



# New Zealand Lanka

## Newsletter of the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation Incorporated

Volume 35 Autumn 2007

### From the President ....

We have completed half of our term and you may ask what have we done for you? Let me ask you what have you done for your community? Have you taken the trouble to ask your self do I deserve to be served by the Foundation? Do I need the Foundation to organise events for the pleasure of my family, my friends and the community?

We at the Foundation believe it a two way street, in order for us to serve the community we need you to meet us half way. We sent out in the previous Newsletter, membership forms, to indicate your loyalty and commitment to the Foundation. Be part of the Foundation family that stands for "No politics and equality to all Sri Lankan communities in New Zealand".

We hope you would be a Life Membership to enjoy the privileges that comes with it. 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 and a new metal life membership badge. Free advertising of product and services for members are available on our website too.

The Summer BBQ held recently in February was great day out that brought many people together under the umbrella of the Foundation The sizzling sausages, lamb chops, chicken drum sticks, coleslaw, buns and the hot summer day with great Sri Lankan company on the Orakei Domain, Okahu Bay was a fantastic day out on the Saturday 24 Feb 2007.

We have got some exciting events planned for the community. In May Nanda Malini and Victor Ratnayake will be entertaining the Auckland audience with the very best of the Sri Lankan timeline classics. This duet will enhance the cultural renaissance of the Sri Lankan community for an all-time remembrance. A show not to be missed that may tingle your sensations. We encourage booking your tickets early to avoid disappointment.

In collaboration with the Badminton Club, we will be offering free coaching lessons for members at the Foundation open day. Take this opportunity to have a fun time and socialise with some sport minded people. I appeal to our community membership to volunteer their services as emergency contacts in case of urgent need for any person from our community. We need the contact details of a few medical doctors, Child care minders, builders, plumbers, electricians and carpenters to be listed on the Foundation website: [www.nzslfoundation.com](http://www.nzslfoundation.com)

If you know of anyone from our community with the skills that we require, please pass on their contact details to us. We will formally request assistance from the person. Join us in making the Foundation family a better and caring place for our community.

Omar Fahmy



### The Committee

**President:**

Omar Fahmy (09) 846 9427

**Vice President:**

Manjula Walgampola (09) 529 1443

**Secretary:**

Emmanuel Fernando (09) 627 5875

**Treasurer:**

Nalar Mohamed (09) 522 2181

**Committee Members:**

Rohan Jayasuriya (09) 523 0922

Radhini Sabanayagam (09) 629 3867

S. Puvanakumar (09) 624 4343

Sarath Pannila (09) 624 6984

Anne Perera (09) 846 3158

**Editor:**

Asoka Basnayake (09) 624 6541

**Auditor:**

Nihal Jayawickrema (09) 579 1807

### Next Event: "Tharu Arana"

Our next event is the "Tharu Arana" musical show by Veteran Sri Lankan musicians Nanda Malini and Victor Ratnayake.

**It will be held on Saturday the 26 May at the Dorothy Winston Theatre of the Auckland Girls Grammar School at 6 p.m.**

**Tickets are priced at \$40, 35, 25 & 20 for adults and \$25, 20 & 15 for children under 12.** For tickets contact any committee member as soon as possible.

### Calendar of Events:

**Saturday 26 May 2007** Tharu Arana" musical show at 6.00pm sharp at the Dorothy Winston Theatre of the Auckland Girls Grammar School

**Saturday 23 June 2007** – Badminton Club Foundation Open Day at 99 Gillies Avenue, Epsom, Auckland

**Saturday 21 July 2007** – Annual General Meeting (AGM), 5.30pm at Mt Albert, Snr. Citizen's Hall. Bring a plate to share.

## ***Forthcoming Event – Tharu Arana musical Show...***

The Foundation is pleased to announce that we have organised a musical show that will bring the best of Sri Lankan musical talent to Auckland. "Tharu Arana" is a star studded event that will enable Sri Lankans in Auckland to devour the musical talents of three giant names in Sri Lankan music – Nanda Malini, Victor Ratnayake and Rohana Weerasinghe, none of whom need introductions to Sinhala music lovers.

This is Nanda Malini's second visit to and she was accompanied by Rohana Weerasinghe when she came to Auckland at the invitation of the "Foundation" to perform at the Nanda Malini Geethavali in 2000. Victor Ratnayake has also performed in Auckland earlier at the invitation of the United Sri Lanka Association.

