

# SRI LANKA SOCIETY of Queensland Inc. NEWS LETTER



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## Message from the President

As the president of the Sri Lankan Society of Queensland it gives me great pleasure to begin this message by wishing you all a healthy and prosperous new year.

The Sri Lankan New Year brings us a sense of nostalgia and many happy memories with our loved ones and extended family. The Sinhala and Tamil New Year is celebrated by all Sri Lankans with a sense of hope and excitement for the year to come.

In Sri Lanka people of all faiths celebrate this occasion as a cultural event that dates back many thousands of years. The New Year begins with the Koha singing to herald the New Year with the older generation giving it a special significance. This is followed soon after by the parents arranging for the sweets to be prepared and new clothes that should be worn with the auspicious colours determined by the astrologers.

The New Year dawns with fire crackers and to the drum beats of the Rabana. People flock to temples in their new clothes to worship and pray.

These traditions are still being practiced in Sri Lanka and many of us here in Brisbane and wider Australia have fond memories of these traditions and seek to create the same feelings amongst our loved ones over here who have missed these simple and traditional aspects of Sri Lankan life. The Sri Lanka Society of Queensland is striving to re-create this facet of our culture and to enrich our adopted country's multicultural society.

On behalf of the Committee, it is my privilege, to wish you all the very best for the coming New Year and to extend an invitation to join in and enjoy our celebrations on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April.



**Hiran Cooray**

*OBA SAMATA SUBA ALUTH AVRUDHAK WEVA*

**Hiran Cooray**

*The Committee of the Sri Lanka Society Inc.  
wish all members and well-wishers of  
the Society  
A Happy and Prosperous Sri Lankan  
New Year in 2007*

### CONTENTS

Message from the President	<i>Hiran Cooray</i>	1
Management Committee		2
Diary of Events		2
Whither Multiculturalism?	<i>Victor Gunasekara</i>	3
Society and General News		7
News from Sri Lanka (Feb 2007)	<i>Victor Melder</i>	7
Sri Lanka Cricket News (Feb 2007)	<i>Victor Melder</i>	8
A Note on the New Year	<i>The Editor</i>	9
New Year Celebration Notice		10
Members' Notices		11
About the Society and the Newsletter		12



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## Diary of Events

The following regular events will take place. Some dates are left open

<b>April 14</b>	<b>Sri Lankan New Year Celebration [See p. 10 for details]</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>Sports Day</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>Annual Dinner Dance</b>
<b>December</b>	<b>Christmas and New Year Party</b>



# Multiculturalism under Threat?

by Victor Gunasekara

In the last quarter of the twentieth century many people from developing countries came to live in Western countries making the population of those countries ethnically diverse. This led to the emergence of multiculturalism<sup>1</sup> in many Western countries.

The twenty-first century seems to see a halt to this process and a retreat from multiculturalism. This article looks at this phenomenon in Australia. It has to be first placed in the context of migration policy since Federation.

## The White Australia Policy

In the wake of the settlement of Australia by the British many people from Asian countries too came to the country. Most of them came from other British colonies who as British subjects could enter the country. This included people from Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) whose descendants can still be traced in Queensland and Western Australia.

There was also a substantial migration from the Pacific islands (not all of them voluntary) and from parts of Imperial China. The newer migrants from Asia and the Pacific were considered "coloured" and formed a distinct contrast to the original "white" settlers.

The Commonwealth of Australia was inaugurated on 1 January 1901 as a Federation of the existing British colonies in the country. One of the first Acts of the new Federation was to bar the migration of non-white people – the 'White Australia Policy'. This policy lasted until 1973 when a formally non-discriminatory immigration policy was adopted. This led to Australia becoming a multicultural nation even though it had always been 'multi-cultural' as the Aboriginal people had lived since human settlement. Asians who came before Federation too continued as a non-white demographic group even after 1901.

There was little change to the 1901 Act until the end of World War II when Prime Minister **John Chifley** created the portfolio of Immigration. **Arthur Calwell**<sup>2</sup> was the first Minister of Immigration. He presided over the largest influx of migrants to the country. To facilitate this two changes were introduced which led to a shift in the White Australia policy though not its abandonment.

The first change was to enlarge the "white" migration base beyond the Anglo-Celts who had dominated it so far. The newer migrants came from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean but were still 'white'. The second change was the admission of people of part-white descent. A historian of immigration policy of

this period describes this change as follows:

"[Calwell initiated] a little-known change to policy on 'mixed-blood' immigrants, many of whom were British citizens and sought entry into Australia as imperial power declined and civil unrest in their homelands increased. At the end of the war it became necessary for a 'mixed-blood' applicant to establish 75 per cent 'white' descent, not 50 per cent, as before. This could be done by producing birth certificates and authenticated genealogies to establish three European grandparents, or two European and two 'half-castes'. In addition, applicants were required to be of European appearance and European in education and upbringing. Despite the stringency of these conditions, perhaps 10,000 'mixed-blood' people were admitted by 1965, the largest group being the Burghers of Sri Lanka."<sup>3</sup>

Thus Sri Lankan Burghers, Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Chinese can be grateful to Calwell for the relaxation in policy that enabled many of them to migrate to Australia.

