



# New Zealand Lanka

## Newsletter of the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation Incorporated

Volume 34 Summer 2006

### From the President ....

It is with mixed emotions, I write the second message to our community of Sri Lankans and friends of the Foundations. It is time to reiterate your commitment to the Foundation if you like what we are doing for you. Send us your enclosed membership forms and show us you care. We have kept the fees affordable as part of our commitment to be inclusive and cater to all of our community. Be part of the Foundation family that stands for "No politics and equality to all Sri Lankan communities in New Zealand".

It is a great privilege to be a Life member of the Foundation, once admitted, you and your family will offered reserved front seats for musical or stage shows organised by the Foundation. The Life member will be awarded a life membership certificate. New metal life membership badges will be available soon. Free advertising of product and services for members are available on our website. We have decided to award free family membership to new migrants for the first year in New Zealand. We have among our membership people who may be of assistance in regards to settlement, employment, schooling, child care, tax advice and many more areas a new migrant may require.

For the sports minded members that would like to get free badminton coaching on Sundays at the Badminton Club please contact a committee member of the Foundation. We also have other sports equipment owned by the Foundation that can be used by the community on a deposit and donation. Fliers, advertising product and services can be included into our Newsletter as an insert mailed to over 300 mailing addresses by a donation to the Foundation.

We sincerely thank all who took the time and made an effort to support the foundation at the recent Mid Winter Dinner Dance at Coral Reef restaurant on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September. In spite of the last minute announcement of "Cream" the band canceling on us, and at short notice we could not secure another Sri Lankan band, friends from the South American Community (Peruvian) came to our rescue. A lesson we learnt, when in trouble never restrict your vision, look outside and wide.

We gambled on the Latin –Baila combination and it worked. The twist of Latin music with our own Nalar as the Baila DJ was just the right mix. The tempos from Samba, Rumba and Baila were just too much to resist even for the elderly folk. We also changed the venue from our traditional School halls to a restaurant to give it a bit of glamour and a feel for a Dinner Dance, this too was a hit, judging from the great feedback we had.

Keeping the cost down was our main concern, this too we achieved at thirty dollars for a dinner & dance. I personally know quite a few people who were quite disappointed for missing out on this great event. We at the Foundation always strive to provide a good quality event that is of excellent value. If we feel we cannot provide that quality we rather postpone the event, hence we sadly had to this for the Market Day in November.

It is time to celebrate the dawn of the New Year with the family, yes having the family on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, having a great time meeting all the other Sri Lankan families in one place, enjoying the great food prepared for you by our own friends, and most of all wishing them all the very best at dawn on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January with traditional kiribath. What more can you ask! Come out and support your community and the Foundation. Do not miss this years LankaNite 2006 31<sup>st</sup> Night celebrations.

Omar Fahmy

### The Committee

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### Next Event: "LankaNite 2006"

Our next event is the New Years Eve dance – LankaNite 2006 which is held on Sunday the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2006. **It is held from 7.30 onwards at the Marist Rugby Club, Liston Park, Michaels Avenue (off Marua Road) Ellerslie**

This would be an event that will provide entertainment for your entire family to celebrate the dawn of the New Year. Live music is provided by Amazonas accompanied by Flamingo Dancers as well as our very own Baila DJ.

**Tickets are priced at an affordable \$15 for adults and children under 12 are free.** Dinner and snacks will be sold at nominal prices.

### Calendar of Events:

**Saturday 10 February 2007** Summer BBQ (Venue to be confirmed)

**Sunday 4 February 2007** – Hoisting of the national flag on the Harbour Bridge

**February 2007** – NZSLF Stall/s at the Auckland International Cultural Festival

### **Recent Event – Foundation Day...**

The Foundation Day get-together was held on Saturday 28 October 2006 at 7.00pm at Our Saints Church community Hall, 19 Banff Avenue, Epsom. We had some young talent displaying their guitar playing skills accompanied by our very own guru Veteran Sarath Fernando.

We also had Clare Carmody, Education Co-ordinator & Programming Assistant of the Auckland Festival, AK07 with us to speak to us on how the Sri Lankan community can help with several issues. Some of the questions to Clare from the audience were related to hosting of the Sri Lankan dances, fund raising, and advice regarding culture, food etc. The networking and making acquaintances of two new families to Auckland was the highlight of the day.

One family introduced by Sohan Cooray decided to become a member of the Foundation. The very next week the membership form along with a cheque was in our mailbox. We need to take time to engage more with new migrants and make them feel at home. The next Foundation day we hope to engage the younger member of our community by ways of sports activities. The sports equipment the Foundation currently has will be used to promote the following: Baseball, Cricket, Darts & Badminton. We look forward to your participation.

