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NEWS LETTER OF NEW ZEALAND SRI LANKA FOUNDATION INCORPORATED

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Message From the President ...

After a Decade...

Manjula Sanis Walgampola

New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation had its 10th AGM on 26th July 2008 at the St. Pauls Methodist Church Lounge in Remuera. It's significant that it was in the same venue where NZSLF had their inaugural meeting. As we approached the 10th Anniversary of the founding of The New Zealand Sri Lanka foundation, it is very encouraging to note that our most important objective "HARMONY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY" is being achieved successfully.

It is with a sense of mission that I have assumed the mantle of the presidency for the second time in two consecutive years. Personally, I take immense satisfaction from the confidence you placed in me to be at the helm. Even as I say it is greatly appreciated, I cannot over emphasize my good fortune in having a dedicated and efficient committee who worked together as one. This year, we can look forward to bright times with a team of extraordinary variety, as several members in the last

executive committee were willing to continue. Among new faces, I am privileged to have one of our very own Sri Lankan ex-MPs Rohan Abeygunasekera on board, together with fellow Trinitian class-mate, Mahes

Perera, who was in advertising and marketing. His expertise in graphic design is reflected in the new face of our NewZletter. Saman Fernando is an enthusiastic new member, who has a wealth of experience in industry both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Kumar Velambalam manages a successful business in Auckland and Sydney Fernando combines academic and management roles, having been at one time in agriculture.

The 10th year events will begin with a big splash. The Gypsies, that very popular musical band from Sri Lanka for one evening performance. This is only a beginning and many more interesting events are being lined up for the rest of the year. I hope all of you, young and the young at heart will join us to make this a memorable evening as we kick off in our 10th Year. While I warmly invite your participation in these events I should welcome your comments and suggestions as they will undoubtedly encourage us to plan our activities even better in the future.



We are ten going on eleven

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A message of felicitation from The Hon. Consul General for Sri Lanka in New Zealand

Aruna Abeygoonsekera

Dear friends!

It is nearly 10 months since I took up office as Honorary Consul for Sri Lanka in New Zealand. It is my pleasure to send this message on the tenth anniversary of NZSL Foundation. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Foundation and to acknowledge with appreciation your valuable contribution to Sri Lankans and your community. For a group that was formed in 1998, you have come a long way fostering goodwill amongst Sri Lankans while also celebrating and promoting your culture in New Zealand.

Our culture has a rich history that dates back to over 2,500 years. It is notable that the NZSL Foundation have undertaken steps to preserve, promote and celebrate this culture by organising yourselves in the manner you have.

My wife Hiranthi and I had the privilege of meeting your members when we attended your commemorative ceremony of Sri Lanka's 60th Anniversary of Independence in Auckland in February this year. We were very impressed with the diversity of your membership, which truly reflects a cross section of Sri Lankan society. We were also made to feel very welcome by the warm hospitality shown by your members.

The strength and sustainability of any group depends on how committed and genuine the members are to what they believe in. It is important that they all feel as "one" people, united under one flag and committed to one country.

They should be genuine in their intentions when welcoming to their membership all persons, regardless of their ethnic, racial or religious backgrounds.

Having lived in New Zealand for the past 20 years (12 of them in the South Island), I have personally found New Zealand to be very welcoming to Sri Lankan immigrants.

Sri Lankans are generally held in high esteem and are considered hard working and law abiding citizens wanting to contribute favourably to the growth of their newly adopted country. They are seen as a group of people with a high sense of social consciousness and strong family values.

It is important that the NZSL Foundation continues to pursue the ideals and goals in the manner you have in the past and continue to be a leading organisation that sets the highest standards and be a source of inspiration for all Sri Lankans in New Zealand.

Like me, no doubt you too, are looking forward to warmer weather and an early spring!

My best wishes to you and your families

**NEXT EVENT:
SEPTEMBER 28 2008
GYPSIES**



**Calendar of Events:
GYPSIES
Sunday 28 September 2008**
Alexandra Park, Function Centre,
Tasman Room, Gate B,
Green Lane West Road, Epsom, Auckland

**DECEMBER 31 2008
LANKANITE**

The foundation completes 10 years this month and we invited all our past presidents to share with us some of their memories from years gone by.