Tharu Arana will be a unique show that should not be missed by any Sri Lankan. The Foundation has once again managed to bring the best of Sri Lankan music, this time with not just one but three people who can be considered national treasures, to far away Land of the Long White Cloud – Aotearoa New Zealand.

This is the kind of performance that will not be held in this part of the world in a long time to come so we urge you to hurry and book your tickets as soon as possible to avoid disappointment as tickets are limited. To reserve your tickets, please call any committee member.

## ***Nanda Malini – Nightingale of Sri Lanka – Back in Auckland Again...***

Visharadha Nanda Malini is no stranger to anyone interested in Sinhala music. She is well known as the nightingale of Sri Lanka. She has dominated the music scene of Sri Lanka for over 35 years. She is not only talented and famous. She is also equally controversial and has her unbending stand against injustice and her steadfast defence of her principals. She uses her medium unhesitatingly towards the promotion of causes that she believes in.

She visited New Zealand for the first time in August 2000 sponsored by the NZSLF and held an unforgettable show, "Nanda Malini Geethavali" in collaboration with her team members Rohana Weerasinghe, Karunaratne Jayasinghe, Athula Kumara Edirisinghe supported by our very own father and son musicians, Sarath and Praveen Fernando.

Born Malini Perera in a village in Leuwanduwa, Aluthgama in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka, she was the forth of 9 children. Her talent was recognised by one of her teachers, Mrs. Margaret Perera and 8-year-old Malini was introduced to the then Radio Ceylon children's programme, Lama Mandapaya that was produced by veterans such as the legendary Karunaratna Abeysekera (Karu Aiyya) and Sarath Wimalaweera.

Lama Mandapaya has incidentally produced many a leading musician of today who started as child artists. She was discovered by Maestro W D Amaradeva who featured her as a background vocalist in the first Sinhala Colour movie, Ran Muthu Duwa and she became a success overnight with her song "Galana gangaki jeevithe". That first movie song not only became the "Song of the year" but also won her a "Sarasavi Award" that year and opened doors for a successful musical career.

Nanda then entered the prestigious Bhatkande college of Indian Music and earned a degree in musicology with a first class honours. Having risen to the top of the musical ladder in

Sri Lanka at a very young age, she has reigned supreme there ever since. She has earned more awards than any other Sri Lankan female artist and has performed in over 30 countries.

She now teaches at her own school of music. Despite her international success, she remains a simple and unassuming lady, clad usually in a simple white sari and her unmade up face only adorned by the light up of her eyes by a warm smile.

Visharada Nanda Malini is not only a singer par excellence. She is a pride and joy to our nation and a living national treasure. We are indeed fortunate to have Nanda Malini performing in Auckland for the second time in seven years.

## ***Victor Ratnayake- A Veteran Sri Lankan Singer***

Victor Ratnayake is no stranger to Sri Lankan music lovers.. He hails from a village in Kadugannawa near Kandy and his interest in music started when he was a young boy aged 9 who was gifted with a harmonium by his father who was a music lover.

This veteran singer has been in the music industry since the 60s and his one man show, The Sa Prasangaya has been performed all over the country in Sri Lanka for over 1000 performances. He can be called the pioneer of solo performances since he initiated Sa in 1973. It created a turning point in Sri Lankan performances.

Victor's name is hailed among the top-level names in the Sri Lankan music industry after veterans such as Sunil Santha, Ananda Samarakone and W D Amaradeva. He has made an indelible name for himself not only on radio and television but also in the film industry. He has directed music in several acclaimed films.

Victor has many fans all over the world and one of his fanclubs in America "Dinara" was set up to preserve his kind of music among Sri Lankans overseas. Victor has gone cyber with his music on [www.dinaramusic.com](http://www.dinaramusic.com).

## ***Rohana Weerasinghe – Musician par excellence!***

Rohana showed his talents in singing and music while he was still a youngster at school. Later, he studied at the Government School of Music and proceeded to study at the renowned school of music Bhatkande in Lucknow, India from which he obtained a diploma in music.

On his return to Ceylon, he performed along with acclaimed musicians of the W D Amaradeva, Victor Ratnayake, Premasiri Kemadasa and Sanath Nandasirii in their musical programmes on Radio Ceylon.

