Mathematical Society.

"Four Canadian universities, McGill, Toronto, Waterloo and British Columbia, had among them 14 students who placed among the top 200. Half of these came from Waterloo."

This year, the top five teams were Princeton University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Toronto and the University of

Chicago.

The 67th annual Putnam Mathematical Competition was held on campuses throughout North America last Dec. 2. The test is administered by the Mathematical Association of America and results were made available this week.

In another UW achievement, a UW team placed ninth overall in the world finals of the 31st annual ACM international contest held in Tokyo on March 15.

The UW team joined MIT and California Institute of Technology as the only North American university teams finishing in the top 12 in the 88-team competition. Team members Myklebust, Simon Parent and Malcolm Sharpe were coached by Gordon Cormack, a professor of computer science.

"Waterloo has qualified 15 years in a row for the ACM ICPC world finals," says Cormack. "In these 15 years, Waterloo has been world champion twice, North American champion five times and a podium finisher 12 times."

South Asian Trade Show Saturday May 12th & Sunday May 13th

The Annual South Asian Trade Show for 2007 will take place for the fifth year in succession and will be held on May 12th & 13th at the Downsview Park (Sheppard & Keele).

The main focus at this year's show which will house over 150 Trade Stalls will be attractive entertainment and games for kids. The Trade stalls will be from a representative section of Toronto's South Asian Business community and will showcase business interests in a variety of areas. The entrance fee for the Trade Show for adults will be \$ 5.00 while

ladies will be admitted free until 12.00 noon to mark Mother's Day.

On the entertainment side there will be musical shows performed by leading groups and what is significant is that these shows will be different on each day of the show. There will also be a fashion show on both days coupled with magic shows to entertain the kids. Sport fans are assured of lively and friendly games in the fields of Soccer, Volley Ball and Chess. Ample space has been provided for vehicle parking and this will be free.

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The Spring South Asian Festival gears for a grand celebration of the South Asian Heritage!



The Spring South Asian Festival, a celebration of Canada's thriving cultural diversity is scheduled

to happen during the South Asian Heritage month of May on the 19th & 20th at one of

Canada's premier trade and convention venues, the Toronto's International Centre. Raising

the bar on quality, inclusiveness and diversity, the Festival is geared to entertain, educate and

prosper the South Asian Communities of Southern Ontario.

The festival features non-stop entertainment with a focus on cultural diversity, creativity and fun; a trade show with a focus on great bargains for attendees and great sales for vendors;

kids play areas with a focus on safety, harmony and spirit; and a food court with a focus on quality, taste and variety.

With the experience of run-

ning 3 hugely successful festivals since September 2005, we've embarked on the 4th event for this spring. 80,000 plus attendees, 1,500 plus local artists,

60 plus shows, over 250 businesses, 25 plus community service organizations, 300 plus volunteers,

100 plus staff, friends and families will join in on celebrating cultural diversity at the

South Asian Festival during

the Spring Festival on the 19th & 20th of the South Asian Heritage

Month. What makes this festival much anticipated by the attendees is that this will be the only festival of its kind organized by TVI&CMR this year.

One of the newest additions at this festival is the Robotics competition. This competition

and show case of technological creativeness and wisdom provides a platform for tomorrow's

leaders of science and tech ranging from ages 8-16 to demonstrate their creations.

This year's festival highlights many multicultural entertainment shows.

For media related inquiries, please contact Ragavan Paranchothy at 647 221 0263

pragavan@cmr.fm

For further event info please visit our website at www.businessfestival.ca

Some Events in Spring South Asian Festival

Zero Gravity Circus

This professional troupe of contemporary Circus artists offer high-impact solo acts, full-length shows or site animation using traditional and contemporary circus-style disciplines. Acrobats, aerialists, fire artists and stilts are just a few of the many nature defying stunts they perform.

Humming Bird Tassa Band & Dances

The Hummingbird Tassa Group was started in Trinidad in 1954. This talented family band consistently won every major Tassa competition and was for many years the most sought-after Tassa band in Trinidad and Tobago. The Caribbean community in Canada unanimously acclaims the Humming bird Tassa Group as the best of all Tassa bands in Canada.

The Magic of Travis & Barbara Ratnam

Travis & Barbara have presented their unique brand of magic to audiences all over the globe. Combining innovative large scale illusion with dynamic theatrics have made them a favorite across North America. Be prepared to witness an intimate moment of grand illusion! They have left many major corporations including Microsoft, Bell, Ontario Power Generation, The TTC and many more bewildered and awestruck with their illusions. These returning stars of the South Asian Festival bring a new chest of untouched tricks!

Muhtadi & The World Drummers

Muhtadi, a spectacular percussionist, teaches African drumming in an attempt to quench his insatiable thirst for the rhythmic excitement of African drums. His troupe Muhtadi & World Drummers, has seen many stages and crowds of varying capacities. This unique form of music gets a new flavor under the guidance of Muhtadi. An electrifying performance is in store from Muhtadi & the World Drummers!

Baby Boyz

The Baby Boyz Dance Group, has been on the urban scene for over four years claiming numerous accolades and accomplishments. Their goal is to be Canada's first dance group to make it to the top of the urban dance industry. With determination and perseverance to make its dream a reality, the group stands second to none, professional, creative, entertaining and believes that only the best is good enough.

Bassment Sound Crew

Bassment Sound Crew is a music group that experiments and practices new styles of music. Bassment Sound Crew capitalizes on the inevitable constant revolution in the music industry to deliver positive messages to the youth community. It practices and experiments with fusions, remixes and remakes with a clear goal of differing from the norm.

Cine dance by Tarana Dance Company

Tarana dance company, made up of talented and trained dancers in the field of Indian dances is one of the most outstanding and unique performing

groups. Combining classical, folk and contemporary Indian dance techniques in their choreography, they have gained recognition in the community as a Dance Company with a "Touch of Class".

The Artistic Director

- Mrs Deviekha Chetram, is from Guyana and trained in Kathak under Sri Pratap Pawar and the Late Pandit Durgalal. She has been a dance instructor since 1989.