PAST PRESIDENTS RECALL THEIR MEMORABLE MOMENTS

“May The Foundation Grow From Strength To Strength”

Anne Perera 1998-2000

On 15th August, 1998, the New Zealand Sri Lanka Foundation was formally inaugurated. We did not look at an auspicious hour in true Sri Lankan style; however the way it has grown since suggests that that moment would have indeed been an auspicious



hour for the Sri Lankan community here in New Zealand.

The real work for its formation actually took place before the inaugural day. We met as a small group and discussed at length to define our purpose clearly; then draw

up our constitution that was to be our guide for our activities; several more discussions in which founder members participated with enthusiasm on topics like the form of incorporation. Many were the ways in which they contributed to the real foundation of the “Foundation.”

I remember very well the moment we decided on the name of our fledgling organization. All of us were agreed that we had to select a name which had the words Sri Lanka and New Zealand, and also would reflect our feelings of solidarity and integrity. Then Vinod Perera, who went on to become our first Vice President at an inspirational moment suggested the word “foundation”, and that stuck a chord in all our hearts. So the name Sri Lanka New Zealand Foundation was adopted by acclamation! Since that day the word has been synonymous with our

organization.

Earlier, I had been on the committee of USLA, and also its President. Perhaps, because of that record, I was unanimously elected the first President of NZSLF. I had a second year as well. In those two years we enjoyed many memorable moments, particularly when we organized musical events. We had Maestro Amaradeva, Channa Upuli and Nanda Malini performing in Auckland and The Royal Dance Ensemble for the first time ever in New Zealand.

Then there was the celebration of a New Millennium! Our first decade continued into the new century and I find that throughout, the Foundation has maintained the true spirit of its founders. It’s my sincere belief that the Foundation will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Jayasena Widanagamage 2001-2002

In 2001 I was elected the President of NZSLF. I have been a student of Management for a long time as I have taught the subject in a MBA course in Sri Lanka. I am fascinated by studies of management



styles. Back at home my style was a people and task oriented one. However, in our committee affairs I consciously adopted more of a democratic style. I believed that this was more appropriate when giving leadership to a volunteer set up such as ours.

Then came the task of organizing the ‘Annesley Malawana Show’. The committee agreed to price all

tickets at a flat rate of \$25. Personally, I was not very happy with the decision for I envisaged problems in seat allocation, which NZSLF has had to face in the past. Nevertheless I went with the flow of the majority.

Each ticket seller was allocated a number of seats and the floor plan was displayed at the entrance to the auditorium. One of the ticket sellers was a lady who was not a member of the committee. She was unhappy with the seats allocated for her tickets and disputed them refusing to accept the seats that her tickets were given. She to my surprise, launched on a tirade of abuse on me in everyone’s presence. Then in true “democratic” fashion invited her ticket holders to sit anywhere they chose. It was pandemonium let loose as some of her friends waded from the rear to the front seats and occupied them.

I had invited the Hon. Judith Tizard, the Associate

Minister of Transport at the time to the grace the occasion as our Chief Guest. Photographs of the event showed various people seated around the minister while the committee members who had by then comprehended the confusion withdrew to the back seats.

So much for my democratic and laissez faire style of management!! However I drew great comfort from the success of the project. Annesley got the full participation of the audience. Almost everybody, including the Associate Minister, who did not know a word of Sinhala, was clapping and enjoying the show right through.

The plus factor of such a leadership style was evident throughout the year. All the committee members contributed their best. We, with our spouses cherish the relationship we’ve had and some of us still continue to meet even after seven years.