Later, Rohana ventured into playing the sitar and gained a name for himself as a music director and composing lyrics for over 3000 songs sung by most popular singers in the country.

He has also moved into the area of films and teledramas and has won many coveted awards such as the State music awards, OCIC, Sumathi tele awards and Swarnasankha awards for his work. Rohana was part of the team that accompanied Nanda Malini to Auckland in 2000.

## Introducing a Sri Lankan Achiever - Dr Kawshi De Silva

It was a pleasure to meet a fellow Sri Lankan who works in a key position in a mainstream organisation who has made a difference in people's life in our adopted country. Dr Kawshi De Silva is a well known figure in the field of Public Health in New Zealand. She works currently as the Director of Public Health at the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand. Her profile and achievements are impressive but what impressed me most about Kawshi is her passion for the work she does, professionally and her personal involvement in the field of health promotion.

Kawshi hails from Colombo and has had her education at Visakha Vidyalaya, Bambalapitiya. She proceeded to study in Chittagong, Bangladesh where she completed her MBBS and qualified as a doctor to work in Sri Lanka where she worked as a medical officer in the public health service until she migrated to New Zealand. Kawshi moved to Auckland with her husband Namal and her two children a few years later.

Kawshi's awareness and interest in social responsibility took a new turn when she went to Bangladesh to study. She had a privileged and sheltered upbringing in Colombo and her childhood ambition was to become a doctor. After completing studies, Kawshi left for Bangladesh to study medicine. The poverty she encountered was incomparable to the poverty she may have witnessed in Sri Lanka. She was aghast when she learnt that some of the workers in her hostel had a staple diet of rice and water. During the six years she spent in Bangladesh, she had a good understanding of public health needs in a poor country.

On her return to Sri Lanka, Kawshi served as a medical officer in remote Polonnaruwa and Nuwara Eliya. The social issues encountered by people of those areas also made an impact on the young doctor. Mass massacres of the day and extreme poverty and related issues faced by the estate workers were etched in her memories. She worked in an OPD environment and also had her private practice.

Kawshi and family migrated to New Zealand in 1991. Her first port of call in New Zealand was Wellington. They chose Wellington as she had family including an uncle who was a doctor. Her uncle suggested that she made a career move to public health and Kawshi commenced a Masters degree in public health in 1993.

She conducted a research project on migrant health and the qualitative information she found during this research was a rude eye-opener for her. Her interest in working with migrant communities was intensified after this project and she felt very close to it as she herself had undergone a similar journey on migration. Her research was used by the Overseas Doctors Association who was lobbying for a "bridging course" for doctors at the time. Her research was also used by the department of political studies at the Victoria University of Wellington.

Kawshi then briefly worked in Taranaki Health Care in health promotion and then a short stint as a project researcher at the Taranaki MultiEthnic Council.

Then Kawshi worked for the Wellington Cancer Society as the Manager – Cancer Prevention and Early Detection and then moved onto the National Heart Foundation as its Public Health Manager in 2004. She also started doing a PhD in the area of Asian Health around this time. Although she had many other opportunities to select other topics her passion was in this area. Her then employer, the Cancer Society also supported her studies.

Kawshi moved to Auckland after being in Wellington for 5 years. She has held several key positions in the public health area such as being an office bearer at the Public Health Association.

Kawshi says that her biggest challenge faced by her is trying to achieve a work life balance while holding a key position and having a young family. She lovingly acknowledges her husband Namal, himself a doctor, who has supported her right throughout her studies and work.

In addition to her very busy role as the Director of Public Health at the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand, Kawshi worked tirelessly in many areas in the public health arena. She was an Executive member of the PHA (Public Health Association of NZ) several years; a current council member of the Health Promotion Forum and a board member of the Agencies for Nutrition and Action. Currently, Kawshi is studying for a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration and hopes to proceed for her MBA.

*Based on an interview by Asoka Basnayake*

### *Be it ever so humble...*

They say you can never go back. That things will be so different you'll wish you had remained with happy childhood memories. But, as Tamara Martyn realises, when you reconnect with the past, there's renewed hope for the future.