At the same time there was a subtle shift in the philosophy behind the entry of migrants. Previously the policy had been one of "assimilation" now it was changed to one of "integration". The difference in the two approaches was more than semantic. Assimilation implied a much greater homogenization while integration meant that immigrants would be allowed a greater degree of cultural diversity. In particular "white" migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe were accepted to a greater extent that was previously the case, even though they could not speak English or play cricket.

The Labor Party was defeated in the elections of 1949 and a Liberal-Country Party coalition assumed power with Menzies as Prime Minister and Harold Holt as the Minister of Immigration. Initially there appeared to be some relaxation in immigration policy towards Asians. During the war some 5500 displaced Asians were brought to Australia. After the war many went back but about a third wanted to remain. Calwell wanted all of them expatriated forcefully and began doing so until Labor lost the 1949 election. The new Government allowed them to remain as wartime refugees. A similar policy was also adopted towards Chinese who refused to return to China after the communist take-over in 1949. These changes were more due to adverse foreign publicity rather than a genuine change of policy.

In fact the views of Menzies and Holt on non-White immigration were no different to those of Calwell. Holt wrote in a confidential memo to the Minister for External Affairs: "I confess that the more I have to do with the administration of the Immigration Department the stronger becomes my own conviction that we have to hang on to our restriction policy as tenaciously as

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1. Multiculturalism may be defined as the official recognition of more than one culture in a country. Note that it does not require all cultures to be equal.

2. Calwell was perhaps the most racist Australian immigration Minister remembered for his statement "two wogs do not make a white!"

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3. Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations*. Allen & Unwin, 1994 p. 167)



we can".<sup>4</sup>

The first intake of non-White immigrants on a nondiscriminatory basis had to await the departure of Menzies from the political stage in 1966. He was succeeded by Harold Holt who appointed **Hubert Opperman** as his Minister of Immigration.

In March 1966 Opperman initiated a change of policy which led to the first entry of nonwhite migrants in their own right. However, the number of people so allowed was strictly limited in order not to threaten the country's allegedly "homogenous" population. They were generally professional people.<sup>5</sup> The Opperman innovation was deemed a success and the limited number of persons admitted did not create the kind of problem visualized by the White Australia lobby. Also at this time the Labor party, which had been one of the greatest supporters of White Australia changed its policy in favour of a non-Discriminatory policy. The victory of Gough Whitlam over Arthur Calwell as the leader of the Labor party was a dramatic expression of this change of policy.

Gough Whitlam won the 1972 election. He appointed Al Grassby as the Minister of Immigration. It was this administration that finally repealed this the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. This marked the formal end of the White Australia policy.

The White Australia policy was one of the most blatant racist policies adopted by a Western government. It was perhaps only exceeded by the Apartheid policy of South Africa. But even in this regard elements of apartheid were not entirely absent in the Australian experience, especially in relation to the treatment of Aborigines.

### The Shift to Multiculturalism

The end of the White Australia policy marked the shift to Multiculturalism. The previous policy was not only a mono-racial one (race being defined by skin colour) but also a mono-cultural one. Culture is a multi-dimensional concept and the specific aspects of cultural identity that are emphasized differ according to the context. A dominant cultural norm was established, and all arrivals (as also the original inhabitants) were expected to conform to this norm. The norm was the culture of the original invaders (the "first fleet"), and the policy of enforcing conformity to it was either called "assimilation" or "integration". We saw that the changes in 1945 involved a shift from assimilation to integration. The question now arose whether multiculturalism meant a further progress away from integration itself.

It is possible to combine a multi-racial immigration policy with an integrationist ideology, as was the case with the Aborigines once it was realized that it was not possible to

physically eliminate them. In the view of many this same policy could be adopted towards non-white migrants allowed under the new policy. In both areas the Christian churches thought they had a special mission to convert Aborigines and non-Christian migrants to their own religions.

But the problem of forcing conformity to a preset cultural norm proved to be more difficult in the case of the non-European immigrants. Unlike the Aborigines they came from places with strong cultural traditions, which were "alive" in the international scene. Thus the problem of integrating them proved more difficult.

It was this that led to the debate between the "multiculturalists" and "integrators". At first the multiculturalists seemed to have won. Thus the celebration of the centenary of federation in Australia in 2001 was often turned into a celebration of multiculturalism. This was probably the high watermark of multiculturalism. What has been happening since could be described as a retreat back to integration.

Multiculturalism is one of those terms with no precise definition and is used by different people to mean very different things. It is clear that multiculturalism is closely linked with the idea of ethnicity, and indeed the two cannot exist in independence of each other. Sometimes ethnicity is also linked to race, but it is clear that the two are not identical the former being defined by cultural traits and the latter by physical characteristics.

Mark Lopez, a student of the subject has identified four varieties of the species, as follows:<sup>6</sup>

- (1) **Cultural Pluralism (CP)**. This refers to the preservation of migrant-ethnic values through Government support, with service delivery to ethnic groups being done through special ethnic organisations.
- (2) **Welfare Multiculturalism (WM)**. This looks at migrant-ethnic groups as being essentially disadvantaged requiring special support from Government.
- (3) **Ethnic Structural Pluralism (ESP)**. This looks at ethnic-migrant groups as forming a distinct part of the social fabric, in addition to principles involved in WM.
- (4) **Ethnic Rights Multiculturalism (ERM)**. This concentrates on the codification of ethnic rights, and looks at such groups as being subject to institutionalized racism, etc.