Omar Fahmy

### **Granting of Tourists Visas for foreign nationals to enter Sri Lanka.**

The Sri Lanka High Commission in Canberra has informed me of several changes made to the issue of tourist visas to Sri Lanka. I wish to offer the following information to those who intended to travel to Sri Lanka in the near future on New Zealand Passports.

If you travel to Sri Lanka as a tourist for less than 30 days you do not require a prior visa. You will be granted an entry visa for 30 days on arrival at the Colombo Airport, subject to the following requirements:

- a). Availability of sufficient foreign exchange reckoned at the rate of \$ US 15.00 per day.
- b). Possession of a return air ticket
- The 30 days landing endorsement given to tourists on arrival will not be extended beyond 30 days with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006 until further notice. This means that if you reach Sri Lanka before 1<sup>st</sup> December you may obtain an extension for a longer duration over 30 days from the Department of Immigration and Emigration in Colombo (after arrival).
- If you wish to travel to Sri Lanka after 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006 as a bona-fide tourist for more than 30 days you will have to apply for a visit visa before you go to Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka High Commission in Canberra will continue to grant tourist visas up to a period of 3 months for bona-fide tourists after recovering the necessary fees. Visa fees for a stay of up to 3 months are A\$70.00. Return postage is A\$20.00.
- You may obtain the necessary forms and instructions from me.
- If you wish to clarify issues further, please contact Mr. Asoka Giriagama, Deputy High Commissioner at the Sri Lanka High Commission, 35, Empire Circuit, ACT 2603, Australia or Telephone. (02) 62397041/42. Fax. (02) 62396166. Email: [slhc@atrax.net.au](mailto:slhc@atrax.net.au)

**Rudra de Zoysa, Honorary Consul of Sri Lanka**

### **Children of the Sea in Auckland...**

Think it is fair to say that we all learnt about the overwhelming generosity and the warm hearts of the average New Zealander when Sri Lanka was devastated by the tsunami a couple of years ago. I for one was humbled by the way young children donated their Christmas money or the money from their piggy banks at the collection points, at sausage sizzles and other events that was organised to collect funds. Starting from those kids with their piggy banks to the New Zealand government which matched up all funds collected, dollar to dollar, a staggering amount of aid was sent to Sri Lanka.



Last issue, we featured an exclusive interview with Mary Taylor who has contributed immensely to the country and through her we learnt about another Kiwi who has been on a mission what he calls the “the most amazing theatrical experience of my life” to support people affected by the tsunami in Sri Lanka.

Coming from a well known actor, director and playwright who played the role of Koro in Niki Caro's award winning New Zealand film *Whale Rider*, this should not be taken lightly. Rawiri Paratene is no stranger to most of us. If you have watched *Shortland Street*, as I have over the years, you will instantly recognize his face. He played the role of Joe Hudson, husband of Te Hana and father of Tama in the popular Kiwi soap. He has been in the entertainment industry for over 30 years. He is an actor, director, writer, producer and tutor in theatre and has been featured in television, radio and film. He has won acclaimed awards such as being a Robert Burns fellow and the Maori Trustees Writers award for his first play.

What Rawiri calls “the most amazing theatrical experience of his life” is his involvement as the co-devisor and lead actor in a project called “Children of the Sea” (COTS) which is the result of a series of theatre workshops he has conducted in Sri Lanka for young survivors of the Tsunami and the ongoing crisis of civil war in Sri Lanka. The product of those workshops was a play based on Shakespeare's “*Perciles*” and COTS has been performed not only all over Sri Lanka but also in the 2005 Edinburgh Festival where it has won four awards. A sequel to COTS, “*Finding Marina*” which was staged at the 2006 Edinburgh Festival won the prestigious UNESCO Light of the Festival Award for life changing theatre. The first performance was held in Matara, Sri Lanka where the audiences were Tsunami survivors.

“I fell in love with your beautiful country” was the first sentence Rawiri said during my interview with him. He

has been to Sri Lanka over 15 times and traveled the length and breadth of the island, except the north, “for obvious reasons” he chuckled. He could not say which was his favourite place on the island, “perhaps Trincomalee” he mused, “I’ve never seen such beautiful beaches”. He must have seen many beautiful beaches in his time I guess.

Rawiri spoke of the young people he has trained and moulded and one aspect he pondered over was how he had to reject some of them at audition. He said that those children, all of them who were affected by the Tsunami, behaved so differently to what we would expect kids to be in New Zealand. They took the rejection in their strides and were not bitter at all and he still remembers it. Rawiri went to Sri Lanka on invitation to conduct a series of workshops. The rest is history.

Now we have the opportunity to be view this award winning drama that has won the hearts of many a theatre goer in several parts of the world at over more than 1200 shows. The show has also gained a superstar fan in Kylie Minogue who sponsored one of the children to get to Edinburgh and helped raise the profile of the piece.