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Poya day in Anuradhapura. The fluorescent orb of the full moon gleams in the velvet night, setting off the white stone of the Ruwanvelisaya to perfection. At the foot of this dome-shaped, 104-metre high dagoba, pilgrims dressed in white sarees and sarongs make offerings of frangipani and lotus, their sweet fragrance mingling with the heady bouquet of incense. Soft chanting wafts towards us, the gentle murmur occasionally broken by the screech of a monkey in the banyan trees.

You don't have to be a Buddhist to be awed by a country full of sound, scent and colour. Anuradhapura was Sri Lanka's first capital of Sri Lanka in 5th century BC, a time frame my children cannot even begin to comprehend, but they too sense the glory of the past. Tiahli, 11, slips her hand into mine. "It's amazing Mum," she whispers. "Cool!" agrees Tanushk, 15. "Much better than the Sky Tower!"

I'm grateful for their enthusiasm. I'd been afraid that their Kiwiness, fondness for chocolate fish, Chinese takeaways and The Warehouse bargains would inhibit their ability to absorb the complexity of their heritage. They may have been born in New Zealand but an innate part of them will always be Sri Lankan. Tears prickle my eyes.

I'm doing a lot of crying on this trip, this journey back to our roots. Words that normally gush out like geysers, now get stuck in my head. My eyes do the talking.

I'd last been in Anuradhapura on a school trip. It's a surreal feeling to be here, many moons later, carrying a New Zealand passport, accompanied by my husband Lalith (who used to live five minutes away from me in Colombo, the current capital, but we met in Wellington) and our two Kiwi children. Place names such as Polonnaruwa, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Yala, Kurunegala, Kandapola, Dambulla, Pinnawella, Bentota, Sigirya, Sinharaja Forest and Ritigalle fall trippingly off the

tongue, and itinerary, as we play tourist in a country that joyfully embraces us as its own. Lalith and I revel in chatting up the locals in Sinhalese, hearing idioms and friendly banter that have long evaded our ear, and then translating the anecdotes for the children who, eager to be part of the scene, feel frustrated that they're missing out on the "in" jokes.

But we are all equally enamoured by the historic and natural attractions that have lured visitors here since the North Indian prince Vijaya set foot on these shores in 483 BC. He and subsequent rulers, including the Portuguese, Dutch and the British, have made their mark on this little island in the Indian Ocean and its people, and now the country, reshape Lalith and me, as we experience the land of our birth together. Were we really so complacent about the picture-perfect beaches blessed with soft, powder-white sand at our doorstep? Did we take it all for granted, the wattle-and-daub villages, brooding primaeval forests, gentle grey elephants and shaven-headed boys in saffron robes?

And while we feast on it again, thankful for the opportunity to reconnect with our past, Tanushk and Tiahli gaze in wonder on ancient palaces and temples, climb rock fortresses, ride elephants, visit tea factories and explore virgin jungles. We watch men walk on fire, cobras dance, monkeys perform. We swim in crystal-clear rock pools, play in warm, foamy surf and bump on dirt tracks through wildlife reserves where native leopards, elephants, bears, snakes, deer and birds roam free.

Ah yes, freedom. I can't speak for the wildlife, but the humans don't take it for granted. While we are in Sri Lanka, bombs go off in the north and east, some soldiers are ambushed, a few sailors die. Our travel agent advises us against going to Trincomalee or Batticaloa where sniping is rife. Conversations are peppered with fear. People recount stories of late-night home searches and land takeovers. Peace is tenuous in a country where soldiers armed with AK47s are as plentiful as the once-ubiquitous crows. Gracious homes adorned with verandas, pillars and riotous gardens, now hide behind high walls and iron gates with peepholes through which guards demand to know your business before they deign to let you through.

I used to tell my Kiwi friends that Sri Lanka was like my mother, New Zealand my lover; the fact that I was born in one and married in the other commensurate with my feelings. Now, after nearly four weeks in that country I change my mind. Sri Lanka is my crazy great-aunt, the one who downs a whiskey as she gets out of bed in the morning and sips cocktails all day while still in her nightie. She's the one I love to love in private, but embarrasses me by breaking wind at parties and swearing aloud at the school prize giving.