There are no major differences in the four varieties of multiculturalism listed above. They all center around the delivery of support from Government. CP is probably the mildest but even here there is the separation of ethnic organizations from the general service delivery system for the community at large. WM carries this further, and its strong supporters are in church groups. ESP and ERM are forms of "structural multiculturalism" and focus on the separate identity of ethnic groups. ERM is the most extreme kind of multiculturalism and has the potential of posing a threat to liberal humanist values.

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4. There was a growing rift between the external affairs and immigration departments on the question of Asian immigration. The former mindful of foreign opinion wanted a change even if merely symbolic while immigration did not want to abandon the White Australia policy.

5. It was under the Opperman policy that the present writer was admitted as a (non-white) permanent resident in 1969, one of the first Sri Lankans to be so admitted.

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6. Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism*, Melbourne U.P., 2000, p.447 Previously varieties of multiculturalism were divided into 'structuralist' or 'cultural' in one classification, or into 'left' and 'right' on political grounds.



### The Origins of Australian Multiculturalism

Australia secured a separate political identity with Federation, but did not develop a distinct national (or cultural) identity. It tended to look upon itself as an outlier of British identity which since the Second World War, with the great migrant influx, became more Europeanised. Since then it has become increasing Americanised.

With this cultural void it is natural that with the extension of the eligibility for migration in the late 1960s there was an attempt to extend the cultural base of Australian society to encompass new cultures. This was greatly aided by the emergence of multicultural movements in the United States and to a greater extent in Canada. There was the inevitable backlash but this has not, as yet, succeeded in reversing the new developments.<sup>7</sup>

The initial impulse towards multiculturalism came from European (i.e. 'white') groups, particularly Italians, Greeks and East Europeans. The early multicultural organisations were set up by them. The local support came from professionals and bureaucrats. It is only gradually that ethnic groups set up by the Asian migrants have entered the broad multicultural movement.

This extension of the multicultural movement have also revealed differences within it as well as diverging aims and aspirations within its various components. While the search for Government support for ethnicity is still the main motivating force other factors have also come into play. In order to investigate the nature of these complex forces operating within the contemporary multicultural movement it is necessary to investigate the components of culture and ethnicity which remain the base of multiculturalism.

### The Determinants of Culture and Ethnicity

The terms 'culture' and 'ethnicity' are often used interchangeably but there is no agreement as to what their components are. At one time it was assumed that race was at the bottom of both manifestations. But since the advocacy of racial aspiration came to be called racism, and acquired an opprobrious reputation, the use of this term has been eschewed. But to many ethnicity is a nicer word to replace what racism was formerly used to denote.

There are serious scientific difficulties in defining race even though this term is intuitively obvious to many people.<sup>8</sup> Since the term ethnicity is generally used to avoid the connotation of race we may exclude race from the desiderata of ethnicity. This leaves us with the following characteristics *as* defining a particular ethnicity: country-of-origin, language, religion, food, customs, dress, sport, dancing, and other less important characteristics. These characteristics may interact in a variety of ways. Thus if a given ethnic group is defined in terms of

country-of-origin they may exhibit a diversity in language and other characteristics. Usually most countries (or regions within a given country) will have a dominant language, religion, etc., and individuals exhibiting all these characteristics who will form the core of that ethnic group. Others could form sub-ethnic groups within that broad ethnicity.

### Reconciling Ethnic Diversity

If multiculturalism is accepted as the basis of Australian identity then the question arises as to how these various dimensions of ethnicity can be accommodated and reconciled. This is the core of the multicultural question, and a variety of solutions have been offered. The generally adopted solution is a patchwork one. We may cite the multicultural broadcaster SBS as a one way of solving this. In its radio broadcasts it divides up the time into various slots representing the various language groups with almost no interconnection between them. This very often results in creating more problems than it solves. Of the many characteristics we have identified we may consider only the characteristics of country, language and religion as the more important ones.

If we take the criterion of *country-of-origin* there are few problems when the country-of-origin is broadly homogeneous in terms of the other determinants of ethnicity as is the case with, say, Ireland or Norway. But when we deal with large countries which are themselves ethnically diverse, like India or Nigeria, there is a serious problem in defining the ethnicity of the country concerned.

When it comes to *language* it is clear that Australia recognises only English as its national and official language. For reasons of courtesy some information may be given out in ethnic languages but this has no legal validity. As we saw some service organisations like SBS may service the different languages but this is not a major way of supporting these ethnic languages. So when it comes to language multiculturalism must necessarily fail.<sup>9</sup>

It is in the area of *religion* that some of the most difficult problems arise. Many ethnic migrants are already Christian and so conform to the national stereotype. Even in their case they tend to form ethnic churches (like the Chinese) although other Christians (e.g. from the Indian subcontinent) fail to persuade their religious superiors to permit churches in their own ethnicity despite the formal church support for multiculturalism. However this problem is minor when compared to militant religions like Fundamentalist Islam.<sup>10</sup>

Judaism had been under attack from militant Christian right-wing neo-Nazi elements, but this is not a purely Australian problem but is a flow-on from the Christian anti-Semitic tradition. This has now been extended to Islam especially in the aftermath of the terrorist actions of 9/11.

