

SRI LANKA SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND Inc *NEWSLETTER*

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FROM THE EDITOR

Whilst Sri Lanka is preparing for CHOGM due to be held within a fortnight, it's great news that Colombo Katunayake Expressway is due for opening soon for safer and quicker travel for everyone. Most readers will no doubt agree, getting much needed road infrastructure in place is extremely important not only for CHOGM but for all road users as well. Paraphrasing what James Packer said recently, it's the time for Sri Lanka to shine in Asia, Sri Lanka will put up a good show come CHOGM time, no doubt about it.

Of the few functions of an entertainment nature held in Brisbane over the past couple of months, Saralanga organised by Sinhala Sangamaya and Paduru Party by SPUR stood out providing the stage for the youngsters to kick off their talents while the opportunity for young at heart to display their artistic skills on stage. Saralanga audience no doubt, did spot some younger members of our community with exceptional talent artistic and oratory. Another positive aspect of Saralanga was the numerous opportunities provided to all souls who wanted to have a go and certainly looked all participants responded well. Opportunities provided by Sinhala Sangamaya to all across the board is commendable. No doubt Brisbane youngsters are very fortunate with the opportunities available at their door step to enhance their skills, should they be willing to participate. Thanks to the effort of SPUR, Brisbane got a good taste of the evolving culture of Sri Lankan music arena when a Paduru Party was held in Brisbane for the first time, with a stunning performance combined with a good mixture of songs of different era and artists performed to perfection. For a moment, probably the audience wouldn't have been able to figure out if their senses; hearing and vision were in harmonisation as the audience would not have expected a performance of such a high calibre from our own local artists here in Brisbane and anyone couldn't have agreed more with the person who said "Brisbane certainly got talent".

Happy Reading !

Talking cricket How Sri Lanka was Granted Test status

Now that the footy season is done away with it's the time for a bit of cricket Down Under. No doubt, come November there will be a huge interest in Test cricket when the first Ashes Test begins in our own backyard "The Gabba", particularly post being bashed by the English a few months ago in England. We all will hope Clarky and the boys would do well both with bat and the ball, with the home advantage and win the Ashes again for Australia. It is also timely to give a run down on how Sri Lanka gained Test Status, as nineteenth death anniversary of late Gamini Dissanayake who was instrumental in gaining test status was only a few days ago on 24th October.

While Australia, England and South Africa have been playing test cricket from 1909 as founding members of the Imperial Cricket Conference. The next three members to the conference were India, West Indies and New Zealand in 1926 while Pakistan was granted membership in 1953. It is interesting to note that there were only seven members in the conference who were able to play Tests until 1965, when the name was changed to International Cricket Conference after making provisions allowing countries outside the Commonwealth to be elected to the governing body (*However, South Africa left the Conference in 1961 as a result of leaving the Commonwealth*). Another name change took place in 1989 when the name was again changed to International Cricket Council.

Sri Lanka had been knocking the door to gain full membership of ICC for a considerable period of time but each time Sri Lankans were told "*Not up to scratch yet*". This was not because Sri Lanka didn't have the players of Test calibre but due to lack of infrastructure and associated facilities. Sri Lanka always had its fair share of excellent players in each era, the likes of Mahendran Sathasivam, Michael Thissera, Anura Tennakoon, Mervyn Peiris. T.B. Kehelgamuwa, Tony Opatha, David Heyn, Russel Harmer, Sunil and Mithra Wettimuny just to name a few.

Sri Lanka at the time couldn't have chosen a better President for Sri Lanka Cricket Board in early eighties than the late Honorable Gamini Dissanayake who had all the qualities not only to promote the game but also take the game to the next level. It is noteworthy to mention the contribution by Raja Mahendran who worked closely alongside Gamini to prepare the ground work for the case at Lords in June 1981. Gamini no doubt had to use all his administrative and oratory skills and charisma too in order to win over some of the adamant cricket administrators at Lords at the time. He successfully argued the case with an eloquent plea for the administrators, for Sri Lanka to be granted Test Status. He was aware that the same old slogan of "*not up to scratch yet*" would surface again and said "*Give us the Test Status and we will provide the infrastructure*". Gamini being a powerful Cabinet Minister then in the government, mentioned that he would provide a personal guarantee to ensure facilities will be brought up to the standard required.

