



NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2007

# GROUNDVIEW

Volume 1 No. 6

Ground View is a bi-monthly Journal

Price Rs. 50.00

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## PRICE & PENANCE PAID FOR

# A PERILOUS JOURNEY

Mangalanath Liyanarachchi - Trincomalee

**T**he border, which separates the North from the South at Vavuniya, is a decisive landmark of a merciless twenty five year old war. The people of the North have to stake their lives everyday to cross over an immense, body of water to reach Trincomalee, the only gate-way to the outside world.

The danger lies in crossing the dreaded sea tiger base under the escort of security provided by the Navy, who are targeted by the Tigers.

Once the Ceasefire Agreement collapsed and the war resumed, the only connection the people in the North had with the South was also severed.

The ship to Trincomalee and a land route from there to other parts of the island, was the only alternative for civilians arriving from the North.

With the signing of the CFA, the A-9 road was opened and the passenger ship operated by the Red Cross Organisation was

suspended. With the recent outbreak of the war the northern civilians lost their land route and the passenger ship service.

It was the Sri Lanka Navy which came to the rescue of the civilians.

They began transporting civilians in view of humanitarian issues and because Non-Governmental Organisations were reluctant to take on this responsibility.

This journey which is operated along the coast of the Mullativu Chale coast line which is considered to be the most dangerous base of the sea tigers is one of the most perilous sea journeys.



**PASSAGE TO JAFFNA**

**"What can we do? What we are trying to do is obtain tickets and get to Jaffna. Therefore there are instances when we have to spend about a thousand rupees extra and to buy such tickets."**

(See full story contd on page 6)

**"Let us go back to our beloved sea"**



Fisher folk of China Bay, have been denied a traditional livelihood -fishing with beach nets. They wait for authorities to wake up from their slumber, while their children face starvation.

Godwin Devapriya, alias Baby Aiya, a resident of Cod Bay Trincomalee, is someone who has worked traditionally as a fisherman. Baby Aiya, who is a father of eight children, supported his family thanks to the fishing trade he inherited from

(Contd on page 7)

## Voices-Deprived But Determined

By Palitha Ariyawansa

**E**ighteen year old Chitra Damayathi is currently attending the Viharamaha Devi Maha Vidyalaya Badulla. She is in the Advanced Level (A/L) class offering Physics and Mathematics.

The daughter of a Chena farmer, she passed her Ordinary Level (O/L) examination at the Taldena Vidyalaya with good results.

Her brother is still attending the Taldena Vidyalaya in her village. "I came to this school as my former school had no A/L classes. I attend private classes for three subjects. It is with great difficulty that I pay for the private lessons, in addition to the cost of transport by bus from Taldena to Badulla daily. Paying for accommodation and keep in Badulla is simply beyond the resources of my family. I have a married sister and another who is employed in a Porcelain factory who support me as best as they can. So does my father. This school has some wonderful teachers who appreciate my difficulties," says Damayanthi whose quest to master the

science of matter and energy is indeed an odyssey that begins from a remote hamlet in Uva, beyond the Dunhinda Falls.

Nirosha Priyanthi (18) is currently attending the A/L classes at Vihara Maha Devi Maha Vidyalaya Badulla. She hopes to obtain a degree in Mathematics. The daughter of a Chena cultivator she passed her O/Ls at D.S.Senanayake Vidyalaya.

The Kandaketiya school has A/L classes only in the arts stream. "In my year, 25 students sat for the O/L examination and only 10 students passed. We had no English teachers and all students who offered English as a subject failed. I pay Rs. 3000 per month for my board and lodging in Badulla. I spend Rs. 1,150 for private lessons. My father is a Chena cultivator. I have a brother and a sister who are younger than me, who attend school.

Our home is in the midst of a jungle. With all these burdens, which my father has to bear, it is difficult for me to ask him for

more money even to buy an essential book that I need."

Erandhi Kumudu, from Mahiyangana, passed her O/L examination from the Mahiyangana Madhya Maha Vidyalaya. She says that she was compelled to come to Badulla Vihara Maha Devi Vidyalaya as the Mahiyangana Madhya Maha Vidyalaya did not have qualified teachers for A/L Science classes despite having all the facilities. My father is a security guard employed in a government corporation. It costs me Rs. 3,000 to stay in Badulla while I have to also pay for private lessons in three subjects. I am anxious to some how complete my higher education as it will then enable me to help my family," she says totally devoid of any bitterness or despair. What is admirable in her attitude is her confidence that she could overcome her difficulties by herself. "I can and I will complete what I started," she said and hurried away for her classes.

**GROUNDVIEW**

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**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, WEALTH AND DIGNITY**

**I**n a paper appropriately titled "Government Budget Proposals for 2008: Growth Stimulating or Retarding?" Dr.O.G.Dayaratne Banda Senior Lecturer in Economics of the University of Peradeniya states "knowledge is the only instrument of production not subject to diminishing returns. In order to enhance productivity growth, government needs to adopt an appropriate technology acquisition and development strategy..."

Another eminent economist Dr.Geedreck Usvatte-arachchi writing in the previous issue of "Ground View" Sep-Oct voiced a similar view when he wrote "the pre occupation with once greatness of Rajarata is a real obstacle to this change. Let us write some where in gold lettering that Rajarata was once a great civilization but moved on to give those young men and women who live there now a real chance in life.." These

concerned academics are not prophets who seek to lead our nation to a promised land. They are merely men with intuitive minds who wish to share their vision with their compatriots. Perhaps they are less concerned with carbon emission that has put the planet in peril and are more concerned with issues that have put our people in peril. They are brave enough to spur those at the helm to move in to the second decade of the twenty first century by developing the human resource with élan and confidence that will enable Sri Lanka to be a competent and competitive player in the global economy.

In a highly politicized nation where the common presumption is that political power is an exchangeable commodity, it is indeed a Herculean task to convince a majority of our people that "knowledge it self is a commodity that can be manufactured or bought from others". It is even more daunt-

ing to convince a people who willingly participate in electoral politics which have been described by our regional neighbours as periodic auctions of non existing assets. Development of human capital for educational expansion has never been a priority in our National planning process. W. Lee Hansen of the University of California L.A in a paper written in 1963 has observed "... teacher shortages and the determinants of teacher supply are subjects of vital concern in development planning ; they deserve far more attention than has been given to them by either educators or economists."

The preliminary report on the School Census -2006 published by the Ministry of Education states blandly "659 (6.8%) of our schools have advanced level science stream classes. In the reports that appear in this issue we have sought to draw your attention to the sorry state our educational system has been reduced to.

# Globalisation

**By Arjuna Ranawana**

**A**cross what is known as the "line of control" in the divided state of Kashmir India has built a barbed wire fence. This barrier, more than a thousand kilometres long, is meant to stop "infiltration" into the troubled northern state.

But in a time of disappearing inter-state cultural and trade barriers is this fence an anachronism?

Just ten years ago Indians and Pakistanis could not legally watch a movie or a television programme made in others' country. Today satellite television has made those restrictions a joke. Now Indians keenly follow high quality Pakistan tele-dramas and of course Bollywood is available wall-to-wall around the subcontinent.

The relative isolation of a community from another caused by physical barriers such as a river, the ocean, deserts or mountains created states where "a nation" formed. There were also many other reasons for the formation of these states, but kingdoms and principalities ruled by various levels of royalty and dukedoms evolved into the modern nation state.

In its classic definition a nation-state is a geopolitical entity that houses a nation, and a nation is defined as a cultural or ethnic group.

This of course infers that they have a cultural identity which is retained in a more or less "pure" form, because they share a language and specific cultural values.

We witnessed the rebirth of so many of these states in Central Europe and Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But can such a state survive in this era of globalisation? Many acres of forests have been cut down to print the millions of words that have been written to answer that question. But there is yet no clear answer.

Why the debate continues to rage is because the definition of globalisation is something scholars are still struggling to nail down. But apart from the breaking down of trade barriers and the imposition of World Trade norms, globalisation is profoundly felt in the transformation of cultures.

If a nation state is based on keeping a so-called pure culture then surely the globalisation of ideas and culture will slowly erode that "purity." No remote corner of the world where human life is isolated from some form of communication today. The cities and sophisticated concentrations of people are receiving these messages very rapidly through Satellite communication and the internet. Even the world's anti-globalisation movement is able to harness the efforts of millions around the globe at a keystroke because of

what is called the "global village."

When ideas travel very fast what's exciting and useful will get absorbed very quickly.

But despite all this the nation states are thriving.

Some commentators call globalisation "Americanisation." If this means the spread of American culture, then the phenomenon is not new, Hollywood and American music has been with us for many generations. American food habits, they say are also spreading, as Burgers and Pizzas enter into our markets. This process of globalisation or the spread of "Western" culture has gathered speed after the breaking down of the Berlin Wall. So then are we all eating pizzas, guzzling Colas and driving through the Golden Arches in search of the delights of a Big Mac?

Not really. In fact this year New Yorkers voted Sri Lankan born Thiru Kumar food vendor of the year for his scrumptious Dosas. In Mumbai, the traditional Uththapam has been tweaked into the Pizza-Uththapam.

So it looks like the globalisation of culture goes both ways.

Remember the success of the movie "Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon"? This year Oprah Winfrey had one her highest rated shows when Aishwarya Rai was the featured guest.

In terms of trade and technology the complaint has been that the technologically advanced countries, such as the G7 will hold an unfair advantage and this will un-

dermine the economies of the nation states in the developing world.

But even here the effects are being felt on both sides of the world's economic divide. In countries such as the USA and Canada new immigrants and students traditionally went into factory jobs, call centres and such like. But these jobs are disappearing over there because the factories are moving to China and the call-centres to India. Globalisation and better communication has also meant that we can respond to the travails of our fellowmen faster. The global response to the Asian tsunami and the Kashmir earthquake are two recent examples of how help arrived to the distressed people.

Change is inevitable, even in the strongest and most isolated of cultures. In the globalised spread of ideas, these changes in culture inevitably happen faster than before.

But would that cause the demise of the nation state? Judging from what's happened I think not.

Arjuna Ranawana is the Director of the Sri Lanka College of Journalism. Counting more than 28 years experience in both print and electronic media he has practiced his profession holding responsible positions in South Asia, North America and Sri Lanka. He has served as Correspondent & Bureau Chief of Asia Week Magazine, Copy Editor Toronto Star, Director News MTV/MBC, Editor in Chief of Ceylon Daily News and as News Anchor & Coordinator of OMNI TV, Toronto Canada.



# EDUCATING A NATION

A common phenomenon in schools in Trincomalee is that while those in the urban areas are well equipped, as one travels further away from the city, a decline in the quality of schools and the facilities they boast soon becomes apparent.

Take for example, the Vilagammulla school, situated roughly 15 kilometres down the Trincomalee-Anuradhapura road. The school lies in close proximity to LTTE territory, and is constantly surrounded by police officers. The Principal of the school, Udana Geeganage laments that the students, who determinedly continue to turn up at school despite several obstacles, are given little or no encouragement by the relevant education authorities. "The children have to trek 4kilometres daily just to get to school. The school bus hardly comes on time, and sometimes completely stops plying between the school and the villages for as long as two weeks at a stretch. When the children walk to school, there is a danger of them being accosted by wild elephants at any time," he lamented.