Auntie may be run-down and eccentric by day, but once the sun sets, dusk hides her wrinkles and cracks, and the old lady casts her spell over all of us. The sweat and heat of the day is sluiced off under ice-cold showers, which leave us gasping in delight, and refreshed and re-energised, we party every night. Friends and relatives tell us they are celebrating our long overdue visit as a family, but snippets of conversation reveal that merrymaking is a fact of life. When you live under the shadow of war, every day that you wake up is a reason for rejoicing. For me it was an intoxicating honeymoon, introducing people I'd known all my life to my husband and two children who are my life.

"What's it like to be back home after so long?" they ask.

It's a strange word, home. They say it's where the heart is. For 19 years New Zealand has been home. Now we are confronted with another, the one we left when the serpent writhed into our childhood paradise. New Zealanders go on

their OE; what term is there for abandoning your birthland in droves, looking for another country to live in, any country that would have you? Those with family who stayed behind, came back regularly, kept in touch with aunts and uncles and sultry nights. Others, like Lalith and myself, with siblings and parents spread over five countries, had family reunions elsewhere on the globe.

But the years of living overseas have made Lalith and me street wimps. I'm never going to complain about Auckland traffic again. I understand why people say that after having been on Sri Lankan roads for a few weeks, atheists become firm believers in God. I also realise why Sri Lanka doesn't have an amusement park. It doesn't need one. They get their adrenalin rush on the roads.

Each time we ventured out we were dicing with death in a hair-racing, pulse-accelerating ride avoiding jaywalkers, cyclists, cows, dogs and bullock carts. Horns blare impatiently, vehicles belch out fumes, buses lean dangerously and roar past anyone who dares dawdle, trains thunder along, people hanging out of them like straw on a scarecrow. Galle Road, once a coastal dream-run from Fort in the city to the southern town of Galle, is a pot-holed nightmare, far too narrow for the relentless traffic onslaught. When it rains, it's worse -- the sides of the streets get flooded so all the vehicles fight for space in the middle.

The trishaws were the worst perpetrators, zipping in and out of traffic, doing U-turns in tight corners, pattering in the face of oncoming vehicles, nipping down side streets, zooming around bends and depositing us at our destination, dishevelled, palpitating and exhilarated.

The children love them, shrieking in delight as we hurtle, jolt and rock. I cling to the seat and keep my eyes closed. "It's like being in Grand Theft Auto [a Playstation game] only better," Tanushk enthuses. "And I don't need to take up smoking. I've had my fill of carbon monoxide for the rest of my life."

Even the far-flung villages which Lalith and I remember as serene hamlets have grown maniacally, with no order, no planning. But the countryside has, thankfully, retained its serenity. It's still beautifully lush and romantic. Like beggars at a banquet we greedily devour the lime-greens and soft ambers of the paddy fields, the startling surprise of a vermillion-feathered breast in the hedges, the brilliant oranges of the King Coconuts with their promise of a refreshing swill, and oh, the dark, mysterious verdancy of the tea plantations in the hills, now hidden, now not by ever-swirling fluffy mists. No wonder the Arabs called this island Serendipity when they suddenly came across it in the 15th century AD. Now all this resplendency sits like jewels in a misshapen crown.

We are treated like royalty wherever we go. In Colombo we stay with my cousin Ermina, her husband Emmanuel and their two sons. Each morning we wake up under a whirring fan to find iridescent-eyed geckos with translucent veined stomachs scrutinizing us from the ceiling. Crows caw derisively in the jak trees, squirrels chip-chip in the banana grove, and the kerosene oil cart, drawn by a bull, (much to the delight of the children) summons the cook to the front gate with its shrill clang. In the kitchen, coconuts are scraped for every rich, spicy dish (our waistlines don't thank us, but our taste buds beg for more). The maid brings us hot, sweet cups of tea

to our bedside. Our clothes are washed by hand, sun-dried, ironed and neatly folded.

With the traditional exports of tea, rubber and coconut overridden by tourism, gems and ceramics, the shopping is addictive. The apparel industry, we're told, brings home the largest number of export dollars. International brands such as Victoria's Secret, Nike, Speedo and Ralph Lauren are manufactured in Sri Lanka. We pick up factory rejects (a wrong label, one sleeve slightly shorter than the other) for no more than \$7. It's easy to feel like royalty when you're dividing the rupee price by 70 to convert it to New Zealand currency and forget that suitcases have limited capacity.