Sarath Pannila 2002-2003

I recall with great pleasure the range of activities that we carried out during my year. As president of the ‘Foundation’, I led a multi-talented team that



year and we succeeded in focusing on our theme of promoting and preserving our cultural heritage in our newly adopted country. Our committee kept the main objectives of the organisation in its view in all its activities. We planned and executed most of our activities during this year

to ensure that our cultural identity is safeguarded and our rich cultural heritage is nurtured amongst the next generation of Sri Lankans. Most importantly, all our activities were mainly focused on working together harmoniously with fellow Sri Lankan organisations in New Zealand. Undoubtedly these partnerships have contributed in many ways to the betterment of the community at large.

The year 2002/ 2003 was started on a high, with the organising of ‘Lanka Fest 2002’ – Sri Lankan Arts and Crafts Festival, which proved an outstanding success.

This was the second time the ‘Foundation’ organised an event similar to ‘Lanka Fest 2001’ following its great success. The chief guest was the Prime Minister Hon. Helen Clark. I strongly believe that this event has provided a great opportunity to enhance the profile of Sri Lankans living in this country and to promote the rich Sri Lankan cultural heritage in New Zealand. Also it was an ideal opportunity for many Sri Lankan entrepreneurs to find a market for their products and our younger generation to showcase their talents in Art and Crafts.

In continuing our ongoing Career Development and Employment enhancement programme, we organised two very successful workshops, one of them with the collaboration of the Association of Sri Lankan Engineers in New Zealand.

‘Lanka Nite 2002’ – Dinner Dance that was held at the Commerce Club of Auckland to welcome the dawn of the New Year was another outstanding

success. It was a big attraction, especially amongst the younger generation of Sri Lankans, for whom the music provided by the ‘Ceylonians with Keerthi Pasqual’ had great appeal.

It was Auckland’s turn to host the ‘Sri Lankan Cricket Fest’ during my year of presidency. The Sri Lankan Friendship Society of Waikato and the Sri Lankan Cricket Club joined hands with the ‘Foundation’ to organise this annual event which promotes the sporting links and goodwill amongst Sri Lankans in Waikato and Auckland.

The grand finale was the staging of ‘TM GEE SARANIYA’ – a musical evening with popular artist TM Jayaratne and a group of talented musicians from Sri Lanka. Once again continuing on our pioneering way the ‘Foundation’ sponsored these highly popular and talented artists from Sri Lanka to perform two shows in Auckland and Wellington. An independent group of music loving Sri Lankans from Wellington joined hands with the ‘Foundation’ to organise the show in Wellington. The year ended with this well-received musical evening by the classical music lovers in the country.

Jayasiri Basnayaka 2003-2004

The main focus during my year 2003/04 was mainly on building bridges and working together as a community. All of you will remember how we got all Sri Lankan organisations onto one platform,



defending the good name of our motherland against adverse publicity of the “Sri Lankan Girl” affair. We also made a joint effort to help a Sri Lankan artist who had to leave the country unexpectedly.

The year was full of entertainment too with to high profile events, Puthrasamagama in October 2003 and Gypsies in June 2004. Both groups entertained packed audiences. Jayalath Manorathne who was the leader of Puthrasamagama made a casual suggestion that if we liked to have a Pedurupatiya he was quite

willing to put together one for us. So we put together a casual event on a Sunday and prepared ourselves for a maximum of about hundred participants.

The event was to start at 6.00 in the evening and by 5.00 o'clock we knew that we had made one enormous miscalculation. Imagine our shock and total lack of preparedness when a whopping four hundred plus turned up! Some were lucky to get seats. Others stood throughout the night. But all participants had such great fun and no one wanted to see the end of it. Besides all the short comings we received an excellent feedback from everyone, thanking for organising the extra entertainment event.

Gypsies had the biggest ever demand in Auckland. In two weeks all the tickets were sold out and in fact we had to put extra seats at the Dorothy Winstone Centre to accommodate extra numbers who just refused to miss the show at any cost. Fans! They are back again in September and make sure you reserve your seats well in advance.