As our school has no wall or even fence, we often find elephants in the school yard and the policemen have to chase them away. Our only seesaw and swing was also destroyed by the elephants," said Pradeep Kumara, an Year 7 student of the school.

Although the school has classes only up to Year 5, the school conducts classes up to Year 7, sans Government approval. "The distance from the Vilgammulla school to the next school which has senior classes is very far, and due to economic constraints and an inability to travel so far on foot, most children conclude their education by Grade 5 at this school. That is why we have bypassed the authorities and conduct classes at least up to Year 7, though we do so



**"The success rate in this school is very low. This is because many of the brighter children leave and join better schools in the city",**

with a great deal of difficulty," said Mr. Geeganage. He pointed out that once they finish school at Year 5, or now under his initiative at Year 7, the children end up as

labourers in the quarry or when they are old enough, as home-guards. "My aim is not to prepare children for exams, but rather to prevent the country being inherited by uneducated children", he said.

Although the school is over 35 years, it has only one small building, which houses the Principal's Office, the Restroom, stores, laboratory and the library. In addition to the Principal, who teaches Science, English, Maths and Social Studies there is one other teacher, and in order to overcome the teacher shortage, two female home-guards who have passed A/Levels are also employed as teachers. Class teachers have neither a table nor a chair – much of the furniture has been temporarily borrowed from a neighbouring school. Sadly, for a school full of little children who need to be able to stretch their limbs between classes, the only playground which was donated to the school by a generous benefactor was destroyed by elephants a long time ago and is yet to be replaced.

The China Bay Junior Tamil School in Trincomalee is facing similar problems. The teachers say that although there isn't a shortage of teachers, they are greatly lacking in facilities. Although the school has classes from Grade 1 to Grade 11, the laboratory has only two test tubes and one barometer. The school doesn't have a library, a music room or a home science room. "The entire music section has only one drum. All our pleas to the education authorities have fallen on deaf years", lamented the Vice Principal.

"The success rate in this school is very low. This is because many of the brighter children leave and join better schools in the city", R.Shashikala, a teacher at the school told GV.



# CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS STORIES OF THE PRIVATE TUTORIAL CENTRES



Udaiyar from Jaffna.

**T**he people of Jaffna believe in the importance of educating their children, and would even sell their jewellery and property for their children's education.

Analysts believe the administration, discipline and the moral conduct of the education system of the northern schools gradually declined after schools were taken over by the government and religious leaders were prevented from teaching.

Political leaders and intellectuals are of the opinion that once the schools were taken over from religious leaders' violence and conflict between the ethnic communities broke out in the country.

It is amidst this back drop that private education began to emerge in the early 70s.

Earlier students attended private classes only to be coached in tough subjects. But now it's a fashion to send their children from grade 1 up to advanced level for private tuition.

The trend began when teachers in the colleges invited students for special classes conducted at their homes. Certain sections of the syllabus were only taught at the special private classes. Therefore

students were compelled to go for the tuition classes.

After the standardization of university admission, parents send their children to the schools in remote areas for the sake of low cut off marks for university entrance. But they send them for private classes as well for better education.

Within a year private tuition centres began mushrooming in Jaffna. Many put up bigger sheds and buildings to conduct these classes on a large scale, specially targeting the O/L and A/L students. It has turned into a profit oriented business initiative spoiling the mindset of teachers.

Teachers failed to coach their students fully at the schools spending most of their time in tuition classes where they could earn more than the salary paid in school.

The tuition centres have won for themselves the confidence and trust of the students, proving that the students could excel if they attended tuition classes only. To promote the centres the teachers place congratulatory messages in the papers with the photographs of their students who excelled at the examinations. Likewise every tuition centre has to undergo stiff competition to promote themselves.

Not only the GCE Ordinary and Advanced level examinations, but also the year 5 scholarship exam has created a demand for private tuition classes. There are negative sides to these competitive public exams, especially in terms of the impact it has on the care free attitude of young students.

When a child turns two the parents begin to worry about which tuition centre they should admit their child and depriving them of the freedom to enjoy life.

In Jaffna it is quite common to see posters of these private tuition centres pasted on every wall. The masters, who are sometimes not qualified to the level of even a government school teacher becomes very popular. They become prominent faces in a society which is ruled by a market economy.

Although the free education system is still in place, the problem that remains is the availability of textbooks.

Sometimes, the textbooks arrive once the students have sat for the exam. The other hassle is the frequent change of the curriculum. Hence, students are not able to refer the books which the senior students used, due to the delayed delivery.

The present educational system satisfies the motive of the funders who support the programme. Nobody knows who is

responsible for the delivery of free text books to schools in the north and east. When books arrive two months prior to the final exam, students have to rush through revising the whole textbook within two months, when students in other parts of the country have a period of twelve months. This eventually leads to frustration a fall in the educational level of these students.

In this context these private institutions do play an important role to some extent. They manage to get at least a single copy of the free textbook through their influence, and make copies or short notes from the books and sell them to the students

Students are always seen carrying books with them going from one tuition class to the other.

In Jaffna town, there are many schools that are poor. However the teachers still remain committed to serve students from the poorer families in those areas. Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Victoria come from a generation of teachers.

Late Mr. Ferdinand taught at St. Patricks College, in Jaffna. His wife Victoria has been in the teaching profession for more than 30-years. She has worked in the remote areas of the province such as Kilinochchi and Iranapalai before she joined Stanley College, Jaffna.

She has been there for more than 20-years.

The couple's son Ferdinand Arulchelvan, born into a family that values the teaching profession for years, started his teaching career in 2000. On a visit with the family in Pandiyanthalvu a soft spoken young lady warmly welcomed us with a cup of sugary tea even though sugar is scarce in Jaffna.

When asked about his first day at school, Ferdinand replied "When I went there with my appointment letter, Vice Principal Sr. Jasintharani warmly welcomed me. She appreciated the fact that I chose teaching as a profession. The school has 13 teachers for the 300 students. When I entered the Grade 1 class, it reminded me of my first day at St. Patricks College. My father was a teacher at the school. It was he who took me to class. So I didn't feel afraid."

He continued by saying, "I used to think this place was below my standard, because a person who is an old boy of a leading school would not normally choose a small school to begin teaching. But anyhow, I'm satisfied in teaching these poor children. I teach mathematics from grade 6 to grade to 9. If we tell them that the sum of two plus two is three and not four, they are sure to accept it and will even memorise it. Their knowledge is that much. It's a disastrous situation."

"Even if I teach the same thing over many times, they will listen to it as if it was the first time. If I ask any question on the particular subject the next day, nobody would give me a correct answer. Their level of intelligence is so poor."



# Against all odds

MANGALANARTH LIYANARACHCHI - TRINCOMALEE

**W**e might not like stinking mires which emit a bad odour but it is pleasing to see a lotus which emerges from the marsh lands and though it grows in such places, the flower emits a sweet and pleasant odour which spreads far. The life of Pradeep who lives in Trincomalee is very similar.

Pradeep who was born into a very poor family, under going many economic hardships is today a first year medical student at the Sri Jayawardhanapura University.

Pradeep's father is a Mason and in the present day those in this profession earn a very high daily wage. However, his father took to alcohol cared very little about the future of his children or bearing responsibilities. But fortunately mothers of such families become stronger and Pradeep's mother belongs to this category of courageous mothers.

Pradeep attended Sumedakara School in Trincomalee for his primary education and after having reached the Advanced Levels, joined the Sinhalese Central College at Trincomalee to pursue his advanced level with many hopes.

"Pradeep was very weak in his studies when he was small, and when he was in Grade 4 the teacher summoned me to school and informed me that Pradeep was extremely weak and that he did not understand what the teachers were saying making it difficult for them to teach the other children too, and advised me to arrange some tuition classes for him in the evenings. But finally by the time he reached grade six, he became very

clever and came first in class, won every event and even won literary, debating and English Language contests," Pradeep's mother indicated.

Due to Pradeep's father's drinking habits the money available to the family was squandered.

"Pradeep's father gives me Rs. 150/- a day for household expenses. There are three school going children. When I request money for expenses, quarrels start. The amount of times Pradeep has gone to school filling his stomach with just water is unaccountable. I feel very sorry for my son and sometimes ask him whether he does not get hungry by afternoon. He says I do get hungry and there are times his friends call him to share their meals, but I do not join because if I do they expect me to bring a meal and share with them the next day. At these times I go out and drink water until my stomach is full," he used to tell me recalled his mother.

Pradeep never troubled his parents for this and that; and wouldnt even participate in educational tours arranged by the school.

"I would never tell my mother about educational trips arranged by the school, I didn't want to trouble them. If I did go, I would have to take my two younger brothers too; with the problems at home it was much better to utilise that money for our existence," says Pradeep. However, the teachers of Sumedhankara Vidyalaya did not feel like going on these tours without Pradeep and used to give his mother the necessary money and would ask her not to tell Pradeep; and he still does not know that expenses for most of the trips

undertaken were borne by his teachers.

The Mother recalls "When there is nothing to eat on certain days, my sons go to school in hunger and I try to secure a little rice and cook it, with some dhal and mallum and go to school by 11 O'clock. After getting permission from the master I feed the three of them. Even at that time Pradeep asks whether there was enough rice for his brothers and whether I was hungry.

Higher education in Sinhala Schools in Trincomalee was not very good and thus advanced level students have to attend private classes; but there are hardly any classes in Trincomalee and with our financial status this was unimaginable."

However, my son attended classes during both years, in the first year he travelled to Kurunegala on Friday evening and attended classes on Saturdays and Sundays staying in my elder sister's house. He returns by around 10 O'clock on Sunday night. Nevertheless he did not like to stay in my elder sister's house and carry on with his education, thinking that this was a problem for them and as such went in the 4.00 a.m. Kurunegala Bus and returned late reaching home by about 10 p.m, to carry on likewise the following day too. That was his routine.

For the entire two years he relied on one trouser and one shirt and due to this he was ridiculed. He was the easiest to recognize among his class of 800 student being the one who had a washed shirt and faded trousers.

On returning from school he used to work from 6 O'clock in the evening, to 5 O'clock the following morning in an ice factory in the



Mrs. Sriyani Swarnalatha  
A Proud Mother

area to earn money not only for his educational expenses but even for the expenses of his home.

"When my son goes to the ice factory he takes two books with him. The work there is very difficult and when a little free time is available my son starts studying whilst the others sleep," intimated Pradeep's mother.

Pradeep's mother recalls with much sadness how he used to returns home and rub Siddhalepa on his hands to ease the pain he suffered while at work.

"Though Pradeep entered Medical College, the surroundings were not so favourable for him in comparison with the others. He faces a lot of problems with regard to the expenses and clothes; but he plods along courageously and was able to obtain the highest marks in the tests held in the past."

Pradeep has even declined to marry saying his responsibility is to educate his two younger brothers and look after his parents. Although, the university provides lodging in the first year, students have to find their own board and lodging from the second year, this is the biggest problem confronting Pradeep at the moment.

"I wish my son will be with me throughout my journeys of life," were the parting words of Pradeep's mother while wiping her tears.



Sarath Manula Wickrema

**T**he year is 1998. The buildings which were meant to echo with the laughter of children and the wisdom of years lay silent and empty. Though close to the Kala Oya in Rajangane, the Kalundegama School was overlooked by parents who preferred to send their children to schools miles away, even as far as Anuradhapura.