Sanskriti Dance and Yoga Center

Bollywood Cine dance Maiyya Maiyya, Dil Mein Baji Guitar & Barso Re, Kathak based Dance, and Aaj Ki Raat Bollywood dance are presented by Puja Amin. Puja Amin has worked with some of Bollywood's premium personalities like Sanjay Leela Bhansali, Salman Khan, Aishwarya Rai, Lata Mangeshkar and others on film sets, directorial campaigns, dance tours and concerts around India and the world. Under Puja's direction, Sanskriti Arts has seen many heights and accolades including Kesri Youth Award, GOLD Championship, Entertainment Challenge Championship and many more.

Contemporary dance by Menaka Thakkar Dance Company

For over 30 years, the Menaka Thakkar Dance Company has been a unique treasure in Canada's dance world. Canada's oldest Indian dance company exposes audiences to the stunning beauty of traditional Indian dance, while remaining open to other dance cultures in the creation of new works.

The company uses the language of many dance styles to reinterpret ancient themes and introduce contemporary concepts. The Menaka Thakkar

Dance Company and its Artistic Director, Menaka Thakkar, have earned a reputation for artistic excellence, presenting works that are visually spectacular and infused with drama.

"Snake" Classical dance by Usha Nageswaran's "Nila Dance Academy"

Hailing from Sri Lanka, Usha Nagendran, the artistic director of Nila Dance Academy, has been a dance instructor for over a decade. With numerous titles and accolades to show off with, Usha and Nila Dance Academy have produced and staged several contemporary dance pieces.

South Asian Classical Dance by Kumuthini Srikanth's "Kalabavanam"

Naatiya Kalaimani Srimathi Kumuthini Srikanth commenced her initial Bharatha Studies under the profound expert in Bharatha Naatiyam, the 'Nadana Perasaan' Late Mr. Kalaichelvan Erampu Suppaiah. Currently in Canada, she continues to provide dedicated and professional service to the community in Bharatha Naatiyam. Kumuthini Srikanth's Kalabavanam troupe is set to enthrall the audience with their rendition of Bharatha Natyam.

Welcome Dance by Rajani Balendran's "Abinayalaya"

Rajani Balendra received the title of "Aadal Kalaimani", following the completion of her dance training in Sri Lanka and India. She was a dance teacher at Hindu

Ladies College, Sri Lanka and established her own dance academy "Abinayalaya". Today in Canada, she is well recognized for her contributions and achievements as she continues to dedicate her self to teaching dance. Rajani Balendra's prudent disciples perform the eastern traditional welcoming dance.

"Shakthi Pirakirathu" Classical Dance by Maalini Pararajasingam's "Kalabavanam Naatiyashastra"

Artistic Director Malini Pararajasingam has lead Kalabavanam Naatiyashastra to a uniquely contemporary world of performing arts.

Breaking the barriers of age, Malini teaches the most intricate forms of dance to all ages and ensures that the art form reaches audiences of all ages as well. Kalabavanam has produced and staged many productions including Kamakola, Unnai Nee Arinthukol, Thani Maram, Pommattam, Vattathukkul Neengala, and Uyirmoochu.

Cine Dance by "Bollywood Grooves"

Bollywood Grooves (BG)™ is a global dance company unlike any other! Originating in London (U.K.), it has schools throughout the globe including Brazil, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland. BG has worked with MTV, BBC, Sony Television, and Zee TV to various projects and has performed on stage with with Malika Aurora, Raghav, and Malkit Singh. Bollywood Grooves is committed to spreading the love for Bollywood and Bhangra dance throughout the world.



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Monsoon Photo Journal



Youth in Peace Buiding

By Dushiyanthini Kanagasabapathipillai

The Peace building and Development Institute in Sri Lanka in partnership with Peace building and Development Institute – International Peace and Conflict Resolution Division of American University has arranged a week long training on "Youth & Conflict: Integrating Youth in Peace building Training" at Palm Village Hotel in Uswetakiyawa, North of Colombo. The training program was held from April 23rd to 27th 2007. It was the first annual International and Regional Peace building and Development training Program in Sri Lanka. Participants from all over Sri Lanka from all communities participated in the training program. The views cast by the participants are compiled and reflected here:



"Youth are the future leaders. They have to be identified and let take part in peace building. They can be manipulated easily and mis-used. The youth should be handled carefully and selected to share the space for peace. If we plant the seeds for peace in their minds, we can put the county on the path to peace. They are the key to peace of a country."

Christie Y. Jeyanandan from Batticaloa



"Youth have novel ideas and have the energy to implement their ideas. They are our future. I think youth should be entrusted with more responsibilities in peace building."

Janaki Dias from Colombo



"Youth are adventurous, and energetic. They can think with new ideas and relate easily with others in the community. Youth can break the barriers easily, unlike the adults. The chance should be given to them in building peace."

Stanislaus Nimalraj from Jaffna



"Sri Lanka will have more elders than youngsters in twenty years. We all are well aware of this issue, and the reason for it is cruel war . Therefore the youth who think about the country and the future of the development of the country should join hands in peace building, which will lead the rest of the society to think about sustainable peace."

Jeyathevan Kaarththigeyan from Trincomalee



"Youth are the backbone of a country and they are the leaders of tomorrow. They think differently and are creative, enthusiastic and more reliable to carry out certain tasks. They are the most vulnerable group, which could be easily manipulated in a conflict situation. They potentially play an important role in peace building"

Muhammed Sanoon from Valaichchenai



"The youth have the capabilities to create new thinking and make social changes, which lead to new ways for peace. They should influence the leaders, who have power in building peace. The leaders should be able to lead the society towards peace. The youth can create a relationship across dividing lines, and raise their voice for peace and against war."

A.C.M. Mahir from Kathankudy



"Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. The youth should be motivated towards peace, not towards war. The grassroots level should be brought to the mainstream, and be given a chance in national level. The youth are committed, therefore make use of the force for the betterment of the country. We have to make them feel the country is theirs, and they have a duty to commit."

Ponnuthurai Sivakumar from Kilinochchi



"Youth are the most vulnerable group in present war situation in Sri Lanka. Youth are being abducted, killed and disappeared on daily basis in Jaffna. Many youth are vacating their native land due to fear, and safety. The victims of the war can realize the brutality of the bloody war better than anybody. If the youth who suffer are given an opportunity in peace building, it will be more effective than any other initiative."