The committee during that year comprised of

Lionel de Silva, Dharmasena Maddugoda, Omar Fahmy, Gamini Wanniarachchi, Ari Randeni, Manjula Walgampola and Thesara Jayawardena. I couldn't have asked more from this committee in terms of commitment and dedication. Such were their talent, capability and commitment that four of them went onto become Presidents of the Foundation in later years contributing immensely to the course travelled by the Foundation.

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Dharmasena Maddugoda 2004-2005

This year could well be one of the busiest in our history due to some unplanned events interrupting our annual agenda. After taking over the Presidency on 24th July 2004, we held our first major event



The Annesley Malawana and Indrani Perera musical show at Dorothy Winstone Centre on 24th October. This was followed by a “Members' Night” held at Our Lady

of the Sacred Heart Church Hall in Epsom on 19th September.

Our real challenge came literally from “out of the blues”. We were making elaborate arrangements for a fun-filled 31st night dinner dance - “Lankanite 2004”. A Sri Lankan music group “The Cream” lead by Hemantha Fernando and Anusha were to provide music and the tickets had been printed and distributed. Then we all made our way to the Cricket match where the visiting Sri Lankan took on New Zealand on 26th December - Boxing Day - at Eden Park.

“Papara band” music was lively, the occasional euphoria when a six or a boundary was hammered, everyone's spirits were high. We were in the latter part of the game when we heard some anxious murmurings of “some problem” in Sri Lanka. Upon enquiry, no one seemed to be sure what had happened. A” Sunami:, oops!,” a Ptsunami”, er...” a Tsunami” had hit Sri Lanka. No wonder we were not familiar with this word, as catastrophes of this magnitude occur in the world once only in a 1000 to 2000 years.

We were overwhelmed with grief and shock. The loss of life, human suffering, damage and devastation of the tsunami were heart rending. Immediately we cancelled all festivities planned for the 31st night. Instead, as 2005 dawned and the night sky above Sky Tower lit up with fireworks, we stood on Aotea Square, tills in hand collecting small donations.

January was a strenuous month with frenzied activity, everyone getting involved in raising funds. In response to the Sri Lankan President's appeal, NZSLF dispatched \$5000 to the President's Fund through our Treasurer who left for Sri Lanka soon after. We initiated discussions with NZ -Aid for dollar for dollar NZ government contribution. This money was used for rehabilitating the fishermen

at Welipatanwila. All those who were involved in fund raising activities can draw satisfaction from the improvements and relief our contribution made to the lives of the fisher community at Welipatanwila.

Yet another first was achieved by NZSLF when it raised the Sri Lanka National Flag on Harbour Bridge on 4th February 2005. This raised many eyebrows. Indians followed suit on 15th July, creating a domino effect that resulted in nearly 100 countries raising their National Flags on the Harbour Bridge in the ensuing two years! Independence Day commemoration celebration took place at the Auckland Town Hall with Hon. Phil Goff, then Minister of foreign Affairs and Trade, as our Chief Guest.

19th March 2005 we presented two dance items at the “Taranaki Multiethnic Extravaganza” at Yarrow Stadium in New Plymouth. This was a full day annual event with the participation of all ethnic groups in New Zealand that draws around thirty thousand spectators. On 18th June 2005 we had our last major event - Edward Jayakody musical show with veteran ‘tabla guru’ Wijayarathna Rananatunga at Dorothy Winstone Centre, which was a fitting finale for an eventful and memorable year.

Lionel De Silva 2005-2006

I should like to share two stories during my term as President, SLNZF. It was the time when US President, Bill Clinton visited NZ. We were discussing the absolutely tight security for him and my impressionable twins were



all ears to what was being said. They heard that no one will be allowed to draw up close to his Presidential bullet-proof Limo when driving on the streets.

One day I was in my own ‘limo’ driving to

a function of the NZSLF. The twins were at the back. Then the guy driving in the next lane got very close to my side almost grazing it. This excited the twins and they called out “Dad ! does n't he know you are President?” ! The twins evidently elevated me to the level of President, USA. How dare do they get that close? !