One man saw it differently however. Shantha Senaratne, a qualified and experienced English teacher, saw the potential of the school and the benefits it could offer students who would not spend precious hours on the road to reach other schools farther away.

Having taken over Kalundegama Bodiraja Vidyalaya in 1998, few parents shared Shantha's vision, with only 12 parents agreeing to send their children to the school, and that to due to abject poverty and the lack of resources to send their children to better schools farther away.

Under his skillful and dedicated direction the school began to grow. With no access to fresh drinking water, students often spent the whole day parched and unable to concentrate on their studies. Despite strong advice to the contrary, Shantha got a deep well dug in the grounds, which not only refreshed the parched lips

of the students but also watered the wilted flowers in the garden, which had until now to depend on sporadic rain to bloom. He also got a pond dug along with various other additions, and within a short period the school grounds were transformed into beautiful gardens. Brand new direction boards showed visitors the way to the 'Office', 'Grade 2' and the 'Library'.

He encouraged the students to conduct the morning assembly, instead of subjecting them to monotonous monologues which they paid little attention to. Realising the importance of exposing them to the English language, he increased the English language

activities of the school, and a majority of the students now have a working knowledge of the language.

Three out of the twenty who presented themselves for the Grade 5 scholarship exam in 2006 were successful. In 2007, six students out of 26 were successful.

The authorities sat up and began to take note, and a school which was not equipped to handle classes even up to Grade 8, was now endowed with classes up to Grade 10, and students could now sit for the Ordinary Level examination through.

In 2004 Shantha Senaratne was able to get his school ahead of some of the best schools in the island, and

win several awards at the National level in science. Shantha was adjudged the best principal in the entire North Western Province. In 2005, Bodiraja Vidyalaya also won the 1<sup>st</sup> place in the National Productivity Awards, in an year when the First, Second and Third places were won by some of the best schools in the island.

The school is now much sought after by parents of the district. But for all his hard work, Shantha has received little recognition. In an era of tuition class mentality, when those in charge of education have abandoned their responsibilities, hard work and selfless dedication seems to draw no praise.

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

**A PERILOUS JOURNEY...**

The reason being that this passenger ship has come under attack by the Tigers near the Mullativu coast line.

"We come from Jaffna by ship to Trincomalee after paying thousands of rupees and with great hardship. Sometimes we have to be on the waiting list for weeks on end. Most people come to obtain medicine to go abroad or for some other specific purpose. On our journey back to the North we have to spend at least five or six days in Trincomalee. People who operate these ship services, at times buy the tickets ahead of time and sell them for higher rates. It is possible that the government officers are unaware of this. Already a ticket to Jaffna costs around 2,500 rupees. If two people of the same family travel to and from Jaffna it costs about Rs. 10,000. If we buy tickets that are sold fraudulently it costs much more," said a resident of the North who was reluctant to reveal his identity he said that giving his name might mean a precursor to his disappearance.

"The government has not provided any facilities to the residents of the North who have to stay in Trincomalee for several days. Therefore, they have to spend colossal amounts of money to stay in the few lodgings that are available in Trincomalee. In the capital, most often such a room costs about Rs. 300-500 but in Trincomalee it could cost from Rs 650 to as much as Rs.1000," say residents of the North.

"We have to stay in Trincomalee for at least five or six days before we can go to Jaffna. As we do not have relatives here, we have to stay at lodges. In Colombo a room in a lodge costs about Rs 300. But a similar room in Trincomalee is about Rs700. Those who have money, stay in big rooms with good facilities. However not everyone can do that. I came from Jaffna to Colombo to have a surgical operation done on my child. I pawned the "thaliya" which I got when I married," says Thana Pakiya, a resident of Karainagar in Jaffna, who has already been staying in Trincomalee for a period of three days, in a lodge together with her daughter who is a patient, in order to get to the North, said.

All dealings and arrangements in respect of the Trincomalee Jaffna Passenger Ship service is conducted from a small room, in the ancient museum building situated adjacent

***"I can definitely say that such a thing does not take place. However there are various pressures. At times, certain Ministers take five or ten tickets from us. We are not aware of the fact whether those things happen because of these tickets. It is difficult for us to prevent that situation.***

to the Divisional Secretariat. It is quite a common sight to see about five to six hundred residents of the North, daily, milling around this place which has no facilities and resembles a wayside rest (ambalama). As everyone hopes to buy tickets as fast as possible and get to the North, they are enticed to buy higher priced tickets through various individuals and organizations.

"What can we do? What we are trying to do is obtain tickets and get to Jaffna. Therefore there are instances when we have to spend about a thousand rupees extra and to buy such tickets. This is because we have



to spend the same amount for a room for a day too. It is the same for food and drink... We want to get home as soon as possible... This is what Mr. Palan, a resident of Urumbrai Jaffna stated.

***Henchmen of certain Ministers make use of the Ministerial powers and take goods to Jaffna for business purposes, on this same vessel. As a result it is difficult for us to take some extra luggage. This is no longer a passenger ship but a merchant ship.***

Residents of the North say that people who travel from Trincomalee to the North have to spend a large amount of money for rooms as well as food and drink. They say that, food and drink for one person costs at least three hundred rupees for a day and they also point out that in a family where

there are two or three members, this situation becomes more complex and that if the ships travel daily, such a situation would not arise.

**Mr. K. Gnappagasam – Urathurai**

"The vessel Green Ocean travels to Jaffna on alternative days. Due to this, when they transport businessmen and their goods, the opportunities we get become less. If at least they get one other ship to do this run, this would not happen. The other thing is that, some other method must be devised to transport the goods of people who go for business purposes. The Government will not suffer losses if they get another ship. Also the weight we can carry is only 25 kilograms. If the goods we bring weigh more than that, we have to leave them behind on the Jetty. At times we have had to leave behind our clothes and take more important things with us. It will be an immense relief if we are allowed to take at least goods weighing 50 kilos" he says.

"In the past when we came on these trips, there were rest homes or public buildings where we could stay. But now there are none. We cannot afford to pay thousands of rupees and stay at hotels. The other fact is that this traveling by ship will not end in the near future. Therefore it is possible for the Government to construct an intermediate camp where people who travel to Jaffna can reside in temporarily. If they charge us a small amount it is satisfactory. If they provide the camp with water and sanitary facilities, that is more than enough. We do not come here looking for pleasure..." Mr. M. Ratnasingham, a resident of Kondaveli, Jaffna says.

The civilians who travel from Trincomalee to the North have to come to the Ashroff Jetty in China Bay Harbour from the Trincomalee town in order to board the ship, Green Ocean. The Divisional Secretariat has provided private buses for this purpose but the residents of the North point out that they do not charge them reasonable amounts.



**Nadaraja Meshaparan (South Kopai)**

"The usual bus fare from Trincomalee to China Bay Harbour is about twenty rupees. However these buses charge each person 100 rupees. In addition they charge 100 rupees per piece of baggage. We travel to the jetty in these buses, not because we have money but because we cannot travel in oth-



er vehicles. If we ask some of them whether the amount they charge is too high, they ask how we paid the Tigers more taxes. Just consider, whether these statements are reasonable..."

"We have to state that, those who cheat us and who try to eat us alive are people from our own nationality. The Navy help us a lot at the Ashroff Jetty. Henchmen of certain Ministers make use of the Ministerial powers and take goods to Jaffna for business purposes, on this same vessel. As a result it is difficult for us to take some extra luggage. This is no longer a passenger ship but a merchant ship. We believe that if this operation is handed over to the Navy rather than to the Divisional Secretariat office, there will be more justice done" Such is what Mr. Ravi Chandran of Chavakachcheri said.

We inquired from Mrs. Shashikala Jabudepan, the Trincomalee Divisional Secretary as to whether the issuing of tickets for the ship is controlled by various armed groups.

"I can definitely say that such a thing does not take place. However there are various pressures. At times, certain Ministers take five or ten tickets from us. We are not aware of the fact whether those things happen because of these tickets. It is difficult for us to prevent that situation. It is true that the bus fares are highly priced. We have spoken to the bus owners and informed them that they have to charge only seventy five rupees per bag. Generally, people do not have to wait two or three days for the ship. It happens only rarely. Any how, we are making an effort to provide some relief in respect of their lodging facilities, in the future", she said.

There is no sign of the A-9 route being opened in the near future. The only way for the residents of the North to have any connection with the South is this passenger ship service. It is in Trincomalee that the most number of non governmental organizations in Sri Lanka are active. They say, that most of them have come to provide services to the people who suffer as a result of the war. However the money spent on the facilities for their offices, vehicles and other amenities are far more than what they spend on their causes. How beneficial it will be if the money spent thus, is used to start a shipping service with the assistance of the International Red Cross Organization, for the residents of the North?

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

## “Let us go back to our beloved sea”

the previous generation. However, today he is not permitted to go down to the sea which is just in front of his house.

His livelihood for twenty years has been restricted by the security forces who've erected a barbed wire fence to prevent the fisher folk living close to the harbour.

Fifty-one-year-old Kanapathi Pillai Vadivel who joined the fishing trade at the age of fourteen years, sits on a dilapidated fishing boat and waits for the barbed wire fence to be removed by the state.

It is not only Kanapathi Pillai Vadivel but Mohammed Thowfeek, resident of China Bay, Lanka Bridge who has had to give up his familiar fishing profession and do a labourer's job in order to satisfy the hunger of his wife and children.

It is particularly significant that all these fishermen have been displaced due to the Tsunami disaster and the war of twenty years. Although the East has been liberated from the formidable tiger terrorists, the sun has not emerged for these people. The only lament of Godwin Devapriya as well as Kanapathi Pillai and Aswer is that, they should be granted access to the sea that was forbidden and given back the job they lost.

Around one hundred and fifty, registered fishermen live in the region of the sea in close proximity to the harbour which spans from China Bay, Cod Bay to Melo-co. Twenty eight of these fishermen were given permits by the Navy and their only source of income was through fishing. In addition there are a large group of people who catch ornamental fish.

During the past, the Ceasefire Agreement succeeded in bringing about a new awakening in the Eastern province. The fisher folk had ample opportunity to carry out their profession as they desired. However, as the Tigers began engaging in activities at sea, the Government and the security forces were compelled to make decisions with regard to the security of the harbour. This resulted in the Navy banning the fishing trade in the sea off Trincomalee, indefinitely. This ban has been in effect now for a period of one year and seven months.

Also, the Eastern province has been liberated from the clutches of the Tigers as of now. In spite of this, the fishermen have not been given access to the open sea.

Fishing is the main livelihood of the people of Trincomalee since time immemorial. They have lived without burdening the State, thanks to the sea.

As a result of continuous protests by fishermen, they were granted an opportunity to go ahead with their fishing subject to certain restrictions. However, this opportunity was not given to the fishermen living in the vicinity of the harbour.

Although the fishermen have continuously pleaded with the authorities, no one has as yet lent them an ear.

Godwin Deshapriya, father of eight, resident of Cod Bay is a fisherman who has had to face immense hardship in his life. Mr. Godwin who faced many a hardship due to attacks by the Terrorists as well as from the Tsunami disaster, has yet to receive any relief from the government.

Around ten or twelve people in the neighbourhood lived off my beach net. We dragged in the beach net for about twenty

years, here in this place. There was no problem at all. We did our job in this lagoon even while the Indian army was here and there was more war activity.