Jude Sutharshan from Jaffna



"We have to understand the differences and work together on commonalities. The youth have this capacity to work. They are very enthusiastic. We have to create an environment for them to understand and coexist for all communities to live in peace and harmony. The youth can change things, they can either make or break. The leaders should give an opportunity to the youth to take part peace building, and listen to them."

A.G. Naushad Ahmed from Pottuvil

Front-line Cancer Care Professionals Recognized for Exceptional and Compassionate Patient Care

Cancer Care Ontario Presents Human Touch Awards -

Cancer patients depend on their health care professionals to help guide and support them through this difficult time. Today, Cancer Care Ontario presents the Human Touch Awards to honour front-line cancer care professionals from across the province for providing exceptional and compassionate care to cancer patients.

"It is a privilege for me to honour these front line heroes of cancer care in Ontario," says Richard Ling, Chairman, Board of Directors, Cancer Care Ontario. "These awards acknowledge those who have gone beyond their job descriptions to extend the kind of care to patients we would all want our loved ones to receive."

All part-time or full-time health care professionals and providers who provide direct patient care at either a regional cancer centre or as part of the Regional Cancer Program including home care, palliative care, public health, community hospitals and primary care are eligible for the award.

"Every day these extraordinary teams and individuals pro-

vide high quality clinical care to patients and equally important is the personal care and kindness provided to patients as they make their way through their cancer journey," says Terrence Sullivan, PhD, President and CEO, Cancer Care Ontario.

"We congratulate and thank these individuals today for their devotion and compassion to cancer patients and their families."

The partnership between Cancer Care Ontario, government and the organizations, health professionals and front-line care providers that make up the Regional Cancer Programs are critical to providing high quality cancer care and making sure the system works for patients.

"Ontario's progress in the fight against cancer would not be possible without the work and dedication of front-line cancer care professionals and providers," said Hon. George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. "On behalf of the people of Ontario, I want to thank the award winners and congratulate them for their tremendous contributions."

Human Touch Award Winners:

- Donna Danelon, Registered Dietitian, Windsor

Regional Cancer Centre

- Breast Disease Site Team, Juravinski Cancer Centre, Hamilton Health Sciences

- Dr. Karen Mazurski, Regional Oncology Physician, Dryden Regional Health Centre, North West LHIN

- 3Z Blood Disorders Unit, McMaster University Medical Centre, Juravinski Cancer Centre, Hamilton Health Sciences

- Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Oncology/Palliative Care Team, Erie St. Clair LHIN

- Rosanne Peever-Trottier, Director of Nursing, Anson General Hospital, North East LHIN

- Dr. Dori Seccareccia, Palliative Care Physician, Princess Margaret Hospital, Toronto

- Chemotherapy Clinic Team, Centenary Site, Rouge Valley Health System, Scarborough Cancer Care Ontario is a provincial agency that steers and coordinates Ontario's cancer services and prevention efforts so that fewer people get cancer and patients receive the highest quality of care.

For further information, please contact -

Fiona Taylor
Public Affairs,
Cancer Care Ontario
Tel: (416) 971-9800 ext. 3336

Rouge doctor restores vision to child hurt in fluke accident and to 96-year-old cataract patient

- Surgeries performed by Dr. Cheskes at Rouge Valley Centenary this month -

From children to the most senior of citizens, Dr. Albert Cheskes delights in bringing his expertise to a lifespan of patients at Rouge Valley Health System.

Cheskes' 40-year practice and surgeries at Rouge Valley Centenary Hospital, in east Toronto, has run the gamut of life. Two recent patients – one age four, the other 96 – reminded him of the value of a well-rounded community hospital.

-THE FOUR YEAR OLD -

Earlier this month, four year-old Lena Wang inadvertently poked a newly-sharpened pencil into her right eye. Dr. Cheskes received a phone call at a bit after 11 p.m. "I don't get out late much anymore, but I did that night."

He rushed to Rouge Valley Centenary and met a team of nurses to assist in this urgent surgery.

"Her iris was protruding through her lacerated cornea. We needed to act fast. Another two or three hours and she would have been blind in that eye."

Mother Ellan Wang, who doesn't speak English, says through a Chinese interpreter, "I was impressed with how fast our daughter received such terrific care from Dr. Cheskes and the hospital."

Her daughter's vision is now excellent, with only four tiny sutures on her eye providing evidence of the peculiar, but potentially drastic, accident she experienced. Even now, only several days since the surgery, the sutures are not easily detectable to anyone except for perhaps, her mother, and her doctor. In time, the surgery itself will not be very evident, says Dr. Cheskes.

- THE 96-YEAR OLD -

Within a week of Lena's surgery, Dr. Cheskes helped one of the Chinese community's most senior citizens improve the quality of her life.

Lit Lan Wei, of North York, had been without sight for the last seven years when her family brought her to Dr. Cheskes' office. After an assessment he scheduled her for cataract surgery at Rouge Valley Centenary.

The cataract surgery he performed has restored her vision from "stone blind" to very good vision. "She can see, she can again cook for herself, walk unas-



sisted, groom herself. All the things a person might take for granted," he says.

"To me it was just another day at the office, you might say," notes Dr. Cheskes, who estimates he has done about 18,000 cataract surgeries.

"But to this high-functioning 96-year-old, it has restored a higher quality and greater level of independence to her life. No matter how many years I am in practice, I will always feel wonderful about what we are able to do for patients. The nurses and I just felt elated after both of these surgeries. It reminded me of the value of a good, quality community hospital."

Natalie Bubela, Vice-President of Programs and Support Services, says, "The work of Dr. Cheskes and our nurses for these two patients really exemplifies the breadth of high quality family centred care that Rouge Valley practices every day."

Rouge Valley Health System is an innovative leader in quality family centred care, with regional programs in cardiac care, mental health and paediatrics. Rouge Valley consists of several health sites, including two hospitals: Rouge Valley Centenary, in east Toronto; Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering, in the west Durham Region. Together a team of doctors including 224 general practitioners and 325 specialists, more than 1,000 nurses and many other professionals, care for a broad spectrum of health conditions. In consultation and partnership with community members, other hospitals, healthcare organizations and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Rouge Valley continues to improve its programs and create new ones catering to the needs of the growing communities of Scarborough, Ajax, Pickering and Whitby. It's in our nature to care.

www.rougevalley.ca

Nurses recognized for their just-in-time delivery

Two Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering (RVAP) registered nurses were recently given a staff recognition award for delivering a baby in a minivan parked outside the emergency department.