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7. The institutional form of this reaction is seen in the rise of the One Nation phenomenon. Even the mainline political movements contain traces of it, and the recent outcry again: the illegal entry of asylum seekers was partly due to it. However there are many other issues in the One Nation phenomenon.

8. The old White Australia policy has been based on the view that "whites" constituted a race. This is nonsense in anthropological terms.

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9. A category called "non-English speaking" is recognised some ethnic jurisdictions. But the emphasis is to make the ethnics involved to convert to English rather than perpetuate their dependence of their native languages

10. It must be mentioned that only a minority of Muslims endorse militant Islam. But it is to them that much of recent public attention has been focussed.



The official response to this is not to recognise the failure of multiculturalism in the religious area but to impose new laws against religious “vilification”. Some see in these laws an abridgement of freedom of expression, and an impediment to fundamental human rights.

### Towards a “Non-culturalist” Policy

It was to remedy the defects of the White-Christian mono-culturalist position that the policy of multiculturalism was adopted. Compared to what it replaced there are distinct improvements in multiculturalism. It prevented some serious discriminatory practices and gave a measure of equality and access to disadvantaged groups. It also provided a framework to legitimize the aspirations of the Aboriginal people (even though many of the new non-white migrants shared the same anti-Aboriginal attitudes of the previous white settlers). A great deal of cultural diversity has been introduced in social and public life. Radical changes in food habits, and in the arts have taken place. There has been an economic spin-off, particularly from trading relationships with Asia, from which the whole nation has benefited. Migrants have brought with them scarce skills and human capital (not to mention business capital) when it was increasingly difficult to attract such resources from the traditional European and North American arenas.

However now in its third decade the shortcomings of multiculturalism are emerging. This is taking place at a time when multiculturalism has moved from its cultural phase into its “structuralist” phase. Moreover this move is towards the militant “Ethnic Rights” position (or what has been referred to earlier as ERM). This has raised the question whether time has come to transcend both the old mono-culturalism and the new multiculturalism. We shall refer to a post-multiculturalist policy as one of *nonculturalism*.

What is important to stress here is that there are no “ethnic rights” as such but only “human rights”. In fact some ethnic rights are directly destructive of long established human rights such as the demand for the outlawing of so-called religious vilification. Human rights inhere to people not because of any special characteristic like ethnicity but simply because people belong to the common genus of *homo sapiens*. This is the fundamental right that all humans enjoy and it should not be truncated to satisfy partial aspirations such as membership of a particular racial group, ethnic culture or religious affiliation. This is what we have called a non-culturalist policy or a humanist policy.

### Religion and Secularism

A consequence of Multiculturalism has been to give a higher profile to religion than would otherwise been the case. In Western countries secularism has been progressing ever since the Enlightenment at the end of the eighteenth century. The first half of the twentieth century saw secularism triumphing in all the major Western countries, and indeed even in the rest of the world. In the last decades of the twentieth century religion has been making a comeback. This was also the period when multiculturalism became accepted in most Western countries. Is there a connection between the two?

There is of course no necessary connection between the rise of multiculturalism and religion. As we have seen religion cannot really be seen as part of culture. Most religions in the world claim to be universal religions having a relevance to all cultures. Strictly ethnic religions like Judaism, which was supposed to be confined to the “chosen people” have not generally had a large population. Hinduism has also be considered an ethnic religion, but even though it has have a large following most of it is confined to the Indian subcontinent. More recently Hindu revivalists have tried to portray Hinduism as applicable to all ethnic groups, and as such has had a presence in Western countries (e.g. through the Hare Krishna movement). But non-Indian Hindus as still very small. Universal religions should not come within the ethnic umbrella and as such not be recognised under multiculturalism. So even though the recent revival of religion took place at a time when multiculturalism was receiving recognition there is no causal connection between the two developments.

Similarly there is no essential conflict between secularism and multiculturalism. Secularism is defined by the strict separation of church and state. Religion is relegated completely to the private domain. A secular state is more likely to fare better under a multicultural regime than under a mono-cultural regime which is also likely to be mono-religious. Under mono-religion the dominant culture will have adapted to the dominant religion. Thus many institutions and practices in Ireland is likely to be Catholic as they would be Muslim in Egypt. In these countries political pressure is likely to result in the state promoting the dominant religion. This is not merely of making funds to the dominant religion. It will also involve legislating the moral rules favoured by the dominant religion. In a true multicultural system the State may find it too difficult or expensive to support all religions. Thus it is more likely that the various religions are left to fund for themselves through their own resources.