However, during the past, the government and security forces, prevented us from doing our job within the harbour, stating that it was due to security reasons. It is more than two and half years since we were deprived of our job. At the beginning it was said that we would be allowed to do our job once the East was liberated. But a number of months have passed since the East was liberated. Our ban still remains the same. Is it not enough that for two and half years, we did not engage in our jobs because of national security? We do not know any other profession...

This is our traditional profession. If we take this Beach Net elsewhere, the people there will try to kill us. . What we request the government to do is, to come to this area, not just make decisions from Colombo and see for themselves our situation and make a decision..." says Mr. Godwin.

### Kanapathi Pillai Vadivel resident at Janasavigama,



Has worked as fishermen in the China Bay harbour, Bhoomico area for over thirty years. Kanapathi Pillai Vadivel states with pride that not only his father but his grandfather as well have been involved in the fishing industry. However today they do not have a profession.

"I got this job from my paternal grandfather... Our entire family was supported thanks to the sea. Even my younger sisters are familiar with this seagoing job. They catch fish with fishing rods and dig for cockles and mussels and earn about Rs. 400-500 a day. But now we cannot even go to the beach. As a result, of this ban, the situation is such that we cannot even attend to our religious needs. Once a year, we fast in the morning and then go to the Kovil and we engage in rituals and then immerse ourselves in the sea in remembrance of our departed. But this time we did not get an opportunity to do that. We cannot even get into the sea.

In the past, I used to give the fish I caught to my younger sisters. They sell the fish and give me the money. However, what I do now is buy fish from outside for a higher price and keep a small profit and sell it to the people in the village. I do this because I have no other option. What we request is for the authorities to give us back our sea..." says Kanapathi Pillai Vadivel.

### Mr. Suresh Priyantha – China Bay Harbour



"We carry out our profession within the harbour about 50 to 100 meters from the coast. We do not go anywhere where the ships are or towards the Navy Camp. It has been around 20 to 30 years since the war began

but there has been no incident where we do our jobs. Within this time, there have been two attacks within the harbour. Once a vessel belonging to the Navy was destroyed by the Tigers, at the Navy jetty.

After that a vessel transporting people to the North was destroyed as well. That was at the Harbour Police Jetty. No terrorist activities have taken place in the area where we work."

"When the State deprives us of our jobs, they have to consider how are children will eat and drink. When the drought comes and the farmers' crops are affected the Government provides them with rations. They give them compensation. However the fisher folk have nothing. As much as the farmer provides the rice for the country we provide the fish. We do not want any handouts from the State. What we ask is, by the greatness of the gods, for us to be allowed to do our jobs for two or three hours during the daytime."

We do our jobs from boats and sailing vessels. The Navy are well aware of the fact that we cannot go in and attack ships or the harbour but still they prohibit the fishing within the harbour because of the convenience for them in carrying out their duties.

At this time, the Army has liberated the entire Eastern province. Now, there is no obstacle in granting us permission to do our jobs. The Government is silent on this issue the State does not care about us in any way. We waited patiently for more than a year, because of security of the country. However they should take into consideration that we cannot live under these circumstances forever and we cannot tolerate it forever..." said, Mohammed Thowfeek, a resident of Janasavigama at China Bay Harbour.

### Mr. Thushara Nixon – President of the Ekamuthu China Bay Harbour Fisheries Cooperative Society



"Even the Ministry of Fisheries does not take into consideration, our plight.

Although we say we do our jobs in the vicinity of the harbour, we do not go into the harbour at all. We carry out our profession, in only three places within the harbour. The other fact is that we only go about 50 to 100 metres off land. We all own boats and 'wallam' only. We do not have motor boats. We requested the Navy to grant us permission to do our jobs for two or three hours during daytime. However, their response is always, next week or let's see next month. The security situation is complicated now. These are the stories they tell us.

"We picketed several times in front of the Clock Tower in Trincomalee against this. But the Government is still asleep. The Fisheries Project Office of Trincomalee, should get involved in this matter and make a special effort to solve it. Those officers do not have any discussions on this matter with the Navy.

Does the Government expect us to take our nets and our fishing vessels and go from this place?

We will clearly show them that there will be no problems in carrying out our profession. If we were also large scale fishermen and owned tank boats, we could somehow have found some way to do our jobs. It is at Cod Bay Fishing Harbour that the most number of fishing boats in Sri Lanka weigh anchor. However none of those boats belong to Trincomalee.

Even though there is no space for our boats in the Cod Bay Lagoon, multi-day vessels from Gandhara, Dondra, Negombo are allowed to go to sea and come back from within the harbour. If so, it is also dangerous for tank-boats to go through the harbour to the deep sea."

What we request is for the Fisheries Ministry and the Navy to discuss these issues with the fishermen living close to the harbour and see the situation from the fisher folk's point of view and make some arrangement.

### Mrs. Suresh Kumar Koneshwarie – China Bay harbour



"Although I am a woman, I can row a boat, I can throw small fishing nets and fish with a fishing rod. We learnt fishing because of our father... on certain days, we dig

up cockles and mussels and clams named "aakko" and earn around Rs. 200-300 rupees. That is more than enough for us to survive for the day.

Once the war ended we were happy and thought that we could go back to our previous jobs and that we would be able to do our jobs as before. But what happened was, something that we did not expect – the sea was fenced off with barbed wire. The vessel ("wallama") we bought with a loan from the bank is rotting in the garden due to termites.

We inquired from the North East Fisheries Coordinating Officer, D.H. Wimalasiri as to what measures had been taken regarding the fishermen living in the vicinity of the harbour who were deprived of their sea going jobs and also regarding the accusation that the Fisheries Ministry has not paid any attention to the fishermen who live close to the harbour.

"I accept the fact that, clearly the fishermen who live close to the harbour have been badly affected because of this fishing ban. The Navy brought about this ban for the protection of the inner harbour. This is because there are a large number of ships transporting the Army security forces and ships belonging to the Navy, within this harbour.

This ban was put into effect due to the suspicion that an attack could be aimed at these vessels. However, even at this time, we are having discussions with the Navy on this matter. We will make arrangements as soon as possible to provide some relief to these fishermen. However it is difficult for us to give a specific date. It will be the Navy who will make a decision based on the security situation."

# CHILDREN WHO NEED LOVE & CARE

Mangalanath Liyanarachchi



A country's future is its children. With each new birth, the country is promised a new beginning, a better one, a future where our children grow safely and securely under our care to be the best they can be, and take our country forward generation by generation.

But judging by the number of children's homes in existence in Trincomalee alone today, it would seem that Sri Lanka needs to rethink its attitude towards its children.

While in the 1980's Trincomalee had just one home for destitute children, the ravages of war and the toll it takes on human life has now raised the number of children's home to 15, with seven more yet to be registered.

These homes are generally run under the auspices of religious organizations or NGO's, which provide not only for their physical needs such as food, clothing and shelter but often go the extent of providing education, finding employment and even arranging marriages for these children who have no one else to look out for them

Thirteen-year-old Sinnetamby, who hopes to be a doctor, is one such orphan of a children's home in Trincomalee, who lost his mother to gunshot injuries in 2002 and whose father is missing.

He is however one of the relatively lucky ones. The children's home he resides in was one of the first to be established in Trincomalee. The home is well run by a competent Warden and has on several occasions been chosen as the best maintained home in the District.

The Warden, N. Chandrakandan told Groundview that many of the children have lost their parents in the course of the war. 'We try to minimize the loss of their parents as much as possible. We see that they go to school, tuition classes and see that they have facilities for sports and cultural activities.

One of our children is a third year undergraduate in Management Studies at the University

of Jaffna. We also arrange for their marriage, and some of our girls are now resident in countries such as Canada and England – we are very proud of our children," he said

Rasanjali is a 12-year-old from an uncleared area in Vavuniya, whose parents are missing. "After my parents went missing, I set out to find my brother who lives in Trincomalee. I came to the Vavuniya bus-stand and boarded a bus to Trincomalee. When I was wandering around the town, the police arrested me and produced me in Court and then I was sent here. I go to school now, and get everything I need here. I never want to leave this place. When I grow up I will in turn look after the children in the home," she says emphatically.

While most residents of children's homes are sent by the Courts or the Department of Probation and Child Care, there are also those who seek shelter here for their protection. Saumya Rasanjali is one such 12-year-old.

'My mother deserted my family when I was very young. My father was a fisherman, and one day when he was fishing, the LTTE fired at his boat, and I have not seen him since. I then went to live with my uncle, but I was ill-treated there. I had to do all the household work and take care of his little son too. I was beaten all the time by my uncle. When I told my teacher this, she advised me to go to a children's home, she told me to inform my uncle and go to the Revatha children's home. I knew my uncle would never let me go, so when there was nobody at home, I went out alone look for this children's home. When I arrived at the Revata Home, there was nobody as everyone had gone on a picnic. Then the police found me and produced me in Courts, and I was sent back here," she said.

Although the Revata Children's Home is the only Sinhala children's home in the entirety of the Eastern Province, it houses Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil children, like Mohamed Roshan who

I knew my uncle would never let me go, so when there was nobody at home, I went out alone look for this children's home. When I arrived at the Revata Home, there was nobody as everyone had gone on a picnic. Then the police found me and produced me in Courts, and I was sent back here,



lives at the home with an elder and younger brother, ever since his father was killed by the LTTE, and Chamindan, a Tamil youth who was sent by the Probations Department. This is in stark contrast to other Children's Homes in the District which restrict their intake to the ethnicity of those running the home.

Founder of the Institute Kammal Deniye Pagnnatissa Thero told Groundview the events that led him to first set up the Revata Home. "On my way to Trincomalee in 2000, I noticed several children of school-going age selling items such as peanuts, stringhoppers and fruits on the train. When I asked them why they were not in school, they all had similar answers – their par-

ents had been killed by the LTTE, were deserted or had abandoned them," he said.

Despite much criticism and obstacles, Pagnnatissa Thero determinedly went on his way and set up the home, which is now looked after by several generous benefactors.

"The Revata Home is open to all races. We try to raise children to respect people, animals and the environment. Their race or religion is of no concern to us. The children here have gone through so much, they have never known love or kindness only hardship and sadness. If we do not correct them at a young age, they can go astray and add to society's burdens. We treat them kindly and they respond to us," he pointed out.

The Home only accepts children under 12 years of age, as older children are generally not receptive to its environment and cause problems among the younger children. Many of the children are orphans, but some of them have older brothers and sisters. During the school holidays they are sent to stay with these siblings. It employs one supervisor for every 10 children, who looks after all their needs including schooling and tuition, thereby ensuring that no child goes uncared for, or their needs unfulfilled," the Thero told Groundview.

The Revata Home receives a monthly subsidy of Rs. 300 per child, which is given annually. The red tape to obtain this money is however often cumbersome, he said. The money however is nowhere near enough to run the Home, and it now relies on generous benefactors in the area, although even with such help the Home often has to ration food, he said.

Another such home, the Methodist Children's Home was first set up to give safe haven to children affected by the Black July riots. The boys' home is on Court's Road in Trincomalee and the Girls' home is situated at the Nilaweli Methodist Church, and both Homes are funded by "Kinder Help", an organization affiliated to the Methodist Church.