The Board of Directors of Rouge Valley Health System made the presentation to Mike Gorman and Mike Paetzold. They were among the team of staff who rushed outside at 4 a.m. on Jan. 20 to deliver a baby who was already on her way into the world from her parent's minivan, parked in the ambulance bay at RVAP.

Within seconds of their arrival at the hospital, parents Matthew

and Lindsay Wildfong, of Pickering, welcomed the one-week early arrival of their daughter Stevie, weighing in at a healthy eight pounds.

"The baby was half-way out and crying," remembers Gorman. "It's great for us to be recognized, but as clichéd as it sounds, we were just doing our jobs."

Matthew Wildfong says that the quality of care by Gorman, Paetzold and the RVAP team made a potentially difficult experience run quite smoothly. "I really think it's great that they're being recognized. I was pretty frantic, but everyone who helped handled

it very well and so fast. They were great to us."

Rouge Valley Health System is an innovative leader in quality family centred care, with regional programs in cardiac care, mental health and paediatrics. Rouge Valley consists of several health sites, including two hospitals: Rouge Valley Centenary, in east Scarborough; Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering, in the west Durham Region. Together a team of doctors including 224 general practitioners and 325 specialists, more than 1,000 nurses and many other professionals, care for a broad spectrum of health conditions. In consultation and partnership with community members, other hospitals, healthcare organizations and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Rouge Valley continues to improve its programs and create new ones catering to the needs of the growing communities of Scarborough, Ajax, Pickering and Whitby. It's in our nature to care.

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Paradise Lost & Paradise Regained

Travel experiences of A Hyphenated Canadian - Raymond Rajabalan

It is unfortunate that many of us including myself fail to appreciate the comforts and facilities we are blessed with in this beautiful country of Canada. I realized this when I recently visited Sri Lanka—once described as pearl of the Indian Ocean—now referred to variously as Fractured paradise, A glimpse of Hell or A tear drop of the world, because of the serious human rights violations, abductions, killings and disappearances rampant in that country.

Visiting my motherland after a relatively long interval of more than two decades, I was appalled by the state of affairs prevailing in the island nation, once the envy of many for its pristine beaches, unparalleled scenic beauty and its unique fauna and flora coupled with lush verdant vegetation.

During the last leg of my journey to my mother land while the air craft was about to land, the passengers most of them returning from a middle east country burst into baila songs, shouting at the top of their voices with scant regard to the comfort of the others. This unacceptable behavior of these fellow passengers most of them evidently belonging to the majority community returning for holidays - was an indication of the variety of unpleasant and unruly situations I was to experience during my month long stay in the country.

When the air craft landed with

a slow thud and taxied towards the terminal I had butterflies in my stomach, with the anticipation of seeing the faces of my family members and relatives gathered to welcome me.

Arriving at the International Airport in Katunayake, I could not believe the state of poor maintenance where there was dirt all over the place with piles of garbage strewn around .It was then I began to appreciate the unparalleled beauty of the state of the art Pearson International Airport in Toronto and its perfect cleanliness. To add insult to injury, the custom and immigration officials did their job half heartedly just waving us through the security check points .Further more, the gun toting soldiers stationed around the perimeter of the air port instilled in me a feeling of uneasiness and apprehension.

On reaching the exterior of the airport all around was bubbling a cacophony of voices, people shouting at the top of their voices while a number of vehicles were running around flouting every traffic rules. The journey to my residence in Colombo was a real nightmare with hundreds of cars and mini vans criss- crossing the narrow winding roads which had seen better days .Every time our van screeched to a halt or tried avoiding an oncoming three wheeler – known locally as Auto-my heart was in my mouth .Having used to driving on well maintained multi lane roads in Toronto, it was impossible for me to stomach this confusion and dis-

orderliness. All along the way I was shocked beyond belief to watch huge mountains of garbage dumped at various spots in close vicinity of civilian residences. The stench emanating from the heaps of dirt was revolting .What a sharp contrast this was to the efficient system of regular removal of garbage from residences in Canada.

Reaching my temporary residence, I was overjoyed to meet my siblings and my frail mother after a long interval of time. Later in the day I realized that the nights are not going to be that pleasant since I noticed an army of huge sized mosquitoes humming around as a prelude to their dermal attack .True to my expectations , even with the fan swirling around at high speed and with mosquito coils burning in the room I soon realized our efforts were no match to this ubiquitous insects .The following morning it dawned on me that the culprit was the stagnant drainage canals in the vicinity .I also learnt that repeated complaints to the municipality officials was of no avail and the residents have got used to living with discomfort. I was thinking how we used to get annoyed when we notice tiny flies swarming around the house during hot summer days in Canada. In sharp contrast in the very heart of Colombo, the capital, I had to put up with the unwelcome nocturnal insect visitors during the rest of our stay.

Coming out of the house in the morning, I noticed the road on which our temporary residence

was located was much narrower than it was many years ago and was zigzagging all the way. While discussing about this with a neighbour, I learnt that this was because of the fact that many of the owners of the residences have put up additional structures encroaching parts of the road, obviously with the connivance of the lowly paid corrupt local officials who would have received their due share for turning a blind eye. Multi story buildings had cropped up all over the area due to the whims and fancy of the owners with scant regard for the damage to the environment, resulting in serious congestion and inconvenience. I was wondering if there was any town planning department that existed in that country.

Later in the day, I walked up to the main road and I just could not digest the chaos that prevailed. With hundreds of vehicles literally flying past, together with dozens of three wheelers weaving around in the traffic I realized that my stay in the country was not going to be an easy one. Trying to cross the road darting across like a bunny- a habit I quickly learned from the locals- I felt as though I had completed a Himalayan feat in doing so .On a serious note, I was thanking God for blessing me with an opportunity to live in this wonderful country of Canada where every thing is so orderly. Yet we are guilty of complaining about petty things, not realizing how lucky we are compared to many in other parts of the world.