### The Clash of Civilizations and Terrorism

A recent development that is having a profound effect on the future of multiculturalism is the so-called “Clash of Civilizations” or the conflict between Christianity and Islam. In this conflict the overwhelming military strength lies with the Christians. It is therefore not surprising that the militant Muslims<sup>11</sup> have chosen the tactic of terrorism, the “weapon of the weak”. This has posed a serious problem to the West on how to fight Islamic terrorism. George Bush the US President who has taken on himself the role of guardian of the West (and Christianity)

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11. It must be mentioned that most of the references to Muslims in this section are to militant Muslims or “jihadists” as they are referred in the popular press. It is against them that the “war on terror” has been launched. It must be mentioned that they form only a small minority of all Muslims, but their actions like the 9/11 and Bali attacks have created profound fear amongst the general population. It is this fear that is creating a backlash against Multiculturalism, not only against innocent Muslims, but against all who are assumed to have a “profile” that identify as them being “aliens” of some kind.



launched the “War on Terror”, but with an enemy difficult to identify it has become more difficult than conventional wars. The multicultural policies in the West over the preceding decades have liberalized immigration laws which have allowed non-Christians including Muslims to migrate to the West. Some elements in these communities have become a resource for terrorists as is seen by the number of people who are now charged with terrorist offenses, with places of religious worship considered as places of recruitment of terrorists, and the security services placing them

under surveillance..

One tactic that has been adopted is to impose stricter controls over minority groups and erode some of their rights under multiculturalism. One of these has been to insist on the “integration” of these minority ethnic groups into the dominant culture/religion. This does away with one of the basic principles of multiculturalism which has given equality of treatment for all cultures with no particular culture being considered the dominant [Continued on page 11]

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## Society and General News

### From the Publications Secretary

At the 2006 AGM of the Society I announced that I will be stepping down from the position of Publications Secretary which I had held for several years. After many years of service to the Society I felt that it was time to retire. Accordingly I did not stand for office at that AGM.

At this year’s AGM I was again asked to take up the position until a replacement could be found. With some reluctance I accepted and I hope that this will be my last stint in this position.

The new Committee has decided to issue three Newsletters during the course of this year. They will appear approximately at the beginning of April, August and December. The format of these Newsletters will be similar to what had been issued previously when I was the editor.

The Newsletter of a Society like the Sri Lanka Society should be a forum where members can have their say. If the Newsletter is to fulfil this role it is important that members should contribute articles, letters to the editor, and news items that are of interest to members. There had been a reluctance of members to do so in the past and I hope that with the influx of young people and the great enthusiasm shown by the new Committee this will be a thing of the past.

**Victor Gunasekara**

### Membership Renewal

Please note that financial membership of the Society for any given year ends at the next AGM (usually held in February each year). Members attending the AGM can renew their membership at the meeting. Others are kindly requested to send their subscription to the Treasurer at the postal address of the Society.

Even if you have not been a financial member for a few

years you can renew your membership for the current year without additional penalty. Persons who have not been a member and desire to become a member please return the Membership Application Form on the back page of this Newsletter (or a photocopy thereof) together with your subscription.

There are reciprocal arrangements with fraternal societies (e.g. the Silverfawn Club and the Sinhala Society) for members to attend functions of these Societies at the rate for their members.

If you have changed your address or contact details please inform the Treasurer. The Newsletter and official communication will only be sent to members at their address as currently on the database of the Society.

### Advertising in the Newsletter

In previous years a concession was allowed to members to advertise their products or services provided commercially free in the Newsletter. The Committee regrets that due to increasing costs of publication this concession has been discontinued.

You can still advertise your products or services for a fee of \$25 for a business-card sized display in three consecutive issues of the Newsletter. Please note that the Society does not guarantee or accept responsibility for any product or service so advertised.

Please send the copy of the Advertisement to the Publications Secretary together with a cheque for the fee drawn in favour of the Sri Lanka Society of Queensland Inc.

### Society Webpage

The URL of the Webpage of the Society is now as follows: <http://www.srilanakansqld.org>. For any communication regarding the webpage please contact the Web Page Administrator (contact details on p.2.)

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## Sri Lankan News - February 2007

By Victor Melder

Sri Lanka’s first-operational fish canning factory is expected to go into production by the end of this year, in Mutwal, Colombo. The factory is a joint venture floated by a Russian company called Inform Progress Bank and Ceylon Fisheries Corporation (CFC). The Russians will bring in \$9.6 million and

the CFC equity will be one acre and 72 perches of land within its premises. The factory will produce 96,000, 200 gramme fish cans per day, twenty percent of which will be sold in the local market. (Sunday Observer 4.2.2007)

Last year’s tea production slipped by two percent over



the previous year's (2005) production figures to 310.8 million kilos. However, rubber production year on year grew by 4.6 percent to 19.2 million kilos. (Sunday Leader 4.2.2007)

Failure to honour the collective Cabinet responsibility by the former Ministers, Anura Bandaranike, Mangala Samaraweera and Sripathi Sooriyaarachchi forced President Mahinda Rajapakse to sack them, a government source said. The immediate reason for the President's decision was the boycott of the vote on the extension of Emergency Regulations when it was taken up in Parliament. The three Ministers who were at odds with the President and unhappy over their portfolios boycotted the Emergency vote. (Sunday Observer 11.2.2007)

The Ministry of Trade, Marketing Development, Cooperatives and Consumer Services for the first time signed agreements with the private sector traders and cooperative societies to keep prices of essential commodities stable for three months. The prices of 11 essential consumer items such as sugar, sprats, dhal, green gram, garlic dried chillies, red onions, potatoes, canned fish, dry fish and gram at all wholesale markets will remain stable during this period. (Sunday Observer 18.2.2007)

The Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB) is targeting 600,000 tourist arrivals in 2007 despite the travel advisories and the deteriorating security situation in the country. The country's fourth largest foreign exchange earner – the leisure industry suffered severe setbacks during the 2006/2007 winter season and is struggling for survival. (Sunday Leader 18.2.2007)

The British government is putting the squeeze on Sri Lanka, threatening to stop a grant of Forty One Million Pounds Sterling for breaching international obligations and for "unjustified" military spending. Britain's International Development Minister Hilary Benn has written to Sri Lanka seeking assurances that it would demonstrate in the coming year that Colombo is meeting the concerns raised by the British government, informed sources said. (Sunday Times 18.2.2007)

Exports of fruit and vegetables from Sri Lanka have dropped by thirty percent resulting in a revenue loss of one billion rupees to the country, while vegetable prices have skyrocketed during the last year in the domestic market too. (Sunday Observer 25.2.2007)

India has informed the Mahinda Rajapakse government that its support for the resolution of the ethnic conflict will only

be forthcoming if the proposals to be submitted are an improvement on the 2000 Draft Constitution of former President Chandrika Kumaratunga. The 2000 draft proposal provided for a union of regions within an undivided state with a merger of the north and east subject to a subsequent referendum. (Sunday Leader 25.2.2007)

The joint venture Crude Palm Oil (CPO) mill set up by Agalawatte Plantations Ltd, Namunukula Plantations Limited and Elpitiya Plantations Limited, under the company AEN Palm oil Processing Pvt Limited (AENP) commenced commercial production recently. The total investment in the project has been around Rs 250 million and was set up with the help of expertise from Malaysia. Palm fruit from all three plantations companies will be processed in this mill and CPO exported overseas. (Sunday Island 25.2.2007)

President Mahinda Rajapakse's administration would not quit the Oslo-arranged Ceasefire Agreement, government sources said. Amidst growing JVP-led protests aimed at forcing the President to abrogate the CFA, the sources emphasized that the agreement was irrelevant. Senior officials explained that the government was committed to a negotiated settlement. (Sunday Island 25.2.2007)

The Central Bank (CB) is targeting foreign investors and Sri Lankan expatriates to invest in Sri Lanka Development Bonds (SLDB) worth US\$ 200 million in the coming year. The move is partly devised to curb illegal channeling of remittances from expatriates. An estimated thirty to forty percent of remittances from expatriates come into the country through unofficial channels causing concern to a foreign cash strapped government. (Sunday Times 25.2.2007)

Compulsory export inspection certificates for all imported reconditioned vehicles will finally become effective from March 1. The regulations which initially came into effect on August 1, 2006, were postponed soon after due to concerns by dealers that the regulations would only lead to an increase in the cost of an imported vehicle by approximately Rs 100,000 or more. Most reconditioned vehicles in Sri Lanka are imported from Japan and will therefore require an inspection certificate from the Japan Auto Appraisal Institute (JAAI) and similar authorities from other countries. (Sunday Times 25.2.2007)

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## SRI LANKA CRICKET NEWS (February 2007)

by Victor Melder

The first One-Day International between the touring Sri Lankans and India, played at Kolkata Stadium, was abandoned due to rain. **Scores:** Sri Lanka – 102/3 in 18.2 Overs (Jayasuriya 63no, Tharanga 14, Patel 2/25)

The touring Sri Lankans beat India by five runs to win the second One-Day International, played at Madhavrao Scindia Stadium, Rajkot. **Scores:** Sri Lanka – 257/8 in 50 Overs (Sangakkara 110, Dilshan 56, Patel 4/49, Sreesanth 2/39) India - 252/9 in 50 Overs (Gangully 62, Tendulkar 54, Dhoni 48, Maharooof 3/42, Bandara 2/36, Malinga 2/75). This was Kumar Sangakkara's sixth One-Day International century.

Sri Lanka's World Cup Squad: Mahela Jayawardene (c), Kumar Sangakkara, Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga, Marvan Atapattu, Tilakaratne Dilshan, Russel Arnold, Chamara Silva, Chaminda Vaas, Farveez Maharooof, Lasith Malinga, Dilhara Fernando, Nuwan Kulasekera, Muttiah Muralidharan, Malinga Bandara.

Kumar Sangakkara has signed up to play for Warwickshire for the 2007 season. Sangakkara, who has never previously played county cricket, will join the club after the World Cup and expects to spend most of the summer at Edgbaston.