Here too, the emphasis is on studies, as for many this is the only

way out of their poverty stricken and destitute plight.

"The Warden of the Boys Home, S.A. Sawnaraj, had this to say. 'These children have had to face very cruel childhoods, what with the War, the Tsunami and family problems. Although their past has been unpleasant, we cannot leave them to a bleak future.'

Despite coming from very difficult situations, the children are second to none when it comes to their studies. One of the Home's orphans is now a medical student who returns during the holidays and teaches the other children at the Home," said Mr. Sawnaraj, visibly proud of this achievement.

Vijay Kumara Muralitharan is another promising student as well as star athlete of the Home. "Where we lived, in Verugal, we were often caught in the crossfire between the Armed Forces and the LTTE and faced immense hardships. Several of my friends were forced to join the LTTE and I'm sure the same fate would have befallen me had I stayed at home. All I want now is to study hard and help my younger siblings," he said, expressing his fears and his dreams succinctly.

There are many similar stories. Sixteen-year-old Christy Leon came to the Home from Kiliveddi when he was just 11 years old, as his father, a labourer, was unable to support the family of eight. "I am very happy in Trincomalee. I am in a good school and came third in my class last year. I want to study hard, get a good job and help my family," he told Groundview.

There is Pradeep, who was abandoned by his parents, Sendura who thought the Home might offer him a brighter future than his family could and Dharshan who joined the Home when he was just two and now comes first in his class and hopes to become a doctor.

Their stories are the same, their hopes and dreams bright with expectation, and while there can be no substitute for a loving and nurturing family unit, in the absence of it, the Homes seem to strive to fill the vacuum in these children's lives as best they can, under difficult circumstances.



# Camp of the displaced from SAMPUR

**I**t is the north east monsoon season. After a prolonged drought that lasted most of the year it is now that the dry zone peasant breaths a sigh of relief watching the fields turning an emerald green, the tanks that remained dry overflowing with much needed water it is a time that gladdens the hearts of many.

Yet this joy is not shared by some others. They are the people who have been displaced from their homes and native habitats and now living in Camps for the displaced. When the Government regained the Sampur area from the grip of the LTTE and liberated these people, they were first relocated in Wakarai and then in Batticalao. They have now been offered temporary shelter in the Kalyana Mandapam Hindu Cultural Hall and the land it is on. These people who have been there for nearly one year have no idea on when they could return to their villages and their own homes. With the rains their plight has become worse.

K.Pillai Amma who is a resident of the camp explained "This place has been built on reclaimed marshy land. Everybody cannot be accommodated in the Hall. There are 86 families in temporary huts built on the surrounding grounds. AS these are temporary structures the ground is bare and the rains make the interior soggy. I have five children. We all occupy a small room which is about 8'X 8'. The small children and the girls sleep in the room while the males sleep in the open air. Then the rain compels all of us to squeeze in to this room. It is worse when scorpions and mildly poisonous insects infest the room. We simply do not think of ever returning home because we have no hope for the future."

All residing in the IDP camp at the Hindhu Cultural Hall are from Sampur in Muttur South. When the fighting flared up between the Government Forces and the LTTE they fled the area leaving behind all their worldly possessions. Most of them were left with only the clothes they wore when deciding to flee for their lives and those of their offspring.

V.Sunderaligam narrated the events that brought him to this all time low point in his life.

"there were sporadic fighting in the area but we never expected the heavy fighting that erupted so soon. Suddenly there was Shell fire all around us. When the LTTE brought in heavy arms and mortars we realized that our lives were in danger. We then decided to leave our homes and seek shelter in government controlled areas. The LTTE did not allow us to move and the only option then was to take our kith and kin and sneak out as quietly as we could through jungle tracks and reach Werugal. We could not even bring the feeding bottles of the infants. We left with only the clothes we had on at the time of fleeing for our lives. My daughter collected her school books. It mattered a lot to her as she was planning to sit for O/L examination next year. Today it is almost one year and six months in this place but it is almost like a lifetime. If you spend one night here you will realize the trauma we have to go through every day and night. Now I feel it would have been better if I had died in the midst of the war. When the metal roof gets heated under the scorching sun I take the children and seek the respite offered under the shade of a tree. We are all like ants in a small anthill. If the Government does not want us to return to Sampur they could settle us on any other land in Muttur as there is plenty of government land. If they do that we will not be a burden on the Government any longer. Isn't that so? he asked with no great conviction and launched in to another litany of misfortunes he and his family suffered



the previous night due to the rains while spreading thick coat of sea sand on the floor of his temporary abode in an attempt to rid the dampness of the soggy ground.

Of the people in the IDP camp it is the children who attend schools that suffer most. Although in Sampur they attended schools devoid of many facilities, they now attend the leading Tamil schools in Trincomalee. They find it difficult to keep pace with the other children. Residing in a camp and attending school, these children feel and experience the chasm that exists between them and the other children. Nagarasa Jalani from Katta Parichchan Sampur is now attending a premier school in Trincomalee Sanmugam Girls School. She is in Grade 13 in the Science stream. She says it is extremely difficult to study while living under these conditions. "It is not at all comparable to Sampur. Here the competition is intense. We have to compete with children who enjoy better facilities. We have no electricity in the camp. We study with the aid of a bottle lamp. Kerosene is expensive. Our parents have no income. Yet every child attends school. The others take extra lessons. We cannot even think of it. We do not wish to add to their worries. So we do not tell our parents. Just think how a girl could study in this little room with so many in it. A girl needs some privacy which we are denied. It is only just that the government offers some land where our parents could settle if they do not want us to return to Sampur" says young Jalani in a voice that betrays despair as well as courage. Jalani was seated on mat attending to her home work. The ground around the mat was muddy. "When it rains the roof leaks. The ground get soaked. As it is near the sea the drizzle is constant. I cannot relate these in school. So however difficult it is I do the best I can" said Jalani listening to

the quiet whisper of the Ocean waves.

The residents of the camp dispute the claim made by the authorities that they receive adequate supplies of food. K.Nilleamma is a mother of five. She says that the ration she gets is not enough to lick let alone feeding ourselves. There is no milk powder for the infants. We sell the rations to the shops and buy some milk powder. The older children go to school with only cup of tea with no milk. Even children who are about five or six would like milk but we just cannot think of it. Our men have no income. They earn what they could by performing casual labor which is a few hundred Rupees. It is only way we have survived so far. Please request some organization to provide some milk food for these children" she pleaded. The monsoon weather is also a health hazard for the inmates of the IDP camp. The sanitary facilities including toilets are inadequate to meet the needs of the number of inmates. The residents have to stand in line in the mornings to get a bucket of water from the single well in the camp. "This always makes us late for school" says young Pakyarasa Priyadharshani who adds wisely "they can easily install two water tanks and make things a little better".

It seems that the tension of war in the area has been reduced to a great extent. These unfortunate victims of the conflict need not be subjected to prolonged suffering and uncertainty as regards their future. The authorities say that resettlements have been completed in most liberated areas in Trincomalee south. Settlements have been made in the areas between Eevalampattu and Werugal Mohoththuwaram. The area between Sampur and Mohoththuwaram has been declared a High Security Zone. The government it is stated has decided to resettle people in Ammana Nagar, Kattaparichchan and Senavur.

Sampur in its entirety was in was a vast area. If the government cannot resettle all the displaced people within the same limits it should decide on the alternative locations where these people now languishing in camps could be resettled. The time taken to determine the alternative sites is the time that prolongs the agony of a people who have lost their homes, livelihoods and living in a state of limbo for nearly one and half years.

**THROUGH ME YOU ENTER THE WOEFUL CITY,  
THROUGH ME YOU ENTER ETERNAL GRIEF,  
THROUGH ME YOU ENTER AMONG THE LOST.  
JUSTICE MOVED MY HIGH MAKER:  
THE DIVINE POWER MADE ME.  
THE SUPREME WISDOM, AND THE PRIMAL LOVE.  
BEFORE ME NOTHING WAS CREATED  
IF NOT ETERNAL, ETERNAL I ENDURE.  
ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER.**

**F**or Kumudini Jayalath, despite serving in a noble profession, the obstacles she faces are many.

When Groundview caught up with her at the Maharakama Educational Institute Hostel, where she follows a training course since November 2006, this English teacher was pining for her home and her family she had not seen for almost a month. 'I have not gone home for almost a month - my little daughter inquires on the phone when I will be coming home', she says with a smile, despite the tears in her eyes.

The second in a family of six siblings, Kumudini is from Kalupahana in Badulla, where she attended the district school until Grade 6. After a short stint at a school in Gampaha she resumed her education at her former school. While her father is a retired Government Servant, the family is also engaged in farming.

Kumudini sat for her Advanced Level examinations in 1990, and passed, despite education being adversely affected during that period due to insurgent activity. 'The insurgents banned lighting in our house, and

# Of hardship and separation

By Manori Gamage

**In the meantime, Kumudini waits anxiously for the day when she can join her husband and children, from whom she has been away for so many years.**

we had to study in the dark, which was extremely difficult'.

After completing her A/L examinations, Kumudini applied to the Moneragala Buttala University, which is attached to the Sabaragamuwa University, where she was selected to do an English course - a full time Diploma in English for a period of two years. During this time she married a Government Servant and the couple now have two children - a daughter and a son.

Her first appointment was in 2004 as an English teacher at a school in Hambantota, for a salary of Rs. 4000. The school which had class-

es right up to the Advanced Level had around 900 students.

After having taught Grades 3, - 5 for around 6 months, she was transferred to Haputale. The school being situated in a remote area transport facilities were also poor,

Today she speaks very sentimentally about this little school. "The school is situated in a very difficult area about nine miles interior from the Colombo - Badulla main highway, but there is no public transport to the school, she reminisced. There is no electricity and water is supplied from a tank at the top of the hill."

"The whole school comprised only 90 students, with classes only up to the 9th Grade. There were nine classes and only eight teachers. Just three buildings made up the whole school. There was no canteen, a very small library and one computer. It did not even have a playground or a sports teacher. When I went there, there were no English teachers," she said.

When Kumudini joined, the children did not know a single letter of the English alphabet they were expected to cope with a heavy syllabus. Through her initiative however, the principal gave permission for her to devi-

ate from the syllabus and concentrate on first teaching them the very basics, beginning with the alphabet.

In the meantime, Kumudini waits anxiously for the day when she can join her husband and children, from whom she has been away for so many years.

'Although I am a teacher and teach other children, I cannot help my own children with their studies' - ending her conversation on a sad note, echoing perhaps the sentiments of teachers around the island who undergo similar difficulties in order to dedicated themselves to the most noble of professions.

## Oasis to quench their thirst for a better education

**T**he Vidyakara Maha Vidyalaya located in Haguranketha in Nuwaraeliya is a remote area and for teachers who are transferred to the school it is a difficult posting according to the Ministry of Education.

A mixed school, it offers instruction from Grade 1 up to GCE O/L classes. It has a student population of 1,486 children with a staff strength of 66 which is an acceptable teacher-student ratio of 22. According to the staff, despite being a mixed school, students have only one functioning toilet, while the other is in a serious state of disrepair.

The school does not have adequate buildings with some needing urgent restoration. Despite these chal-

lenges the school has produced reasonably good results given the constraints they have to contend with. Last year 78 students sat for the O/L examination and 37 students qualified to follow A/L classes for which they will have to move to another school.