One consolation was that even with the on going ethnic war in the North and East, the people of all communities in the South were co existing trying to put up a brave face and go about attending to their daily chores.

While I was in the commercial area of Colombo I was chuckling to myself when I saw the slogan" Srilanka a land like no other". Whoever coined this phrase certainly deserves a pat on the back since it summed up the state of confusion prevailing in the land ruled by corrupt politicians

Yes, certainly no other country in the world can boast of so much violation of human rights denying the minorities even the basic rights. With people from every part of the globe co-existing in the benevolent country of Canada, it was a shame that two communities are unable to live peacefully in Sri Lanka.

Many business establishments located in Fort area in a number of majestic buildings built during British rule were in a dilapidated state due to gross negligence. I tried in vain to find a clean restaurant and finally I managed to find a very good vegetarian restaurant

run by Tamils a few miles away from Fort .Right throughout my stay I could find only a handful of decent hotels with the assistance of my friends.

The wide variety of Fresh fruits sold on the way side stalls were really delicious and that was one pleasant aspect of my visit .Meanwhile the poor state of maintenance of the fish and meat markets was revolting , to say the least.

I was shocked beyond belief to note the administrative inefficiency in the various government departments and a few financial institutions which I happened to visit .Being disproportionately over staffed due to political appointments, the lethargic attitude of the employees and their lack of dedication was clearly evident. The systematic discrimination of the minorities during the past three decades in recruiting for government jobs had taken its toll and it was plainly reflected in the way the departments were functioning .In addition with millions of rupees spent on the senseless civil war and the present government maintaining a massive a cabinet numbering over fifty, the departments are being deprived of even basic facilities, further contributing to the decreased out put.

All in all , I noticed that a majority of the civilians from all communities are still nursing the hope of attaining peace in this island nation .I noticed huge posters calling for peace plastered across Colombo while I also learnt of a large number of prayer meetings and peace rallies conducted throughout the country.

My stroll along the beaches of Colombo in the afternoon was a welcome relief from the unbearable heat .It was a great pleasure for me to watch the haze of gold, a blessing of the dying sun enveloping the area and the hundreds of people of all communities mingling feely on the beach. I was wondering to myself if and when this situation will prevail throughout the country leading to permanent peace.

While having experienced a variety of situations, including pleasant memories of visiting my family members, relatives and friends I breathed a sigh of relief when my return journey commenced from Colombo and I felt at ease only when the plane was air borne .While thanking the good Lord for protecting me throughout my stay in Sri Lanka I continued my travel to Toronto vowing never again to return to my country of birth which was, by any stretch of imagination no match to this magnanimous country of Canada.

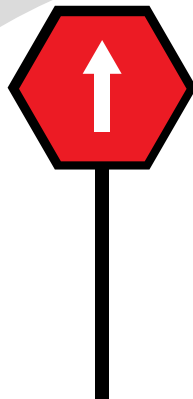
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by Anand. J

Parattai Engira

Azhagu Sundaram

Has Tamil Cinema evolved? Especially with movies like 'Mozhi' and 'Paruthi Veeran' one starts to wonder 'May be it has'. With spirited directors like Manirathnam, Shankar and a slew of talented young directors, film going audiences have started to feel that Tamil film Industry has come of age. But then the reality hits you hard with 'Parattai Engira Azhagu Sundaram'.

The first question that crosses a viewer's mind would be 'Why did they make this movie?' followed by a spate of other reason-



able questions like 'Are viewers mad?' and 'Why a remake?'

Parattai is the story of a youngster, Azhagu Sundaram, from a remote village in Tirunelveli, who reaches Chennai in search of a livelihood to support his mother after his father's death. As fate has it, he becomes a gangster and gains popularity as Parattai, in a very short time. He then develops an aversion towards lawlessness and wants to return to his mother, and the peace of his village. Circumstances however conspire to prevent him from doing that.

Meanwhile, his mother follows him to Chennai, but finds it difficult to locate him in the huge city. And so it goes on. Doesn't it already feel like a 1970's lost and found story? The story is never consistent, at times it is about misled, helpless individuals and at other times, it is about the love between a mother and a son. Finally it boils down to a disappointing climax.

Director Suresh Krishna has relied on melodrama to make up for the story's deficiencies. Poor performances add to the film's low points. This movie is apparently a remake of a Kannada Super Hit movie 'Jogi' which won lots of appreciation. It defies logic when one thinks about how this storyline could have won laurels.

Archana's performance is the biggest letdown. The national award winner could have chosen a better script for her comeback. She is believed to have fallen head over heels for this script since she was told that she would appear through out the movie. Looks like she has lost her touch with the Cine media. Dhanush, as the hero, does fairly well. Having played similar roles earlier, Meera Jasmine has perfected the bubbly bold character and provides some relief in her short role.

Debutant music director Gurukiran's music fails to create an impression. The timing of the songs in the film add to the jarring effect; there is one point where two songs are almost simultaneous.

Cinematography and Editing are the only solace to the viewers. The movie goes into flashback quite often and it has been handled deftly. However, unnecessary attempts to excite, with tilted visuals and unwanted jerks, doesn't go well with the movie.

Director Suresh Krishna has used Rajnikanth's name, in and out of context, in a big to appeal to the superstar's (who is also Dhanush's father-in-law) fans, but that is as ineffective as everything else in the movie.

All in all 'Parattai' will evoke lots of 'Korattai' (Big yawns huh.....)

Ta Ra Rum Pum

Siddharth Anand's Ta Ra Rum Pum plays on every human's ultimate fantasy to conquer against all odds and take home the trophy. Here the trophy stands as a metaphor for the realization of one's most precious dreams. And that is precisely what makes Ta Ra Rum Pum a universal subject to identify with and feel for.

As everyone expects from a Yash Raj Film, even if a story about inspiration and hope, it is bound to be lavish, stylish and commercially viable. Film is set in New York City. What's new, you ask? What is new is Anand's



vision of the most populated city of The States. Not only do you get to do some fresh sight-seeing but also innovative angles of off-

repeated locations like Brooklyn Bridge and Times Square.