India beat the touring Sri Lankans by five wickets in the third One-Day International played at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Fatorda, Margoa. **Scores:** Sri Lanka – 230/8 in 50 Overs (Arnold 66no, Atapattu 42, Dilshan 42, Jayewardene 30, Khan 5/42, Singh 2/37); India – 233/5 in 46.3 Overs (Dhoni 67no, Dravid 66, Gangully 48, Fernando 2/43)

India beat the touring Sri Lankas by seven wickets in the fourth and final One-Day International played at Visakhapatnam. **Scores:** Sri Lanka – 259/7 in 50 Overs (Silva 107no, Dilshan 28, Maharoof 28, Jayasuriya 22, Agarkar 2/52, Zaheer 2/54); India – 263/3 in 41 Overs (Singh 95no, Gangully 58no, Uthappa 52, Sehwag 46, Fernando 1/56). India clinch four-match series 2-1; Man of the Match: Chamara Silva; Man of the Series: Sourav Ganguly

ICC One-Day International Rankings: Sri Lanka placed 6 (out of 11) with 108 points. **Batsmen:** 7 – Kumar Sanghakkara, 735 points, 10 – Sanath Jayasuriya, 712 points (out of 20); **Bowlers:** 5 – Chaminda Vaas, 726 points, 9 – Muttiah Muralidharan, 716 points (out of 20); **All-Rounders:** 5 – Sanath

Jayasuriya, 359 points (out of 10)

Michael Coulter, writing in the 'Sunday Age' of February 11, 2007, has placed Sanath Jayasuriya in second position out of the ten Greatest One-Day Players. After the 1996 World Cup, Peter Roebuck said Jayasuriya and fellow opener Romesh Kaluwitharana had "roared against the percentages of the game, returning it to the jungle from the cages of confinement". With more than 11,000 runs, 280 wickets and the second most one-day sixes to his name, he can still lead his side to victory in the World Cup.

President Mahinda Rajapakse's son Namal will lay the foundation stone for the new Mahinda Rajapakse International Cricket Stadium at Duwawatte, Angunukolapelessa, Hambantota. This international facility is earmarked to have ten turf wickets with all modern equipment, modern dressing rooms, floodlights, electronic scoreboard and modern media box. The ICC is to give technological assistance to Sri Lanka Cricket in this connection.

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## A Note on the Sri Lankan New Year by the Editor

The New Year depends on the calendar on which it is based. What is sometimes called the "Sri Lankan New Year" is traditionally referred to in Sri Lanka as the "Sinhalese and Hindu New Year". It is based on perhaps the best known of the Hindu calendars, the **Saka** calendar, that the Sinhalese burrowed from India. After Independence India appointed a Calendar Reform Commission which recommended a slightly modified version of the Saka calendar as the National Calendar. This was adopted in 1957, but the international **Gregorian** calendar continues to be widely used. The official calendar is generally confined to astrology and dating of religious festivals.

India had developed several other calendars which still continue to be used locally in parts of India. Confining oneself to the seven major Indian calendars the current year (2007 in the **Gregorian** calendar) is year 6008 in the **Kaliyuga**, the year 2551 in the **Buddhist**, the year 2064 in the **Vikram Samvat**, the year 1929 in the **Saka**, the year 1928 in the **Vedanga Jyotisa**, the year 1414 in the **Bengali San**, and the year 1183 in the **Kollam** calendars. The Saka calendar is widely used in South India and Sri Lankan Hindu Tamils too base their New Year on this calendar, a common link between the Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, hence the term 'Sinhalese and Hindu New Year'.

The Saka calendar was inaugurated during the reign of King Kanishka, and has the year 78 CE (Gregorian) as the zero point. It was refined later by the great Indian astronomer-mathematician Aryabhata in the second century CE who ironed out some problems in the Saka calendar. He used the meridian of the city of Ujjain (the city regarded as the birth place of the Arahant Mahinda who brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka) as the base for his astronomical calculations. Unlike the Gregorian calendar which is a solar calendar or the Muslim calendar which is a lunar calendar, the Saka calendar combines both. The length of the year is based on the motion of the Sun hence it has the same length as the Gregorian, but the months within the year are based on the phases of the moon. (A pure lunar calendar like the Muslim Hijri calendar has fewer days in the year than the Gregorian and the Saka. Thus a person with a given age according to the Gregorian will have much greater age according to the Muslim calendar).

In the course of its apparent annual journey across sky the sun travels through 12 constellations (called *rashis*). Indian astronomy assumed that there is a small gap between the rashis, and the time (usually a few hours) the sun leaves one rashi and enters the next is called the *sankranti*. The particular sankranti that is associated with the New Year is the transition from the Pisces Constellation (Meena Rashi) and the Aeries Constellation (Mesha Rashi). This period of known as the *nonagathe* in Sri Lanka and usually all activity ceases during this period. The start of the new year corresponds to the Vernal Equinox and usually falls on April 14 in each year, the precise time varying. The New Year is celebrated on this date not only in Sri Lanka but also in parts of India, in many countries of South-East Asia and amongst the Hindus of Indonesia.

In the celebration of the New Year different cultures adopt different customs. Even in Sri Lanka the celebrations amongst the Sinhalese differ from those of the Hindus. The mini-celebration which is part of the celebration of the Sri Lanka Society of Queensland largely follows the customs of the Sinhalese.