Out of 122 students who sat for the fifth standard scholarship examination 19 students were successful.

The Poramadulla Central School is considered to be the best endowed educational institution in the district.



Started as one of the first Central Colleges in the 1950s, the school has survived many upheavals caused by the various educational reforms

introduced over the years. It has succeeded in maintaining a high standard both in academic and sports. It can be considered as one of the oldest and best central colleges in the island. It has consistently achieved impressive results in university admissions.

Currently it has a mixed student population of 1,910 and a staff of 86. (student- teacher ration of 22). The

school offers instructions from grade 6 to A/L classes in Arts, Commerce, Science and Mathematics. This school is considered to be the best in the district for its results in Science and Mathematics with a highly qualified staff. According to the staff the school needs a computer lab as this will provide a vital facility for the students to keep abreast of IT education.

One of the major problems faced by the school officials is that the demand to enter this school from children in the entire district is so disproportionate to the facilities available. "It is because this is the only oasis of quenching their thirst for a better education in otherwise desolate desert." Was the laconic comment by one of its senior teaching staff.

# More teachers could make a

# difference

The glaring disparity of the allocation of funds and facilities for schools in the provinces is clearly demonstrated when you visit the Navodya School at Mahaweli gama in Seruwila in Trincomalee.

Children attending this school could be seen receiving instructions under the shade of giant trees not because the teachers want their students to appreciate scenic beauty of their surroundings but because the school does not have adequate buildings.

The main building of the school suffered heavy damage due to mortar fire during the fighting some time ago. Since then the pupils of the school held several demonstrations

At the Kantale Education Office which is about 30 kilo meters from Seruwila. Their pleas have evoked no discernible response from the educational authorities.

While the students and parents of the Navodya School which is in a remote part of the district were demonstrating demanding facilities and teachers for their school, the parents and students of the "Rajakeeya Vidyaloka" National School located in the Trincomalee town were demonstrating perhaps indicating the even handed neglect of the officialdom which stands absolved of any partiality towards either the rural schools or the urban schools.

Most of the Sinhala medium schools do not have the required teachers for Mathematics, Science and English. Two national schools in the district currently do not have principals.

There are three Sinhala medium national schools in the Trincomalee district and the premier educational institute is the Trincomalee Madya Maha Vidyalaya.

The new classification of Schools as National and Navodya has been an exercise in futility as it has made no qualitative difference to either category. The Madya Maha Vidyalaya which has 1,200 students is currently experiencing a severe shortage of qualified teachers. This has compelled students seeking university entry to attend private institutions which too are not equipped to teach Science, Maths or English.

Jayanthi Ranasinghe acting Principal of Trincomalee Madya Maha Vidyalaya commenting on her school says "This is considered the premier school in the district. This is one of the two schools that offer science and mathematics in the sinhala medium. The other is Agrabodhi National School at Kantale. For a year at least two students qualify to enter a medical faculty. This is a great achievement as it was reached under trying circumstance. Our main problem is the shortage of qualified teachers.

At the moment we have no teacher for Biology. The students who need to study this subject must attend private classes in Kurunegala or Kandy. In other areas if the facilities are inadequate such classes are available within easy reach. The next town or district. Kandy or Kurunegala is not

within easy reach for even the most determined student. So gaining admission to the medical faculty is testimony to their courage and determination."

The Biology teacher at the Sinhala Maha Vidyalaya is presently the acting principal of the school. Her present administrative duties leave little space to teach her subject. That teacher obtains transfers to other more congenial areas with no prior intimation to the acting principal is indicative of the state of the administration of the education ministry of the province or the central government.

"I am the acting principal. It is a requirement that I endorse every transfer. Yet a few days ago a teacher in this school obtained a transfer and left with no intimation to the school. The principal of a national school is appointed by the Ministry of Education. Yet for seven months the vacancy has not been filled. My acting appointment is unfair by the students and also it removes me from being actively engaged in actual teaching which is my primary responsibility," said Ms. Jayanthi.

The Trincomalee Sinhala Madya Vidyalaya at present has no maths teacher. Till now the subject has been taught by a substitute teacher. As substitute teachers are under the purview of the provincial government, the teacher has been transferred to a school that comes under the provincial council. Mrs. Jayanthi Ranasinghe explained that it was with a great deal of persuasion that she managed to hold the substitute teacher for some time. "It cannot be done indefinitely because it is unfair by the other school that needed his services. Now as an alternative another teacher has been assigned to teach Mathematics which disrupts the teaching of the subject in other grades."

The English Teacher has left the school one year ago and no replacement has been made to date. The children sit for O/L examination with no English being taught for a year before the exam. When replacements are requested the Ministry response is to wait till teachers pass out

**MOST OF THE SINHALA MEDIUM SCHOOLS DO NOT HAVE THE REQUIRED TEACHERS FOR MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE AND ENGLISH. TWO NATIONAL SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT CURRENTLY DO NOT HAVE PRINCIPALS.**

from the Training Colleges which are now referred to as VIDYAPIETA.

These are children who have gone through the pressures of a war. They deserve better.

As this report is written there are vacancies for two trained teachers for English and Science. Teachers claim that requesting for teachers is a process – "as good as playing a violin to a deaf elephant." Still the teachers say there are indeed developments that deserve recognition. The school has been provided with all the necessary equipment and facilities.

The science lab is fully equipped. Sports facilities are in place. In fact according to the Principal what they have received in the form of equipment is more than adequate. Yet the problem of required buildings remain. The tsunami destroyed the perimeter wall that is yet to be repaired. The Library has not been completed. The problem of sufficient buildings is as urgent as the teacher shortage.

The O/L examination results of the Sinha Madya Maha Vidyalaya bears adequate testimony to the problems referred to by the acting Principal, the Teachers and the Students. According to the results the percentage of those who passed in Maths – 43.9%, Science -44.8%, English – 25.9%, Sinhala – 82%. In Science, Maths and English less than 50% had been successful.

The A/L results according to the acting Principal has been impressive taken in context.

Of the 16 students who sat the examination 7 students have passed.(43.8%). All three students in the science stream have gained entry to University. In addition one student who offered mathematics and two students who offered commerce have also qualified to enter university.

D.S.Weerawardene is a Chemistry teacher residing in Trincomalee. In an interview with he made an in-depth analysis of the poor performance of the schools in the district in teaching Mathematics, Science and

English.

"the main reason for this dismal state is the scarcity of qualified teachers to teach these subjects. These subjects need to be taught in a consistent manner from grade 6 to grade 11. Even today the district does not have enough teachers to teach these subjects.

The schools attempt to overcome this problem with substitute teachers. In pithy sinhala he said you cannot sow Sesame and hope to reap Mung (Thala wapurala Mung ganda beha.)

It is the proper exposure of the student to these subjects in grades 7-9 that is vital in providing the required grounding in these subjects.

He pointed out another problem faced by teachers in the district. This district has no Teacher Instructors for any subject other than Sinhala. This denies the teachers to widen their horizons and keep pace with developing trends in imparting knowledge. In effect this is an isolated district. Here the children absorb only what is offered in the school.

In other districts they hold workshops, seminars and also whether you approve of them or not there are private classes more than what is required to meet the demand. There is competition among schools. That helps sharpen the minds of the young.

In Trincomalee whom do we compete against? Also we do not receive the relevant hand books and syllabuses on time. In Trincomalee they have set up an IT centre. They do not train Sinhala medium teachers. Although there is a great demand for IT education, the teachers have no entry to this new domain," he continued.

When appointments are made for National Schools teachers released by the Teacher Training Institutions are given priority. It is compulsory that such teachers serve in what is described as remote are hardship areas. These teachers who are eager to obtain their appointments accept such postings but then they contrive to get transferred to more congenial areas within about two years. These teachers have no qualms about leaving these children who desperately need their services. They do not realize that these young people living under the constant shadow of a war are the ones who deserve a better education. Such teachers are a disgrace to the entire teaching profession. The Minister of Education and the Entire Ministry of Education should be held responsible for this sorry state where political patronage extended for various reasons leave these children in a constant state of neglect.

If the Teacher transfer scheme is properly implemented with no exceptions to the rule this injustice could be avoided. In some cases our schools receive letters from the Ministry that Teachers have been posted to the school. We receive only the letters. As I speak there are about six such letters. The Teachers mentioned in those letters have not even bothered to come to Trincomalee. They have got their postings changed while we hold on to the so called letters of appointment," Mr. Weerawardene concluded.

# The tale of a teacher



**P**rasadi Purnima Jayamanne (25) is the youngest in a family of four. Being a bright student her parents were keen to give her every opportunity to further her studies. After attending the village primary school at Pambala Chilaw she moved on to Sugathananda Secondary school in Karukkuwa where she passed her GCE O/L examination with 4 credits and a dis-

tinction for English. She then moved on to Senanayake National School in Madampe for her Advanced Level examination which she passed but failed to gain admission to university.

She passed the entrance examination to enter the college of education in 2004 and passed out with a merit pass at the finals specializing as an English teacher. At present she is registered as an external student at Sri Jayawardenepura University and hopes to sit for her GAQ examination this year.

Having passed out of the teachers training college, the Ministry of Education held interviews for Merit Pass holders to be appointed to national schools. All other English diploma holders who passed out with her were fortunate to receive appointments to schools within the Puttlam

district. Prasadi Purnima was appointed to a Piyawara School-Anura Vidyalaya in the Kebithigollawa Educational zone.

While all her batch mates found schools they could travel to from their homes Prasadi Purnima is 200 kilometers away from her home.

"I thought that on my performance at the finals and the general assumption that those who obtained merit passes would be given national schools I would get an appointment within the district so that I could be near my aging parents and also be able to look after the my brother's child whose lwife passed away about two years ago. As I had faith in the system and also because I hardly knew any persons of influence I never attempted to canvass for a school within the district," she said

Prasadi spends Rs.3000 per month for her board and lodging in Padawiya and has to travel to Colombo every weekend for her external degree course.

At present there are 169 vacancies for English teachers in the Puttalam district. Prasadi Purnima is bitterly disappointed about her plight. Yet she says "I would like to be in a school closer to my home so that I can devote more time for my studies and also manage with my salary of Rs.14,000 per month. The best solution will be if I could be relocated while also providing a substitute English teacher for this school as there are English teachers who could be appointed to this school if the accepted procedure is followed. I have come to love these children who are eager to learn English and they should not be left in the lurch."

**F**or those in the Eastern Province war and poverty are a common sight. The conflict that swept through our country about thirty years ago affected the Eastern Province very badly and with an immense loss of life and devastation to infrastructure.

The war has hindered the education of children in the region but amidst the difficulties, the intensions of the parents are to educate and push their children into lucrative employment.

In Batticaloa there are schools of all levels, primary, secondary and central; and Kiran Central takes pride of place among the schools in Batticaloa. This school began 59 (Fifty Nine) years ago with 155 students and a staff of four and now has become a Central School where there are about 740 students and classes up to grade thirteen, since last year. As it is there are 27 teachers and the school prides itself on the fact that at least one of its students enters university annually. In addition, their results at the Ordinary and Advance Level Examinations too are good.

The children who attend these schools come from very poor families and their parents have laboured to educate them.