Car racing is the basic premise of the story. Expectedly, there is a whole lot of vroom-vroom going on all through the movie. Rajveer aka RV (Saif Ali Khan) makes a dashing entry; a la Tom Cruise in Top Gun, helmet in hand, against the violent strumming of an electric guitar. His racing skills impress a cabbie Harry (Jaaved Jafferi in his best Gujarati speaking accent goes in for a swell image makeover) and they strike a deal with Billy Bhatia's (Bharat Dabholkar) company Speeding Saddles.

During his winning spree, the carefree RV also hits it with the fastidious Radhika (Rani Mukerji). He calls her Shona because 'it's Bong (Bengali in slang) and sweet, and so are you'. The duo, with funny hairdos, also find time to parade on the empty streets of Manhattan. Again, Anand appears to draw inspiration from another Tom Cruise flick, Vanilla Sky. The latter has Cruise running on the empty streets of Times Square, not a soul in sight.

RV proposes to Radhika with Tiffany, a Merc and a mansion in Manhattan -- all of which is irresponsibly purchased on loan and installment, if you are the one for details. Soon they have two kids, with nicknames that'd have you mistake them for a horse, Champ (Ali Haji) and Princess (Angelina Irani)

All the adulation makes RV feel over-confident about his game. In trying to fool around and entertain the crowds against his closest competition, RV makes a faulty move resulting in a major accident. After missing out on a whole year, he gets back into the action, nonetheless scarred from his previous experience. His poor performance on the track leaves him jobless, homeless and bankrupt. While RV never stepped inside a university, Radhika never finished her degree post-marriage. Silly move, we think. Lack of proper education forces the two to take up low-end jobs and shift to a rundown desi neighbourhood. While the children are made to believe their new improv-

erished status is a play and part of a reality show, Don't worry. Be happy.

Eventually, RV has to take a stand, which means an edge of the seat contest from start to finish and, of course, lots of cheering. The sentimental turn in Anand's story is heartfelt. But what is particularly appealing that none of the characters crib. Instead, they tackle every problem with resilience and humor. Sure, kids will be kids and occasionally sigh at the sight of creamy puffs and spicy hot dogs. Generally, there is a positive vibe running through this family and the film. The foursome make a happy picture hopping inside the enormous Disney store. Speaking of choreography, Vaibhavi Merchant infuses an impressive rhythm and frolic in the movements. Almost every song and



dance is a pleasure to watch.

If Salaam Namaste (Anand's directorial debut) was inspired albeit cool, Ta Ra Rum Pum is inspiring and sweet. The filmmaker has a knack for bringing wit in woe. He does that admirably. Saif Ali Khan's spontaneity is utterly disarming and distracting. He plays RV, a huge racing star, with amusement as if to say 'big deal' not losing his boyishness even during stressful times.

Rani Mukerji's Radhika is a confident lady. Self-assurance comes naturally to the actress.

Essentially, Ta Ra Rum Pum is a feel-good family entertainer with good looking actors, thrilling car chases, playful melodies (Vishal-Shekhar) and pretty visuals. Then again, there's lot more beneath. It talks about taking responsibility for one's own problems instead of finding an easy way out. It packs in a lot of optimism and grace, especially in the way new age parents are depicted. Even if in passing, the fast-growing obsession and dependency on plastic money and installment schemes is mentioned as well.

Any film that makes you feel good about life and prioritizes hope over struggle is worthwhile. Ta Ra Rum Pum brings a smile to your lips and song to your heart.

Unnale Unnale

There is considerable audience for what could be called the

'Soft Romance Melodrama' genre amongst the Tamil viewers and catering to them is cinematographer-director Jeeva with his slow, soft and feel good romantic flicks.

One such story is Unnale Unnale, a topsy turvy love fest starring Karthik (Vinay) and Jhansi (Sadha). Poles apart, Jhansi's soft, introvert nature cannot stand the extrovert, flirty, take it easy Karthik, who very easily attracts the opposite sex-intentionally or otherwise. Though he loves Jhansi sincerely, she fails to look beyond his flirty exterior and walks out on him.

After the break up, Karthik is sent on deputation to Melbourne by his employer and as always he befriends a bubbly and vivacious Deepika (Tanisha) during his short flight to Melbourne. As luck would have it Deepika turns out to be Jhansi's acquaintance.

Jhansi too shifts to Melbourne for some reason. While in Melbourne, Karthik tries his best to get back with Jhansi with Deepika's help. But the story becomes complicated when Deepika, too falls in love with him.

Though the flow of the story is a little confusing, the film ends on a mature note.

Meanwhile, some scenes have been borrowed from popular Hindi movies with no real modifications. Humour is weak. Performance wise, Sadha leads the way while Vinay and Tanisha are mediocre. Vinay looks handsome and he might well turn out to be a contender for Teen Heartthrob along with the likes of Arya, Karthi (Surya's Brother) and Madhavan (Maddy).

Editor V T Vijayan shows off his expertise with some real good transitions between shots. Costumes by Anees add to the feel of the plot.

Director Jeeva excels in cinematography and direction.

If you are tired of all those violent stories of rural villages, you might as well take a break and watch this.

Unnale Unnale – Dullalle Dullalle (Not a Dull Movie eh...)

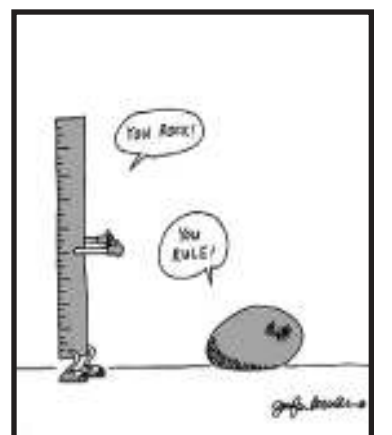
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Kollywood TidBitz

Kollywood Top Contenders

Every decade in Tamil cinema history has witnessed a list of stars contending for the top slots. This Kollywood race dates back to M K Thyagaraja Bhagavadhar era and we have seen this star power struggle happening among stars ever since. Notable stars include M K Thyagaraja Bhagavadhar, P U Chinnappa, M G Ramachandran, Sivaji Ganesan, Rajinikanth, Kamal Hassan and the latest Vijay and Ajith. Not to forget that there were other strong contenders which included Gemini Ganesan, S S Rajendran, JaiShankar, Sivakumar, Vijayakumar, Vijayakanth, Mohan, Vikram and Surya. Each decade has seen a flurry of actors/actresses storm through the film industry and a very few leave a mark in the minds of the viewers and last beyond decades. MGR and Sivaji was able to sustain for over 4 decades and currently Rajini and Kamal has survived and sustained over 3 decades. The race still goes on. We will look at the latest contenders for the top spot in Kollywood.