An experience of the more serious type was how we selected the most appropriate Tsunami project for support from our fund-raising. It was a very difficult decision as there were many projects, ideas, proposals, views put forward on the subject. It was also a very sensitive issue. I needed help and so I turned to my past presidents for their input to the decision-making process. The matter became more complicated than I anticipated. However all the

past Presidents who took part in that exercise left the responsibility of taking the final decision in the hands of the President and Committee.

So the Committee under my leadership, finally decided on the “Ice Plant Project” in Valipatanwila. Once the decision was made, all the past Presidents, irrespective of any differences of opinion which they may have had earlier, respected it and were united in their support of the choice of the Committee. That made my life a little easier at the NZSLF, and then I realised the true value of that poem by our first President, Anne Perera-” Thread in a Lace”. That shows how united we are at the Foundation. Let's keep it that way! Yes, Manjula! We are there to support you!

Long live the Foundation!

Omar Fahmy 2006 – 2007

Our Theme for the year was "Unity". We did our best to bring balanced projects representing all Sri Lankan communities living in New Zealand. We kicked-off with the Mid Winter Dinner-Dance at Coral Reef restaurant on September 9th with Samba, Rumba and Baila that were just too much to resist even for the senior folk. We changed the venue from the traditional School halls to a restaurant giving it more glamour; kept the cost down to thirty dollars, this included a 5-course dinner, Chinese style. It was a huge success, judging from the great feedback we had after the event.

We had a dream to have our very own Sri Lankan Community Hall, so that we could have a venue for



community weddings, community language classes, dance classes, 31st Night Dinner Dances and various other uses that bonds our community together living in harmony in New Zealand. To make this dream a reality the new committee should look into it as a viable project. The key being, getting buy-in from all the other community organisations with Sri Lankan heritage to work-together to make this possible.

Our commitment to the community was to bring affordable events to our members and their families, but not compromising on the tradition of "Foundation Quality". We engaged with our community seeking feedback on future publications and events. We offered opportunities to join our Foundation family that stands for "No politics and equality to all Sri Lankan communities in New Zealand".

LankaNite '06 was a night to remember, with free entrance thanks to the sponsorship of Spiceland, we had families of all ethnicities mixing and mingling celebrating the dawn of the New Year to the live music of Amazonas. The annual Summer BBQ followed at the Orakei Domain, Okahu Bay that turned out to

be a fantastic day out on Saturday 24 Feb 2007.

We introduced a new practice - Life Membership and Past President badges out of metal. Life members were awarded certificates at the AGM on the Saturday 21 July 2007. The website was upgraded with a new look and feel with funding from COGS. The Notice board on the website made possible for public to list announcements, sell items, and advertise professional services.

On the 26 May, Nanda Malini and Victor Ratnayake entertained us with the very best of the Sri Lankan timeline classics. This show was expensive to produce but the appreciation of the audience was even more significant and overwhelming. The music brought immense joy to some and tears to others. Another event notched firmly to many peoples hearts for years to come.

For our website, we still seek volunteers for hotline assistance in regards to expert advice on settlement, employment, schooling, medical aid, child care, tax matters and many more areas a new migrant may require. Please volunteer your services to make our

Manjula Sanis Walgampola 2007-2008

We have just completed our ninth year and as we confidently step into our tenth, we can justly feel proud that we have maintained the lofty ideals of our founders. The year gone by was a particularly busy year for the Foundation and in most respects a very successful one. However two events had very special significance for us.

Last year was the year of Rugby World Cup and the fever which took hold of New Zealand pervaded through all of us as well. At the end of our Mid Winter Dinner Dance we expressed our strong solidarity with our team by all of signing a GOOD LUCK card which was personally



delivered by one of our life members.

In 2008, Sri Lanka had reached a milestone in her history. It was the 60th Anniversary of Independence on February 4th. For us this commemoration was a historic moment. For the first time High Commissioner, H.E. K. Balapatabendi accepted our invitation and personally attended our function. We also had the newly appointed Consul General, Aruna Abeygoonsekera in attendance. The commemoration proceedings went according to plan and we took pride in being able to host this historic moment.