Rawiri Paratene who plays Gower, a storyteller who leads the audience through the story and the venue. He performs kapa haka as an integral part of the piece. He says “The New Zealand flag has been carried with pride in Sri Lanka and Scotland. It is fitting New Zealanders get a chance to share in the success of the project.” We should all agree with Rawiri.

When they arrive in New Zealand it is hoped that the children will be welcomed on to the Orakei Marae, which will be a special experience for these 10 teenagers. “During the theatre workshops the workshops on powhiri, proved to be the most popular. The youths retained what they had learned and whenever a guest arrives at the workshops now, they are accorded a full ceremonial welcome with karanga, haka-powhiri, mihi, waiata and hongis. The small greenstone trinkets they were given are never taken off” Paratene says.

Paratene and Auckland Festival Staff are currently fundraising and seeking sponsorship for the \$200,000 needed to bring the show to New Zealand. “There is not a day I do not think about the beautiful island of Sri Lanka and those remarkable young people that I have had the pleasure and honour to work with. It is my sincere hope to bring them and their inspiration to this beautiful island to share with many more of us...”

The Foundation has had dialogue with Claire Carmody from the Auckland Festival who is very keen to work with the Sri Lankan community to make this dream of bringing “Children of the Sea” to Auckland. They have managed to do some fundraising and secure sponsorship and funding but they still need a lot of help. If we, as Sri Lankans could pitch in and help to make this dream a reality, we would be doing some repayment to people who have done so much to help our motherland.

Claire says that they are not looking at profits but want to break even as far as expenses are concerned and give some token payment to the participants who are all willing to perform free. We as Sri Lankans could help this cause in several ways. We could all purchase tickets and encourage our friends, work colleagues and family to participate; we could help them fundraise and donate whatever we could. Claire is eager to work with the Sri Lankan community via different community organisations and the Foundation will be happy to coordinate this venture after Christmas holidays.

The Auckland Festival Trust is fielding all donations and sponsorship enquires. To offer your support contact Clare Carmody on 09 374 0310 or

clare.carmody@aucklandfestival.co.nz. If you have any ideas, you can also talk to us at the Foundation. Lets make this dream happen.....

**Based on Interviews with Rawiri Paratene by Asoka Basnayake.**

### **Some useful facts about Sri Lanka...**

**Population:** 20,064,776

**Ethnic groups:** Sinhalese 73.8%, Sri Lankan Moors 7.2%, Indian Tamil 4.6%, Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9%, other 0.5%, unspecified 10% (2001 census provisional data)

**Religions:** Buddhist 69.1%, Muslim 7.6%, Hindu 7.1%, Christian 6.2%, unspecified 10% (2001 census provisional data)

**Languages:** Sinhala (official and national language) 74%, Tamil (national language) 18%, other 8%

note: English is commonly used in government and is spoken competently by about 10% of the population

**Literacy:** total population: 92.3% male: 94.8% female: 90% (2003 EST.)

**Age structure:** 0-14 years: 24.5% (male 2,508,384/female 2,397,986) 15-64 years: 68.4% (male 6,658,765/female 7,059,468) 65 years and over: 7.2% (male 670,813/female 769,360) (2005 EST.)

**Median age:** total: 29.44 years male: 28.38 years female: 30.51 years (2005 EST.)

**Population growth rate:** 0.79% (2005 EST.)

**Birth rate:** 15.63 births/1,000 population (2005 EST.)

**Death rate:** 6.49 deaths/1,000 population (2005 EST.)

**Infant mortality rate:** total: 14.35 deaths/1,000 live births male: 15.57 deaths/1,000 live births female: 13.07 deaths/1,000 live births (2005 EST.)

**Life expectancy at birth:** total population: 73.17 years male: 70.6 years female: 75.86 years (2005 EST.)

**Geographical area:** total: 65,610 sq km land: 64,740 sq km water: 870 sq km approximately the same size as the North Island of NZ

**Coastline:** 1,340 km

**Elevation:** lowest point: Indian Ocean 0 m; highest point: Pidurutalagala 2,524 m

**Budget:** revenues: \$3.804 billion, expenditures: \$5.469 billion, including capital expenditures of NA (2005 EST.)

**Public debt:** 98.5% of GDP (2005 EST.)

**Investment (gross fixed):** 27% of GDP (2005 EST.)

**Current account balance:** \$-388 million (2005 EST.)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** 11.2% (2005 EST.)