Trisha – One of the best contenders for the top spot having delivered hits upon hits with Ghilli, Saami, Thirupachi, Something Something Unakkum Enakkum and lot more. She is also vying for the top slot in Telugu film industry which by all



means she might. Having acted with Chiranjeevi in the Super Hit 'Stalin' her stakes in the Telugu film industry has gone high. Her forthcoming release 'Bheema' is the third highly expected movie of this year after Sivaji and Dasavadharam. She is the lead heroine of 'Bheema' acting with his favorite co-star Vikram. Her only aim is to act with the one and only Super Star Rajinikanth by all means. She missed the opportunity of acting with the Super Star in 'Sivaji' since she was pre occupied with commitments for 'Stalin'. Her favorite place is 'New York City' and she wishes to have her honeymoon in 'Venice'. Another film which she is eagerly awaiting is 'Kireedom' in which she has acted opposite the humble 'Ajith' and she is believed to have a powerful role in the movie. More than her actress traits, it is her humble nature and helping tendency that has made her a star power. She has apparently

started a 'Trisha Foundation' to help Homeless families and educate poor children. It is indeed a good gesture from the actress and let us wish her best of luck in her future endeavors.

Asin – The dove eyed beauty created tremor and ripples through her performance in 'Ghajini' which was praised by one and all. She has managed to gain attention through all her movies with her lead stars including Vijay,



Vikram and Surya. Asin, as we reported earlier was a Business entrepreneur before she entered Tamil films. After 'Ghajini', it was 'Pokkiri' that shot her to fame and she is believed to have received three offers from Bollywood including 'Ghajini' in Hindi with Aamir Khan, 'Pokkiri' in Hindi with Salman Khan. She will be the first actress to have made it big in Bollywood after Sridevi if she completes these two projects. Reliable sources say that she will concentrate more in Bollywood for a couple of years while simultaneously doing movies in Kollywood. Asin, still in her early stages of her acting career, received an offer to act with Kamal Hassan in 'Dasavadharam' and she cherishes working with him. Icing on cake is she has dual roles in the movie. Asin is visibly thrilled and she opines that it's a landmark film in her career. She aims to strike gold both in Kollywood and Bollywood. She firmly believes that it is her 'Self Confidence' that has brought her laurels and she would maintain her hard work to sustain her top spot.

Shreya - Actress with an hour glass svelte figure considers herself the luckiest person on earth since she received the opportunity to act opposite Super Star Rajinikanth. Amidst tough



competition from other leading ladies Trisha, Ayesha Takia, Aishwarya Rai, Rani Mukherjee and herself, she emerged winner. She never expected to receive a call from the maverick Director Shankar especially while sulking with the flop 'Mazhai'. It was heartening for this lead lady to find out that it was Rajini who recommended her for the lead role after watching her performance in 'Mazhai'. Having acted only in a handful of movies, Shreya has attracted attention from millions with just one offer 'Sivaji'. More offers pour in this young lady's lap which includes 'Azhagiya Tamizh Magan' with Vijay and 'Kandasami' with Vikram. When answering a question 'Why did she accept to act opposite an Ageing hero Rajinikanth?', she immediately replied 'When 70 year old Harrison Ford can act with 16 year old, why not a much younger Rajinikanth act opposite me?'. Wow. This lady is really bold. Rajini fans are thrilled with her response and a lot others responded smiling. Shreya is a living example of the saying 'Luck is Mysterious'.

After a look at the leading heroines, it is imperative to look at the leading heroes as well. No doubt there is an unprecedented competition among heroes especially with a lot of young talent creeping in. Actors like Vijay, Ajith, Vikram, Surya, Vishal, Madhavan, Jayam Ravi, Silambarasan and Dhanush are all in the race and ofcourse the old war horses Rajinikanth and Kamal Hassan. Sustainability is the key for success and it is very much evident from the number of years of experience these young actors have in them. If you look at Vijay and Silambarasan, they started their acting careers at a very young age and Vijay already has 15 years of acting experience. On the other hand Vikram has 22 years of experience behind him. Naturally the giants Kamal and Rajini has 34 and 32 years of experience behind them. The fact remains that if one can sustain, they can succeed definitely (no matter whatever may be the field of expertise be). Everyone in the Tamil film industry agrees that Rajini and Kamal are in the top two slots even now. Let's take a look at the next generation of actors who are worthy contenders for the top spot.

Vijay - No doubt that this man has emerged winner from all odds. Film critics have tarnished his image saying Vijay cannot act, Vijay looks ugly, Vijay is third rate, Vijay doesn't emote, Vijay is flop. Amidst all this criticisms, Vijay has achieved the spot where he is



now with lot of conviction and hard work. His major plus was his Dancing movements and he converted the plus to his fullest advantage. He carefully chooses his movies that will go well with the masses and follows a certain popular formula (very deftly handled by MGR and Rajini) that will enthrall all audiences. Recently he suffered a setback with a flop movie 'Sachin' but bounced back with his usual formulaic 'Pokkiri'. According to him, his secret behind success is 'Never Reinvent'. That's the reason why he chooses remake movies from neighboring southern states. All his remake movies have been successful including 'Ghilli', 'Thirupachi', 'Sivakasi' and 'Pokkiri'. He believes that he has a lot to achieve and he is nowhere near the Number 1 spot. Although he is thrilled to be in the Number 1 race, he is also scared about the competition since he feels that he is among worthy competitors.

Ajith – 'Never say die' is his approach. He has delivered flops upon flops but still emerged to be



in contention for the race. He is one actor with a lot of self confidence and straight forward approach. He believes that he can perform well and he aims high. He has had a fluctuating career with his highs being 'Vaali', 'Amarkalam' and 'God Father' and his lows being 'Citizen', 'Paramasivan' and 'Aalwar'. He is an actor with capability but has failed to be consistent in choosing his movies. He has tremendous hopes on both of his upcoming movies 'Kireedom' and 'Billa 2007'. Amidst all his flops, he has managed to maintain his star status mainly due to his no nonsense approach. He never over exposes himself to the Print or TV Media and sticks to his work like a pro-

fessional. He lost his way in between his film career to his other ambitious 'Car Racing'. But now he has returned to his film career with full energy and waiting in wings to deliver a Super Hit.