This school being equipped with telephone and fax facilities is indeed an asset in consideration of the competition that exists. Whilst the students of Kiran Central have succeeded in many ways, both teachers and students are concerned of the obstructions that

**All in all, the people of the Eastern Province have once again fallen into a despicable situation with the war, cyclone and the Tsunami affecting them heavily. As such education was obstructed with the schools been used as a refugee camps and having to be closed indefinitely, which may have affected Kiran Central too.**

prevent them from succeeding any further.

One of the main obstacles is the lack of teachers, as they have only 29 teachers in their staff whereas the requirement is Thirty Six; depict-

## HELPING THE YOUNG ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS

By J. A. Jayakody

ing a shortage of 9 (Nine) Teachers of which two are for Mathematics and two for Science. Other than this there is a shortage of 10 (Ten) Toilets.

The Advance Level Classes at Kiran Central began about Twenty years ago and another facility which is lacking is a shortage of Teachers in the Advance Level Computer Section. The incumbent Principal Mr. Arumeirajah indicated that they started conducting "O" Level classes in 1959 and joyfully stated that 34 (Thirty Four) had got through their "O" Levels last year. The advantage enjoyed by the students of this school is that they have to travel only a short distance of about three kilometers to attend school.

However, this was not so with the teachers who take about an hour to reach school daily spending about Rs. 60/= (Sixty) for travelling which they indicated caused them difficulties. The library lacks books and drinking water is short supply. In spite of all these difficulties it can be considered as an achievement that about 34 (Thirty Four)

students get through the "O" Level annually; the credit of which should be given to the Principal and the staff for their efforts.

All in all, the people of the Eastern Province have once again fallen into a despicable situation with the war, cyclone and the Tsunami affecting them heavily. As such education was obstructed with the schools been used as a refugee camps and having to be closed indefinitely, which may have affected Kiran Central too.

We are all aware that a student leaves a village school and enters a Central College to obtain a higher education and those who entered Kiran Central too had the same intensions of pursuing their studies in a University and working for their benefit as well as that of the country. Herein there is no distinction with regard to caste creed and ethnicity, whereas the city is concerned they possess urban facilities and are also strong financially. But although a school like Kiran central had a good history behind it, it had a

very poor economy and a very fearful atmosphere around. If they can be subject to the same mentality as those enjoyed by students of the main cities, they will definitely not in anyway be second in their performances. Although the students and teachers of Kiran Central had to work amidst the sound of gunfire, bombs and the fear of death and uncertainty their results were of an acknowledged nature.

Another prominent laxity in this school is that the lecture hall which began operations in 1948 is totally empty devoid of any furniture although it looks complete without any shortages from the exterior.

By this we stress the necessity to have this hall filled up with its requirement in order to enable the youth to achieve their aims; as whatever they may be in caste and ethnicity our short life inspires us to do what should be done in the correct manner. This will give us due merit here and in our next birth and enable us to obtain satisfaction and happiness and become admirable people in this world itself.



**“there are many children in our school. The classrooms are full and there is very little space. There is no playground for the small children to play games. There is no sports equipment. Some of the classes get wet during the rainy season. If this school is provided with a playground, the children can do a number of things.”**

# English is essential science is necessary

By K.D. Devapriya Kataragama

## VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

**E**ducation is what sustains a country and it is the greatest wealth that children could carry forward to the next generation.

The Kavantissa Primary School of Tissamaharama in Hambantota takes a special place among the schools in the area. This small school accommodates 877 pupils and 25 teachers. This year 58 students sat for the Grade 5 scholarship examination and 31 were successful, however Principal M. Wilson says since there is no English teacher at school the children are compelled to attend tuition classes in order to learn English.

He said, “there are many children in our school. The classrooms are full and there is very little space. There is no playground for the small children to play games. There is no sports equipment. Some of the classes get wet during the rainy season. If this school is provided with a playground, the children can do a number of things.”

S. Kandage is a graduate teacher from Matara teaching at this school. “I studied in order to serve the country. To teach children. I stay on because it is necessary to provide some sort of a service to these helpless children,” she said.

The Debarawewa President’s National School also in the Hambantota District has achieved a high level in both sports and education. However the students and the teachers of the school have to face various hardships.

Two hundred students from this school of

2,443 students sat for the Advanced Level examination and got very good results and came in first place. Three hundred and sixty nine students sat for the Ordinary Level examination of which 221 were successful. As of now since 2006, 18 students have joined the university to do medicine and 6 students are doing Engineering.

This school which shows aptitude both at sports and education has no facilities. Also, according to what Principal W. Abeysinghe, “although there are English teachers, as a result of there being lady teachers, when they go on maternity leave and do not come back for 03 or 04 months the children are greatly inconvenienced. The Debarawewa National School which is a leader among the schools in the area attracts students from other schools. Therefore the lack of classrooms and staff are immense problems that have affected the school.”

“There are pupils who are very good at sports. However these children do not have the support of their parents. It is not easy to move forwards if they do not understand their children’s abilities. As a result it is not possible for the children to be guided along the correct path. English is an essential subject for children today. Science is necessary too. However as there is a shortage of teachers in these areas, it is not possible for these helpless children to move ahead.”

N. Nelson Priyaratne teaches English at the Sella Kataragama Maha Vidyalaya. Mr. Priyaratne educated at Ananda College in Colombo and came to teach in Kataragama 10 years ago undergoing many hardships.



“Children in these areas are helpless. We do not have the facilities that children in popular schools have. A good education is necessary for these children. When teaching English it is required that we give them a good knowledge. I try to achieve that task to the best of my ability. I can go to the Colombo region. But I decided to stay on at Sella Kataragama because of these children,” he said.

The Kataragama Junior School in Moneragala district is one of the poorest schools in the area and has very little facilities. Three hundred and ninety children of the poorest parents come to this school with 13 teachers to teach them. This school does not have a playground, sports equipment, musical instruments or any such facility. Principal, K. G. Cyril speaking to GroundView said, “we have classes in our school up to Grade 9. There are quite a number

clever children among these pupils. There are 100 Tamil children amid these students. There is no teacher to teach the children to write a word of Tamil. We have one English teacher. The teachers do not have quarters. Even though these teachers come they leave in a month or two. These children are not happy about leaving this school and going to another school. If they are to continue from Grade 9 to Grade 10 they have to go to a school in Kataragama. The parents can’t afford to send their children to a national school and they do not have the facilities to send them. They are scared too. As a result the children stay at home after completing Grade 9. They get married at a young age. The government should intervene and try and develop these schools as well.”

H.R.K. Nandasiri, teaches Social Studies at the Kataragama President’s College. He said, “that children should be taught English from the primary school age. It is also important for their homes to provide additional knowledge of English. English is essential today. However the children from provincial areas have been given step-motherly treatment. Today there is a shortage of English and Science teachers in these schools. They do not like to stay in rural areas when they get their new appointments. The Government should bring in some law, which states that a teacher should teach in the same school for at least a period of 05 years. If not what will happen to the future of the country if all those who come keep on leaving? Children are the future of the country. More teachers should be provided for these children for Science, English and Sports subjects.”

A village you come across on the main Pollonnaruwa Batticoloa Highway after travelling about 30 kilometres towards Poonai is Alankulam; and 2 kilometres into this village is the Alankulama Mixed School.

K. Shanthalingam its Vice-Principal indicated to us that this school which is situated in the Divisional Secretariat of Valachchenai began in 1945. There are classes from Grade 1 to Grade 6 here and around 145 Children attend this school. Although there is a requirement for 12 teachers, there are only 7 teachers inclusive of the Principal.

“The people who have come from Thoppigala due to the ongoing war going have their children educated in this school, and although it has the required buildings as resources, it lacked the required Human Resources. Even though 145 children were being educated here; they did not have the facilities such as desks and chairs. The Deputy Principal intimated that they have a shortage of around 50 desks and chairs for the children and about 3 chairs and tables for the teachers. Pure drinking water is hardly available to quench their thirst and these children have not seen a computer although many primary schools of this region enjoyed this facility.”

“The authorities always suggest that a knowledge of computers would be given to every school in order for them to see the world; but this remains a dream not only for the children but even the teachers of Alankulama College, when even the requirement of teachers has not been met, how can we talk about computers?,” he said

“The shortage of teachers mainly applies in the subjects of Mathematics, Science and English and even these compulsory subjects are handled by this small staff of 6 at the school at present.

Despite this situation 2 out of the 5 students who sat for the Scholarship Examination recently received 106 marks

# Educated youth: JUST A DREAM?

each. Although there are clever students, it is a great pity that they do not have the required teachers to guide them, besides, even whereas sport is considered they do not have the necessary equipment or a ground to play on, even though they have an interest,” he pointed out.

It is disappointing that the authorities have not made any effort to accumulate knowledge inside the heads of these children although they now receive a meal daily under the World Food Programme.

The main occupation of the majority of the parents of these children is chopping firewood and Fishing and it is with utmost difficulties that some engage in all sorts of labour work and manage to send their children to school; and they are not financially sound to send their children to private classes. The amount of children who attend this school who hardly spare a meal, are many.

The service rendered by the teachers of this school towards its children cannot be taken lightly. In spite of the suffering, they undergo with the lack of quarters, food, drinking water and a timely square meal. Their services need to be greatly appreciated.

K Vivekanandan (32) of this school expressing his views regarding the difficulties experienced by them had this

to say: “We teach here amidst many difficulties. We are not given quarters or an allowance for working in difficult areas. Although I receive a salary of Rs. 15,000/= (Fifteen Thousand) most of it is spent on my travelling. I require about Rs. 120/= (One Hundred & Twenty) daily for my bus fare as I travel from Kalawanchikudi. I am still a bachelor and there is no way of getting married and living on this salary. There are no teachers for Mathematics, Science and English in this school. On most days our student turn-out is also low due to a lack of teachers. The school is situated at the edge of the village and the children have to walk about 2 kilometers. This is the situation of this area.”

K. Shanmugalingam (32), Deputy Principal of the school speaking to us said “we too face a lot of difficulties as much as the children. I’ve served this school now for 2 years and I travel daily from Kalawanchikudi which is 70 kilometers away from here and it takes me one and a half hours to get to school. I get up at 4.30am and get into the bus at 5.0am and have my breakfast only after arriving at school.”

“The bus fare too and from costs me Rs. 120 daily. After getting off the bus all the teachers have to trek 2 kilometers by foot to reach the

**“The shortage of teachers mainly applies in the subjects of Mathematics, Science and English and even these compulsory subjects are handled by this small staff of 6 at the school at present.”**

school. We do not have sufficient money to buy even a motor-cycle and most of our earnings are spent on bus fares. It is about 4.30 in the evening when we reach home after school and that is the time that I have lunch. We do not receive any allowance for service in even difficult areas leaving aside one for very difficult areas. None of the teachers in the Valachchenai region receive an allowance for working in difficult areas.”

The teachers in this school are faced with many problems and I am suffering the same fate for the last two years. If we receive transfers

and move out there will be no teachers to replace us and then these helpless children will not get any form of education, as the parents of these children are not financially sound to send their children to a school in another area. Very able and clever children attend this school and out of the few children who sat for the Scholarship Exam, two got through receiving 106 marks each, and this is a big achievement considering the difficulties these children undergo. If there are more teachers and the necessary facilities, a lot of children will pass this examination.”