We don't worry about schedules, bills, homework, deadlines or the mortgage. We don't tax our brains. Our emotions, however, work overtime.

We'd expected change. We can cope with streets and places we don't recognize; children who are now men and women; middle-aged school-friends with receding hairlines and pot-bellies. But nothing prepares us for the wounds reopened by those who have passed away. The biggest void is left by my maternal grandmother. A visit to Morrukuliya, Archo's home on a coconut plantation, a few miles off Negombo, broke my heart. The current owner of her little kingdom, where I played at Princess during the school holidays, lives overseas. In the hands of indifferent caretakers, everything has fallen into disarray. The little bungalow is covered in dust and cobwebs, the stench of rat urine follows me from room to room. The joyful tumble of colour that was Archo's pride and joy is now a tangle of weeds.

Dreams aren't worth a cent. With a population of 20 million and growing, land is a solid investment in Sri Lanka. Even with nothing spent on maintenance, Archo's plantation will appreciate in value. Why would anyone care about a house in which an old widow once lived?

There were many others we didn't get to meet and we have wakes for them all. Cancer had claimed Ashvini, a young niece, and Deva, Ermina's brother; the tsunami took away Lalith's childhood friend Faiz. His widow Zeehana and children, Iqbal and Ilam, give us tearful accounts of those harrowing 10 minutes in Hambantota that devastated so many lives. They are lucky to be alive, but are struggling to survive. They have not received one cent of the thousands donated by the worldwide community and are supported by friends and relatives. Though delayed, the tears are therapeutic and serve to remind us that death is a part of life.

As are goodbyes. The Welcome Back parties turn into farewells. We are laden with goodies to take home. We aren't say that our suitcases are already bulging and most of it wouldn't get past New Zealand customs. We vow to be more forthcoming in emails and letters. Once the past has been rediscovered the future becomes more promising.

The young cousins, firm friends after a month, review the highlights of the holiday. Tanushk and Tiahli have taught Keshab the haka. They perform it to howls of delight and recognition. With no national rugby team to take pride in, every Sri Lankan rejoices in All Black victories. They mourn the loss of the 2003 World Cup and talk about visiting New Zealand in 2011. Suvendrini, Lalith's 65-year-old former neighbour, asks after Jonah Lomu's kidney and giggles when her husband feigns horror at her lasciviousness.

It's a different story with cricket. They're passionate about the Sri Lankan team who happened to be touring New Zealand at the time. Because we'd been travelling, we'd caught the action only in snatches. At dinner in a hotel in Bentota, Tanushk asks a waiter for the final score.

"I'm sorry sir," he says gloomily. "It's bad news. We lost." Tanushk waits for the waiter to leave before he gleefully punches the air with his fists, "Yeah! That means we won!"

Back in Auckland, it takes a while to slip into the routine of school, work and play. There's always a musical cadence, a whiff of spicy curry, the sight of a batik, ebony carving or silk saree to remind us of our flirtation with the wild side. At times like these we count our blessings of living in New Zealand. Tuis in our garden. Uncrowded streets. Bbqs in our backyard. Delicious milk. And the freedom to travel anywhere in our country without the fear of getting blown up or caught in crossfire.

Home is definitely where our hearts are at peace. End

Tamara Martyn

## Current Sri Lankan News from Lanka Business Online

### *Graduate school in IT, a 'giant step' in education - Dialog CEO...*

The APIIT (Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology) inaugurated its first Graduate School in Sri Lanka recently and launched two MSc Degree programmes in Computing and Technology Management.

The graduate school and the Degree Programmes were launched with the assistance of Staffordshire University in the UK and APIIT Malaysia, which are working as joint venture partners with APIIT Sri Lanka since 2000.

Speaking at the launch, the CEO of Dialog Telekom Dr. Hans Wijesuriya said that this was a giant step that has been taken in the field of IT while noting that the adopting of IT courses with the correct components is very important. 'Both the facilities and affordability would not have been easily obtained especially in the IT field,' he said.

Dr. Wijesuriya therefore noted that the attempt taken by an institution such as APIIT was remarkable. He further noted that the world is now functioning in an era under the revolution of IT and he stressed the importance of having one's higher education in the IT field in Sri Lanka.