Vikram – 'Hard Work' is his success mantra. Almost 25 years of experience in the film world. He has seen it all. He has been a light boy, a dance assistant, miniscule role, a dubbing artist, an assistant director, assistant editor, character artist, villain and finally a successful Hero. If



reports are to be believed, no other actor in the film industry would have had the opportunity to involve in so many areas of the film industry. Vikram opines that this was not his chosen path but his forced path. His rise to stardom was a bed of thorns but he lived and loved every moment. He has only one piece of advice to his young compatriots which is 'Hard



work, Commitment and Down to earth attitude will definitely fetch Success'. True to his words, Vikram is committed to his film career and hopes to win lots of awards and accolades through his movies.

Surya - Born with a tag 'Star son', he is the son of veteran actor Sivakumar. Although he was born with the tag 'Star Son', his father Sivakumar never helped or forced him in his film career. This young man's success mantra is 'Believe yourself'. He strongly believes in himself and he has a natural liking towards his critics. Surya believes that if someone criticizes him it only means that he is being watched closely and it's an advantage. It gives him an opportunity to correct himself and keep going. Truly he exudes Self belief. He signs his autograph with the verses 'Believe in you, You can do it'. Surya delivered back to back hits with 'Kaakha Kaakha' and 'Ghajini'. He has high expectations about his forthcoming movies 'Vaaranam Aayiram' and 'Vel'.

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by Anand. J

Monsoon Real Estate



BUYING A NEW HOME & TAX REBATE/REFUND

T.M. KESAVAN, Barrister & Solicitor, Legal Practitioner, Kesavan Law Office

New homes purchased from a builder are subject to federal Goods and Services Tax (G.S.T.). Similarly, the Land Transfer Tax (L.T.T) is payable by the purchaser on the purchase price upon registration of a Transfer/Deed of Land in the Ontario Land Registry Office on closing. However, there are few New Home Incentive programs. As an incentive to purchase a new home, Federal Program provides for a housing rebate on the GST paid on a new home. Under the Land Transfer Tax Act, a refund is available to eligible first-time purchasers of newly constructed homes.

Land Transfer Tax Refund

The refund applies to purchase of new homes occurring on or after May 8, 1996. To qualify, the purchaser must be first-time home buyer and occupy the home/condominium as a principal residence. The home buyer must be at least 18 years of age and never owned an interest in a home anywhere in the world. Further, the home buyer's spouse, if any, never owned eligible home while spouse of the him.

G.S.T. Rebate

To be eligible for G.S.T. Rebate, the purchaser must be an individual. The ownership of the property must be transferred to the purchaser after construction is complete and before ownership is transferred to the purchaser, the property must not have been occupied by an individual as a residence. The total consideration paid for the home must be less than \$450,000.00; the amount of the rebate starts to progressively decrease as the consideration exceeds \$350,000.00. The GST rebate is invisible to the purchaser, that is to say, the builder credits it to the buyer and the buyer signs over all rights to the rebate to the builder.

GST Rate Reduction and

Transitional Rebate

Thousands of Ontario homeowners who have moved into their new houses and condominiums after July 1 2006 are receiving very pleasant surprise from Canadian Government. The surprise comes in form of a substantial refund of the GST component of the purchase price. It applies to every buyer of a new residence purchased from a builder prior to May 2, 2006 where both possession and title transfer occurred after Canada Day 2006. Most new home and condominium buyers who closed their transactions since July 1, 2006 typically signed purchase agreements with their builders between 2002 and 2005. Most of them may have forgotten that they are entitled to benefit from the 1% reduction of the GST last year. Here is a guideline to the new GST:

Question: Does the 6% rate apply to new homes purchased before May 2, 2006?

Answer: Where a written agreement of purchase and sale was entered into on or before May 2, 2006 and both ownership and possession are transferred on or after July 1, 2006, the G.S.T. at the rate of 7% applies and a transitional rebate is available to the purchaser from the government, after closing, to account for the rate reduction.

Question: What rate applies to new home purchased after May 2, 2006?

Answer: The new 6% tax rate, if both ownership and possession are transferred after July 1, 2006. If both ownership and possession are transferred before July 1, 2006 the G.S.T. rate is 7% and no transitional rebate applies.

Question: I took possession of my condominium from my builder before July 1, 2006 and final closing is after July 1, 2006. Is there any way I can get the benefit of the tax deduction?

Answer: You are not eligible for

the transitional rebate since you have taken possession before Canada Day. If you haven't taken possession before title transfer, the answer is 'Yes'.

Question: How do I claim the transitional rebate?

Answer: You have to complete an application form and file it with the Canada Revenue Agency.

Question: The price of my new home exceeds \$500,000.00, so I cannot claim a new housing rebate. Can I still get the transitional rebate?

Answer: The transitional rebate is not conditional on receiving a new housing rebate nor is it subject to any maximum purchase price.

Question: I have purchased my new home after July 1, 2006. The G.S.T. rebate of \$8750.00 was reflected in the net purchase. Am I entitled to the transitional rebate, and how much is it?

Answer: 'Yes'. You get a transitional rebate of \$2,240.00.

Question: How is the new GST rebate calculated?

Answer: Where G.S.T. is payable at 7% on the base price of the home, the rebate is the lesser of 36% of the G.S.T. paid and \$8,750.00. Where G.S.T. is payable at 6% on the base price of the home, the rebate is lesser of 36% of the G.S.T. paid and \$7,560.00.

The word 'home' refers to a house or a condominium unit. Any person, including an individual, a non-profit organization or a corporation who purchases a new home in Canada, may be eligible to claim a G.S.T./H.S.T transitional rebate. If you are entitled to claim the transitional rebate, a builder cannot pay or credit an amount to you for this rebate. You have to send an application for the transitional rebate directly to Canada Revenue Agency and they will pay the rebate amount to you.

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