# The Sri Lanka Society of Queensland Inc

Presents

## THE SRI LANKAN NEW YEAR CELEBRATION and CULTURAL CONCERT (2007)



Scene from the 2004 Celebrations

<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 April 2007</b>
<b>Place:</b>	<b>University of Queensland UQ Centre, St Lucia Campus</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>5 pm - 12 Midnight</b>
<b>Bar:</b>	<b>Open after the Concert (No BYO)</b>
<b>Parking:</b>	<b>Free at UQ Centre</b>
<b>Dress:</b>	<b>Smart Casual</b>
<b>Ticket Prices:</b>	<b>Non Members \$60.00</b>
	<b>*Members \$50.00</b>
	<b>Students (with I.D.) \$35.00</b>
	<b>Pensioners \$35.00</b>
	<b>Children Under 12 \$15.00</b>
	<b>Children Under 6 \$10.00</b>

\* Membership includes membership of fraternal Societies (Please enquire when you book your ticket)

### Program for the Day

Arrival of Dignitaries  
Welcome Speech from the President  
Address by the Chief Guest

Rasa Kævili and Tea

Cultural Concert  
National Anthems

Dinner and Dessert

Live music from Sri Lankan group **WILD FIRE** & guest artists "THOSE TAP GUYS" traditional and funk tap dancing by an all Australian Group

*For Tickets:*

*Please contact Sri Lanka Society and Silverfawn Committee Members*

*Or*

<b>Hiran Cooray</b>	<b>0411480337</b>
<b>Pushpa Jayasekara</b>	<b>3300 9911</b>
<b>DavenalFlanderka</b>	<b>3878 1667</b>
<b>Gerard Fernando</b>	<b>3285 2793</b>
<b>Jayantha Pathikirikorale</b>	<b>3808 2299</b>

## Welcome the New Year in Style and have a Good Time!



*Whither Humanism?* [Contd. from page 6]

one to which the other cultures have to integrate. Various methods have been used to implement this policy. The primary check has been at the point of migration, and secondarily on the grant of citizenship after the required period of domicile. Interviews and written tests have been imposed to carry out these checks. These resemble to some extent the "dictation test" and similar measures used during the mono-cultural phase.

### **Conclusion**

This article has looked at the development of the policy used to populate the Australian continent seized from the control of its original inhabitants over two centuries ago. In the century since Federation this policy has moved from mono-culturalism imposed

internally by an assimilationist policy imposed on its original inhabitants and externally by barring those that do not conform to the dominant stereotype. While the multicultural policy of the last three decades is an improvement of what took place earlier it cannot be considered the final solution.

What we have seen is that policy in this area has moved from assimilation to integration to multiculturalism. Recent developments Now the tide has begun to recede. Multiculturalism is again moving back to integration. It could even move all the way back to assimilation and with to the mono-cultural policy on which the Commonwealth is founded. One way to avoid this decline is to follow the prescription in this article is to replace multiculturalism with a universal humanism.

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## **Members' Notices**

This Space will contain Notices inserted by Members of the Society. There is a small charge for insertions. Please see Society News and Comment in this Issue of the Newsletter.

[The Notice below is an example taken from a previous issue of the Newsletter]

**Travel Centre Springwood**  
Suite 1, 3374 Pacific Highway  
Springwood Qld. 4127  
Tel: (07) 3808 2299 (A/H 0411 353535)  
Fax: (07) 3808 4794

**utag@travelcentrespringwood.com.au**  
**Jayantha and Lalani Pathikirikorale,**  
*Managers*

SENDER:



P. O. Box 15099,  
City East QLD 4002

Please deliver to:

**Sri Lanka Society Newsletter**  
**Vol 30, No. 1 – April 2007**

**Newsletter Policy.** Unless otherwise stated views expressed in articles are those of the writer and do not represent the views of the Society, or of the Management Committee. Contributions (letters, articles, etc.) from members and readers are welcome. Please send all material for publication to the Publications Secretary.

**Circulation.** This Newsletter is sent to all members, libraries, fraternal societies etc. It is also sent to persons who actively support Society activities. **If you receive it and are not in any of the above categories please inform the Society, or return it to the sender.** If you have not received your copy please contact the Publications Secretary.

**Objects and Rules of the Society.** The **Objects** are: (1) To promote harmonious co-operation and friendship amongst immigrants from Sri Lanka and Australians irrespective of racial, religious, political and other differences; (2) to preserve, promote and project the culture of Sri Lanka; (3) to render assistance to students and immigrants from Sri Lanka; (4) to encourage and foster recreational, sporting and social activities; (5) to publish and circulate news of Sri Lanka and local events; (6) to render assistance to the people of Sri Lanka in times of need, at the discretion of the Management Committee. The **Rules** of the Society are those of a non-profit society. If you need to see the Constitution of the Society please contact the Secretary.

**Contacting the Society.** See above for postal address, masthead for email and Webpage, page 2 for office bearers.

**Brief History.** Established in 1975 and incorporated a few years later. First Society in Queensland dedicated to serving all Queenslanders of Sri Lankan origin irrespective of ethnic identity, religion or language spoken.

**Membership of the Society.** Open to anyone subscribing to the objects of the Society (see above). Annual fees are \$15 for family, \$10 single (Pensioners and Students: \$10 family, \$7 single). Application Form is given below, please return with the relevant fee.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Name (with preferred title):.....

Postal Address: .....

Telephone: ..... Email: .....

Category (please tick):  Family (\$15),  Single (\$10),  Concession Family (\$10),  Concession Single (\$7)

Name of Partner (Family category only): .....

I wish to be involved in or to involve my children in Society cultural activities (dancing etc.) [Please tick]

I apply for membership of the Sri Lanka Society of Queensland Inc. I agree with the objects and the rules of the Society. I enclose the relevant fee.

DATE:..... SIGNATURE: .....