Gamini was the man in the driving seat and Sri Lanka was granted Test Status (eighth test playing nation) on 21st July, 1981. Some of the readers may not be aware that Sri Lanka Cricket Board at the time didn't have its own premises but functioned in a room with just a manual type writer. No wonder ICC was hesitant to grant full membership. Now that all the talking had been done and dusted, Test Status granted it came down to the real business of honouring the pledges. Gamini being a disciplinarian and an honest person, got down to business without delay by contacting JRJ who him-self was a former President of the Cricket Board and an ardent cricket fan, in the effort to get a land for the Cricket Board. The result was the construction a magnificent building adjacent to the SSC. It was said at the time that the new Cricket Board building was done in such a way that it was much better than the headquarters of

some of the other test playing nations. Gamini and the team not only had the cricket board headquarters in mind but also a plan for much needed grounds. Asgiriya test ground was part of Gamini's plan. It is said that Dambulla cricket ground was also in his development plan. Needs of the cricketers too were looked after by providing an indoor stadium for cricketers at SSC.

Gamini later obtained the services of Sir Garfield Sobers too. He was seated next to Sir Garfield Sobers during a Sara Trophy match and it was Sobers who spotted Arjuna Ranatunga's batting skills and said to Gamini *"He is Sri Lanka's Cricketing future"*. Part of Gamini's success story was that he listened to people by taking all good ideas on board. He gave the devil its due. Taking Sir Garfield Sober's advice, Arjuna was selected to play for the inaugural test match versus England in February 1982. The shining light of the first test match was Arjuna scoring half a century. The episode demonstrates the quality of the man in terms of ethics that he never mixed politics with sports. For those who are not aware Reggie Ranatunga (Arjuna's father) was then in the opposition camp with a different political colour.

It was Sri Lanka's turn for the return one-off test match in England in 1984 in the first tour abroad after being granted test status. There were a lot of expectations from the players as one could imagine. Few matches were played against counties prior to the test match to be played at Lord's. The traditional dinner was held on the eve of the test match at Lord's. Both team members as well as cricketing dignitaries were invited as usual for the occasion. Gamini as the President of Sri Lanka Cricket Board delivered a speech. He certainly could hold his head high as he had already delivered a good part of what he had promised and he spoke to a pin drop silent audience with great knowledge of the game and enthusiasm mixed with humor too. All the Sri Lankan players and officials were very proud of how Gamini conducted the business at the meeting.

It is subjective though, Sri Lanka probably may not have won the world cup in 1996 but also may not have seen the full potential of players the likes of Murali, Arjuna, Aravinda, Sanath, Mahela, Kumar on the world cricketing arena, without Gamini at the helm as the President of Cricket Board in Sri Lanka in 1981.

Sadly Gamini's life was snatched away relatively at a younger age of 52 years on 24th October 1994 when Sri Lanka Cricket and the country itself needed him most. May he attain supreme Nirvana!



Allowance hike for prisoners recommended

The Prison authorities have recommended that the government increase the allowance paid to

inmates for the work they perform. Commissioner General of Prisons C. Pallegama said that an inmate was paid an allowance of one or two rupees a day for the work they did and a proposal had been made to the government to increase the amount to Rs. 50.

He also said that another proposal had been made to the government to increase the allowance the prisoners were paid when they were sent out to work for various outside institutions from Rs. 300 to R. 500.

GMOA warns about danger of consuming white bread, imported grapes

The Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) at General Committee Meeting decided to educate the people on the adverse effects of white bread and imported fruit such as apples and grapes.

GMOA General Committee Member Dr. Nalinda Herath told that Sri Lanka had been importing wheat flour without the bran which contained essential vitamins and nutrients values. The white portion of the wheat flour only contained carbohydrate. He pointed out that most people in the advanced countries consumed whole meal bread (bread with bran) which was nutritious. Bread with bran contained essential vitamins, protein iron and would build immunity in a person to lead a healthy life. But the consumption of only white bread would increase excessive carbohydrate intake, he claimed.

Regarding imported apple and grapes, Dr. Herath said that it was found that many businessmen, who were engaged in importing fruits, were in the habit of introducing chemicals to grapes to keep them for a long time. Even the apples kept for sale were detected to be nine months old. "What is happening is that many fruit importers were using some chemicals on grapes. What will

He said that it was to ensure that when the prisoners were leaving after completing their terms they would have some money to take home.

happen is that people who consume them will end up with health complications, because such chemicals are poisonous, Dr. Herath stressed. He said that GMOA would ask the relevant authorities to combat the menace and save people from health disasters.