**Unemployment rate:** 8.4% (2005 EST.)

**Population below poverty line:** 22% (1997 EST.)

**Economy - overview:** In 1977, Colombo abandoned statist economic policies and its import substitution trade policy for market-oriented policies and export-oriented trade. Sri Lanka's most dynamic sectors now are food processing, textiles and apparel, food and beverages, telecommunications, and insurance and banking. In 2003, plantation crops made up only 15% of exports (compared with 93% in 1970), while textiles and garments accounted for 63%. GDP grew at an average annual rate of about 5.5% in the 1990s, but 2001 saw the first contraction in the country's history -1.4%, due to a combination of power shortages, severe budgetary problems, the global slowdown, and continuing civil strife. Growth recovered to 5% between 2002 and 2005. About 800,000 Sri Lankans work abroad, 90% in the Middle East. They send home about \$1 billion a year. The struggle by the Tamil Tigers of the north and east for a largely independent homeland continues to cast a

shadow over the economy. In late December 2004, a major tsunami took about 31,000 lives; left more than 6,300 missing and 443,000 displaced, and destroyed an estimated \$1.5 billion worth of property.

**Capital:** Colombo; note - Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte is the legislative capital

**Administrative divisions:** 8 provinces; Central, North Central, North Eastern, North Western, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Uva, Western; note - North Eastern province may have been divided in two - Northern and Eastern

**Legal system:** a highly complex mixture of English common law, Roman-Dutch, Muslim, Sinhalese, and customary law; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

**Chief of state:** President Mahinda RAJAPAKSE (since 19 November 2005); note - Ratnasiri WICKREMANAYAKE (since 21 November 2005) is the prime minister; the president is considered both the chief of state and head of government

**Head of government:** President Mahinda RAJAPAKSE (since 19 November 2005); note - Ratnasiri WICKREMANAYAKE (since 21 November 2005) is the prime minister; the president is considered both the chief of state and head of government cabinet: Cabinet appointed by the president in consultation with the prime minister

**Elections:** president elected by popular vote for a six-year term; election last held 17 November 2005 (next to be held 2011)

**Legislative branch:** unicameral Parliament (225 seats; members elected by popular vote on the basis of a modified proportional representation system by district to serve six-year terms)

**Elections:** last held 2 April 2004 (next to be held by 2010) election results: percent of vote by party or electoral alliance - SLFP and JVP 45.6%, UNP 37.83%, TNA 6.84%, JHU 5.97%, SLMC 2.02%, UPF 0.54%, EPDP 0.27%, others 0.93%; seats by party or electoral alliance - SLFP and JVP 105, UNP 82, TNA 22, JHU 9, SLMC 5, UPF 1, EPDP 1

**Diplomatic representation in New Zealand and Australia:** Sri Lankan High Commission in Canberra, Australia chief of mission: High Commissioner K. Balapatabendi PC Consulate: Wellington, Rudra De Zoysa Hon Consul for New Zealand.

## ***Sri Lanka considers a new airline...***

Dec 02, Colombo: Sri Lanka's Ministries of Finance, Ports and Aviation Services will jointly put forward a Cabinet paper to set up a new airline for Sri Lanka.

The Cabinet paper will propose the setting up of Mihin Lanka airline, following the name of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, as a fully government-owned enterprise.

Meanwhile, the agreement between Sri Lankan Airlines and the Emirates is to be terminated by 20 March, 2008, but the government hopes to extend it, sources said.

**Saturday, December 2, 2006, 13:53 GMT, Colombo  
Page News Desk, Sri Lanka.**

## ***In lighter vein...***

### ***Baseball in Heaven?***

Two old guys, Abe and Sol, are sitting on a park bench feeding pigeons and talking about baseball, like they do every day. Abe turns to Sol and says, "Do you think there's baseball in heaven?"

Sol thinks about it for a minute and replies, "I dunno. But let's make a deal: if I die first, I'll come back and tell you if there's baseball in heaven, and if you die first, you do the same."

They shake on it and sadly, a few months later, poor Abe passes on. One day soon afterward, Sol is sitting there feeding the pigeons by himself when he hears a voice whisper, "Sol... Sol..."

Sol responds, "Abe! Is that you?"  
"Yes it is, Sol," whispers Abe's ghost.

Sol, still amazed, asks, "So, is there baseball in heaven?"

"Well," says Abe, "I've got good news and bad news."  
"Gimme the good news first," says Sol.

Abe says, "Well... there is baseball in heaven."  
Sol says, "That's great! What news could be bad enough to ruin that!?"

Abe sighs and whispers, "You're pitching on Friday."

Views expressed in articles are those of the contributing authors and may not necessarily reflect the views of the NZSLF

### ***Contributions***

This newsletter is published quarterly. We welcome contributions to this newsletter and apologize for not being able to publish all contributions due to the limitation of the available space. We reserve the right to edit submitted material. Being a not for profit agency, we do not make any payments for articles. Please send your contributions to the Summer Issue by 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2007 to the correspondence address below. Attn: Editorial Committee or by email to: [nzslf@nzslfoundation.com](mailto:nzslf@nzslfoundation.com)

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