The Mid Winter Dinner Dance with a Black and White theme to express our support for All Blacks took place as one of the first events. Another was a Karaoke Night featuring Sinhala, Tamil and English songs and the evening capped off with a typical Sri Lankan "kottu" dinner.

The New Year Lankanite Dinner Dance attracted a large attendance. The evening was full of excitement and fun. There was the music of "DJ Chester",

prize winners at the raffle draws; and everyone could savour a buffet dinner served in clay pots. We greeted the New Year with jubilation. True to our tradition, a table laden with "kiribath & lunu miris" " kavun & kokis" was waiting for all to partake.

The annual Summer BBQ took a different turn this year. A Twenty 20 cricket match was played with some West Indian residents. Besides a common passion for the game of cricket, it was an occasion to share our common flare for tasty food and lively music with a live performance by the "Caribbean Stars Steel Pan Band". Men, women and children all participated and the day was enjoyed by all.

Another notable achievement was that the Badminton Club which was given a new lease of life by NZSLF became an independent body as the "Sri Lankan Badminton Association". We congratulate them and assure them of our best wishes and support in the future.

*Muslims will commence their Ramadan fast in the first week of September.
Mr. Mohamed Hassan shares his views on this occasion observed by Muslims throughout the world.*

FAST TO BE HEALTHY**M.C.A.Hassan**

Muslims in New Zealand and all over the world will begin their annual exercise in fasting on the 1st of September. "Sawm" (fasting) was first laid on the believers by a Divine Commandment brought to the Prophet of Islam Muhammad (on him be peace) 1427 years ago. It has gone on uninterrupted ever since.

One fasts for the sake of God (Allah). Everyone who is above ten years of age and of good health has to fast. It takes place in the month of Ramadan every year. It starts uniformly on the same day in every country of the world. It is ended also after 30 days (going by the lunar calendar) on one and the same day.

Fasting has many benefits, chief of which is spiritual. In this article I want to portray the benefit for health. Hence, I have titled this article "Fast to be healthy".

Fasting has its advantages from the point of view of health and hygiene. Islam wants a Muslim to be healthy,

clean, alert, agile and energetic. "Fast to be healthy," says Prophet Muhammad (on him be peace).

Today physicians acknowledge the many benefits of fasting. Fasting ensures health and soundness of body and mind. It cures psychological and emotional disorders. It helps an individual to firm up his will, to cultivate and refine his taste and manners. It strengthens his resolve to do good. He can avoid controversy, petulance and rashness, all of which contribute towards a sane and healthy personality.

One who fasts nurtures resistance and ability to face hardships and endurance. Patience is its hallmark. It reflects strongly on his outward physical appearance. He cuts out gluttony and gets rid of excess fat.

Fasting is instrumental in alleviating a number of physical disorders, especially of the digestive systems. They are chronic stomach ache, inflammation of the colon, liver diseases, indigestion, and conditions such as obesity, arteriosclerosis, high blood pressure, asthma, and diphtheria.

A Swiss physician Dr. Barsilus noted that: The advan-

tages of hunger as a remedy exceed those ingesting medicine several times. This is why several physicians advise patients to skip meals, sometimes for a few days, before prescribing them a controlled diet.

Generally speaking, fasting hastens the destruction of the decaying tissues of the body by means of hunger, and then builds new tissues through nutrition. Some scientists suggest that fasting should be regarded as an effective means of restoring youthfulness and longevity. Islam exempts sick and old people whose health is bound to deteriorate from fasting.

Fasting does not mean random skipping of meals. That harms health and stamina rather than improve them. It has regulations to be adhered to. Here again Islam provides the answer. To realize the benefits of fasting, it recommends the late midnight meals called 'Sahar' (before the formal start of a fast) and the breaking of the fast at the time prescribed. Of course, to ensure good health one should abstain from gluttony after breaking fast.

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-organization, we do not make any payments for articles. Please send your contributions to the Summer Issue by November 2008 to the correspondence address below.

**Attn: Editorial Committee or by email to:
nzslf@nzslfoundation.com**

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