John Keells - World Vision collaborate in developing Mullaitivu

John Keells Foundation and World Vision Lanka recently launched a collaboration to uplift and rehabilitate the livelihoods of communities in Northern Sri Lanka. Through this collaboration, several development interventions such as livelihoods assistance programmes including enhancement of women entrepreneurship opportunities, infrastructure and skills development for the benefit of school children and youth and provision of water and sanitation facilities for schools and communities will be implemented in selected villages within the Mullaitivu district.

World Vision Lanka (WVL) has been operational in Northern Sri Lanka for many years and has been assisting returning communities to start life over, providing them with livelihood support, nutrition feeding programmes for preschool children, assistance in education sector, psychosocial support through its mental health project and disaster risk reduction programmes.

Work on 'Port City' to begin with investor allocated 100 acres on ROI basis

One hundred acres within the proposed USD multi-billion 'port city' to be built on reclaimed waterfront land bordering the Colombo harbor will be allocated to the investor on the basis of Return on Investment (ROI) for developing the infrastructure of this mega project, a high-ranking official said. The investor is expected to inject an additional US\$ 2.5 billion to develop the acreage given to him within the zone itself demarcated under a separate plan, says Dr. Priyath B. Wickrama, Chairman, Sri Lanka Ports Authority. Reclamation of the 560-acre site is scheduled to commence soon and work on developing the infrastructure completed within 39 months, he said. "We expect investments in the range of US\$ 15 – 20 billion to pour into this planned city during the next 10 years", Wickrama said. After the land is reclaimed and vital infrastructure facilities such as a road network, drainage and telecom services are developed by the investor entrusted with the task, the 'port city' will also serve as an offshore business destination for trade with global 'buying offices' and international trading headquarters based in the location, the Chairman explained. The property will be replete with hotels, apartments, shopping

malls, entertainment, recreational activities and a whole gamut of ultra-modern, state-of-the-art business ventures in keeping with the concept of a planned city, he noted. "It is an enormous US\$ 2 billion investment that has to be pumped in for initial infrastructure development, which will be borne by the investor", Wickrama stressed. "We have struck a good bargain because this investor will have to channel another US\$ 2.5 billion on developing the 100-acre land extent allocated to him". The investor has entrusted the reclamation to China Harbor Engineering Corporation. After the task is completed, the government will demarcate slots to potential investors on a 99-year lease basis, it is learnt. A mini golf course, a Formula 1 racing track and a yacht marina are also part of the proposed ventures for which potential investors will be sought, officials said. "They are on the cards". Dr Wicrama said that it was President Mahinda Rajapaksa who suggested that a viable project be launched "on the other side of the port as well", during a visit to inspect the site of the partially completed breakwater in 2008. "We developed a model and started looking for a potential investor", Wickrama said. "It is a huge project with huge potential".

* Sources: Sri Lanka Media

Siri Punchihewa Mendis (Mendis Uncle)Appreciation

It is just over three years since the passing away of Mr Siri Punchihewa Mendis affectionately known as Mendis Uncle. Uncle Mendis passed away in August 2010. Born in 1919 in Magalle, Galle, he had his early education at Mahinda College, from 1924 to 1930 prior to moving to St Thomas's College Mount Lavinia. I had the pleasure of associating with Mr Mendis for about a decade and a half as I used to live in the same suburb Wynnum, during the time I learned much about his interesting life and family.

Uncle Mendis's father had his education at Richmond College, migrated to Thursday Island in 1896 at the age of fourteen years from Port of Galle on a ship. He commenced working as a Type Setter for "Torres Strait Pilot", the newspaper for Thursday Island then for quite a few years prior to owning and running the newspaper himself. Mr Punchihewa established his business in 1905 dealing with jewellery and pearls. He started a trading company dealing with natural pearls and mother of pearl shells, later ventured into a partnership with Harmen Pearling, thereby successfully running a fleet of pearl luggers with all other pearl products to New York. Mr Punchihewa later bought over the partnership. Uncle Mendis's mother could not migrate to Australia due to the government policies at the time. It could have been a tough battle for uncle Mendis's parents to be away from one another for a considerable period of time, during an era the only mode of transport from Australia to Ceylon and back was by ships. The voyage itself could have taken much longer compared to present day voyages. That was the life then and everybody accepted it as the norm.