'This is yet another landmark in the progress of APIIT as a leading higher education institution in Sri Lanka,' said the CEO of the APIIT Sri Lanka Dr. Athula Pitigala. He noted the importance of engaging the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in fields of industry and commerce, while observing that Sri Lanka was unable to benefit much from the growth of ICT as opposed to other developing countries who have benefited from it.

'This is mainly due to the lack of trained personnel; our current need for IT graduates has been projected at 5,000 per year,' Dr. Pitigala said and stressed that it was essential to attract and train large numbers of personnel in IT/computing.

As a result of this mismatch, Sri Lanka faces a large graduate unemployment problem. The MSc in computing is a conversion Master Programme and will help some of the non-IT graduates to enter the lucrative field of Computing.

The Master of Computing addresses the market demand for graduates with IT skills appropriate for business and industry, the Master in Technology Management provides the knowledge and understanding of how technology management can be developed and implemented. [www.lankanewspapers.com](http://www.lankanewspapers.com)

### ***Sri Lanka rupee falls to a new low...***

(LBO) – The Sri Lanka rupee fell to a new low of 110.50 to the dollar in early trading Thursday dealers said, while short-term interest rates eased.

The rupee had ended just short of 110 to the dollar earlier in the month with high rupee interest rates encouraging exporters to convert to the domestic currency early. Overnight call rates which hit 50 percent a week ago eased to 15 percent as cash that left the banking system during the April festive season started coming back, dealers said.

Though the central bank has tightened monetary policy to block money printing easing pressure since January, analysts have pointed out that the rupee is technically overvalued by some 13.7 percent in real effective exchange rate terms due to inflation created earlier.

Economists say the rupee has to depreciate to restore Sri Lanka's export competitiveness. Sri Lankan authorities use the dollar as the intervention currency, maintaining a loose peg, and allow other currencies to fluctuate freely. Last year, garment exports to the United States fell in absolute terms.

Pressure is also coming to the exchange rate from losses run by the petroleum distributors. Ceylon Petroleum Corporation said Wednesday it was looking at a loss of 800 million rupees up to April. Losses are also being run up by Lanka IOC which has half as much of the market as CPC.

Analysts point out that energy firms which are funding losses with bank debt are effectively running a dollar/rupee position in the financial system.

In 1999-2000 Sri Lanka went through a severe balance of payments crisis fueled by central bank credit as well as losses in CPC, CEB and a state import trading firm, the Co-operative Wholesale Establishment, which together ran up losses and bank debts of over 35 billion rupees.

The rupee is falling despite a fall in the dollar against international markets.

### ***Cheap Caviar...***

Caviar becomes cheaper as Sri Lanka tries to keep prices down.

Sri Lanka's move to cut food prices ahead of the traditional New Year has unwittingly made exotic caviar cheaper in a country where more than half the population earns less than a dollar a day. Sri Lanka marks the traditional Sinhala and Tamil New Year next weekend and prices usually soar during the festive season.

Caviar qualified to be a duty-free import as it is clubbed under government regulations with canned tuna and sardines that are popular among consumers and considered essential commodities, Gunawardena said. "I hope only a small quantity of caviar will be imported because only five-star hotels buy it," the minister said.

Other items excluded from import tax were chillies, lentils and dried fish. Sri Lanka's inflation rate is running at about 19.5 percent. About half of the country's 19.5 million population earn less than a dollar a day.

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

One day, a blind man and his dog are walking down a street, they come to a busy intersection, and the dog, ignoring the high volume of traffic zooming by on the street, leads the blind man out into the thick of traffic. This is followed by the screech of tires and horns blaring as panicked drivers try desperately not to run the pair down.

The blind man and his dog finally reach the safety of the sidewalk on the other side of the street, and the blind man pulls a cookie out of his coat pocket, and offers it to the dog.

A passerby, having observed the near fatal incident, can't control his amazement and says to the blind man, "Why on earth are you rewarding your dog with a cookie? He nearly got you killed!"

The blind man turns partially in his direction and replies, "To find out where his head is, so I can kick his ass."

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> June, 2007 to the correspondence address below. Attn: Editorial Committee or by email to: [nzslf@nzslfoundation.com](mailto:nzslf@nzslfoundation.com)

Correspondence: NZSLF, P O Box 41191, St Lukes, Auckland 1346, New Zealand, [www.nzslfoundation.com](http://www.nzslfoundation.com)