When Siri Mendis was about 11 years of age, his mother passed away in Galle, which compelled Siri Mendis' father to make the decision to move him to St Thomas's College and to board him in the college hostel. Uncle Mendis came over to Australia in 1935, soon after leaving school to help out his father's business. He married Swarna, a niece of Martin Wicramasinghe in 1946. In uncle Mendis's words, it was love at first sight and they were happily married for 63 years at the time of his demise. Aunty Mendis is full of appreciating words for the gentleman who really cared for the family and the community.

As Thursday Island was taken over by the military during the World War 2, Mendis family moved from Thursday Island to Brisbane via Darwin. Mr Mendis' father had then planned to buy another shop in Adelaide Street, Brisbane, but instead opted to buy war bonds to help out the Australian Government as the government was in need of funds during the Second World War. This generosity was appreciated by then Prime Minister in a letter to Mr Mendis.

I was fortunate enough to visit Mendis uncle's jewelry shop often and have a yarn on various topics. Mr Siri Mendis was an extra ordinary person with a great personality who lived an ordinary life. He was the person who started the first temple in Brisbane with his own funds. He never lost touch with the community and the culture. He was much loved by all Sri Lankans in Brisbane. Mr Mendis's family was no doubt a pioneering family that migrated to Australia from Ceylon. He lived a long life. The secret to his longevity appears to be the simple life he preferred, always greeting anyone with a big smile. no stress, a teetotaler during his entire life and most importantly a devoted Buddhist with a big heart.

May he attain supreme Nirvana!



News & Events

02.11.2013	Goodna Temple	Pirith Chanting (Katina Pinkama)
03.11.2013	Goodna Temple	The opening ceremony of stupa at 9 am followed by Dana Pinkama.
02.11.2013	Spring Dinner dance with Desmond	
	Contacts:	Chaminda 0410 835 982 Shiran 0402 913 000
03.11.2013	Federation of Sri Lankan Organisations of Queensland (FSOQ)	
		Annual Charity Shield, T20 Cricket Tournament
	Contacts:	Bill Deutrom 0409 749 949 Mie Kaye 0413 054 799
		Kamal W 0407 166 138 Deneth 0422 811 321
Please support this Annual Charity Cricket Shield 2013 to raise funds (Freight) to send 40 computers and hospital beds to Sri Lanka		
09.11.2013	Forrestlake Temple	Pirith Chanting (Katina Pinkama)
10.11.2013	Forrestlake Temple	Offering Katina Robes and Dana Pinkama
09.11.2013	Silver Fawn Club	"in the mood" The Dinner Dance
	Contacts:	Dennis 3353 3896 Egerton 3889 6661
		Anoma 0404 488 145 Karol 3216 2980
16.11.2013	RnR Dinner Dance, Live band <i>Heart & Soul</i> with DJ RnR	
	Michael's Oriental Hall, Eight Miles Plains	(See below for details)
	Contacts	Ruwan 0401 414 226 Prema 3715 5415
		Saumya 3849 8356 Sarath 0402 421 530



What's on the menu for Leopards at Yala National Park.

Following a study conducted on feeding ecology of Yala National Park Leopards, it has been found, unsurprisingly "Deer" is hunted as the favourite food of Leopards at Yala National Park. This is probably due to the abundance of deer in the location. Hare is unfortunate to come second though not as unfortunate as deer with a whopping 79%, Sambar managing to third place while the creepy creature slipping down to the bottom.

Deer	78.97%
Hare	9.81%
Sambar	2.80%
Water buffalo	2.80%
Porcupine	2.34%
Wild boar	1.87%
Grey langur	0.93%
Toque macaque	0.47%
Peafowl	0.47%
Snake	0.47%

RnR Annual Dinner Dance 2013

*Presented by RnR Dance
studio, QLD*

Dance all night to the fantastic music of 70's to current

By Live band

'Heart and Soul' and Dj 'RnR'

- Dance performances
- Dance workshop for all dance enthusiasts of all levels
- Banquet Dinner
- Lot of prizes to be won.....

Date: Saturday the 16th of November 2013

Time: 7pm onwards

**Venue: Michael's Orientals Hall 223 Pakenham
Rd, Eight Mile Plains**

Dress code: Smart casual

**Tickets – Adults: \$ 50, Children (Under
12years): \$ 25**

**For more info: call 0401414226 or email
rnrdanceclub@gmail.com**