Stressing further he says “We do not have electricity and computers which are essential for these days. There are not enough sports items and library facilities. So how can these children learn? This school where we serve is the most difficult primary school in the district of Batticoloa, and anyone who comes here will realize it. There is a lack of desks and chairs and there are instances where 2 children share one chair. This is the first time media Personnel have come here in order to apprise the authorities concerned, and this is a great strength for us. If these shortcomings are brought to the notice of the relevant authorities, we and the children have the opportunity to be afforded these laxities and it is indeed a great service”

He went on to state that these children are still grasping their lessons under the cover of a temporary building. Even in the village these children do not enjoy the necessary facilities. If these facilities are extended to these children they might have a chance at a good future. Out of the Rs. 15,000/= (Fifteen Thousand) we get as our salary about Rs. 5000 is spent on our travelling”.

For the staff at Alankulama College producing educated youth is more of a dream. It is upto the government to provide the necessary staff for this school and assist in the development of their education.

Mangalanath Liyanaratchchi in Trincomalee reports on the journey of one determined carpenter to rise against all odds to finally owning the biggest boatyard in the country.

# RISING ABOVE



While it would seem like common sense for a businessman to identify a market for his product and thoroughly study the market before setting up a business, many are those who tend to overestimate the potential demand for their product or who unwittingly position their product incorrectly and thereby fail in their venture. Regis Leddrick however, is not among them. Having begun life in Trincomalee in 1977 as a fibre mixer, earning a monthly salary of Rs. 80, today Leddrick is the owner of Gulf Star Marine Boat Yard in Pathispura, one of the largest boat yards in the country today, with multinational clients and a sizeable share of the export market.

Having lost his father when he was just 10 years old, his mother struggled to raise five children. While studying for his A/L's, Leddrick took to helping his mother, leaving home at 6 a.m. with the stringhoppers his

mother made earlier in the morning and selling them to various wayside boutiques. Then leaving home for school at 7.30 a.m., he would return to the boutiques at 5 p.m. to collect the money for the stringhoppers. During school holidays, he would work in nearby fields of carpentry shops and earn some pocket money.

Having missed entering University by just two marks, he found employment as a carpenter. 'During this time, a foreman of a boatyard came to live nearby. My mother asked him to employ me, and he gave me a job in a carpentry section of the boatyard. I was later transferred to the fibre-making section. I earned about Rs. 80 a month, but as much as I needed the money, the work also interested me a lot,' he said. A few years later Leddrick found employment at a boatyard in Wattala, where he learnt the A-Z of boat-making.

"One day my boss bought a racing boat and asked whether we could replicate it. The Head Carpenter said it couldn't be done as we didn't have the necessary machinery at the time, but I took a big risk and said I would do it. I had to do it on my own time after working hours, and often worked until 3 in the morning," he said. His hard work however paid off, as his employer was so impressed with the boat Leddrick made he appointed him the Head Carpenter of the boatyard. Some time later however, following a misunderstanding with his employer, Leddrick left his job and returned to Trincomalee

with just Rs. 175 in his pocket. But he was armed with something more valuable, fiberglass boat technology. When he first started out he would repair damaged wooden boats on the beach with fiberglass. As his reputation grew, he began to receive more orders and his income increased gradually.

During this time, a friend of Leddrick's suggested that he make catamarans out of fiberglass at a time when they were being with heavy and expensive timber logs. Though at first the fiberglass catamaran was met with a lot of resistance, they soon became increasingly popular, due to their versatility and cost-effectiveness. Just as his small enterprise began to thrive however, it was dealt a blow during the 1987 riots. His workshop was destroyed and Leddrick had to begin from scratch. 'I did not get any compensation from the Government nor did any banks give me a loan, so I set up on my own again at Pethispura, making small boats. I would work until 2 a.m. with my wife by my side, sawing wood, mixing fiber, doing everything on our own'. During this time, one of Leddrick's customers suggested that he made

a bigger boat, and offered to lend his boat

to make the necessary mould, on condition that the first boat Leddrick made would be gifted to his customer. Although the job was a difficult one, Leddrick says his enthusiasm got the better of him and he turned out a seaworthy boat, after which he began to get several more orders.

Gradually, as his reputation grew, he began to draw customers from all over Trincomalee, as his price was several lakhs less than those of the boats in Colombo. In the aftermath of the tsunami, Leddrick said that the Government ordered several boats from Colombo based boat yard owners, who set up temporary factories and supplied boats to fishermen in Trincomalee, but the boats, according to Leddrick, were of inferior quality and needed constant repairs. 'The Government could have given these orders to boat yard owners in Trincomalee who could have supplied the boats at a lower price and higher standard, but they chose to overlook us and go after the bigger fish', he said. Today Leddrick's company, 'Gulf Star Marine' is a private limited liability company run by him and

his family, employing more than 50 people, with his family being involved which employs about 50 people. 'We make several multi-day boats a day, each of which costs Rs. 5 million', says Leddrick proudly of the thriving business he built with nothing but foresight and hard work.

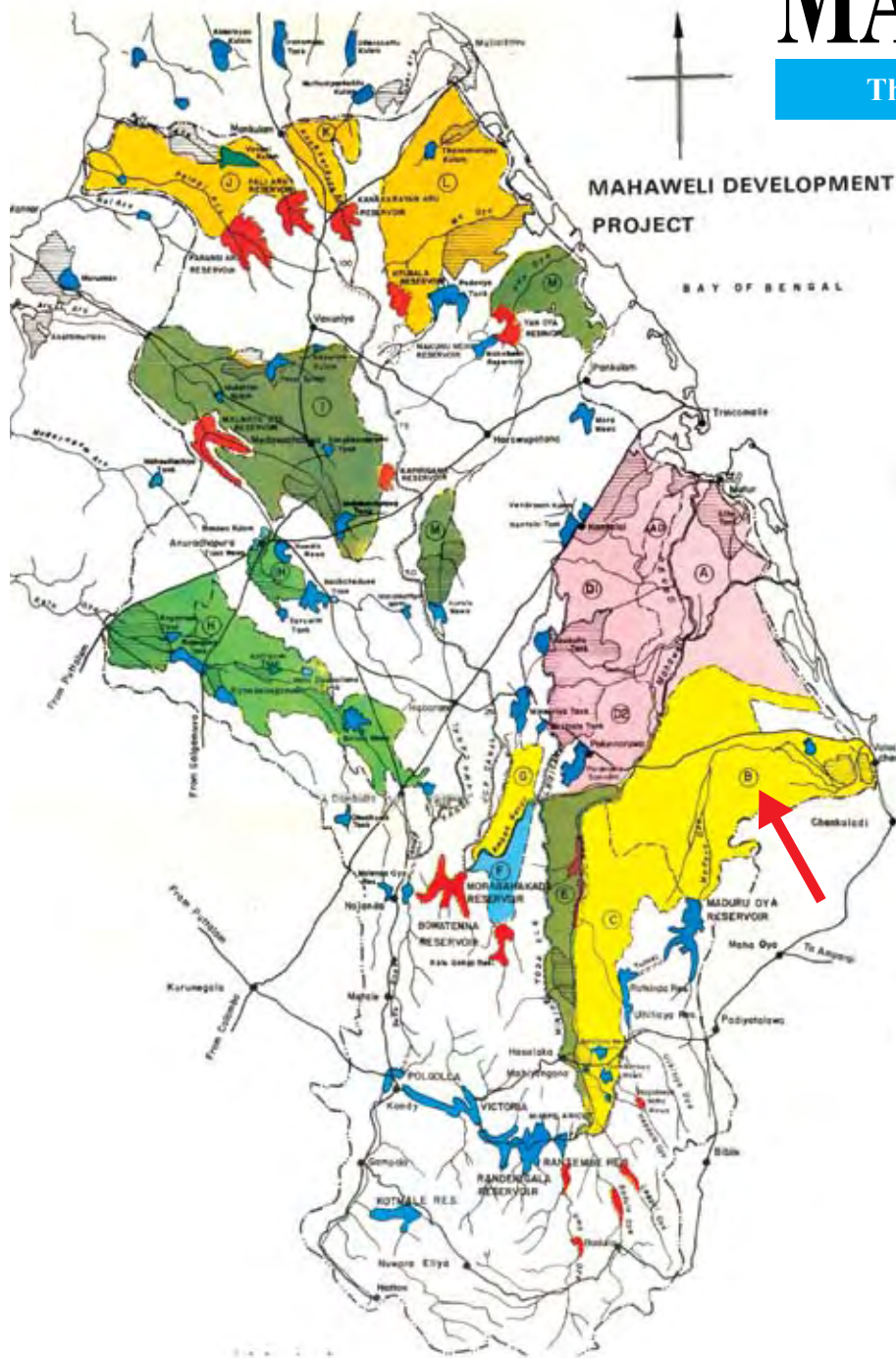
'Several students from technical schools come here for their practical training, and I give them an allowance. I can't forget my school days when I worked as a labourer in the paddy fields and elsewhere', he says.

Leddrick's message to today's youth is, "don't wait for fortune to come knocking on your door. Go seek out fortune and opportunity. If I did not do that, I will still be supplying stringhoppers to boutiques around my home or mixing glass fiber for a wage."



# MAHAWELI TO THE EAST

The Japan Bank For International Corporation may consider funding



The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) has concluded a comprehensive study to assess the progress of the accelerated Mahaweli development programme.

The study was carried out to assess and identify funding needs and technical assistance required to complete planned projects under the programme, and also to assess the requirements to upgrade and rehabilitate physical and socio economic infrastructure facilities that would require urgent attention.

The accelerated Mahaweli development programme is the country's largest development scheme for power generation and irrigation for a larger part of the country which includes the central, north central and the eastern province.

The study was conducted by the Japanese firm Nippon - Koei. The consultants paid special attention to revive and rehabilitate projects in conflict areas in the eastern province which were suspended due to the prevailing security concerns, as possible areas needing future funding.

Description	Zone 6	Zone 7	Zone 8	Total
Gross Area.....	10795.0	12077.0	16842.0	39714.0
Settlement Area	1777.0	2115.0	3133.0	7025.0
Net Irrigable Area ( Total)	3979.0	5140.0	5386.0	14505.0
Net Irrigable Area ( Paddy)	3913.0	4233.0	5200.0	13346.0
Net Irrigable Area ( Upland)	67.0	907.0	185.0	1159.0
Area of Village Tanks	322.0	863.0	610.0	1795.0
Pasture Land				
Forest, Fuelwood and Non- Irrigated Crops	1620.0	2525.0	3939.0	8084.0
Total Families ( P) To be Settled	3913	4233	5200	13346

The main emphasis has been on the development of system B left bank, Zones 4A and 4B where work was incomplete and the entire system B, right bank which is yet to be developed. (See map)

In addition the survey has identified Moragahakande, Kaluganga, Kaudulla and Uma Oya as future projects that would require funding.

the projects that were considered for upgrading and rehabilitation in the downstream areas include among others dairy development, value added agricultural product development, employment generation rehabilitation of canals, roads and the strengthening of farmer organizations, community action planning and management programmes.

When the accelerated Mahaweli scheme was conceived the planners had four main concerns,

- to provide more employment opportunities
- increase food production
- increase power generation
- alleviate poverty

In developing agriculture the main emphasis was given to increase paddy production while a major emphasis was made to promote the cultivation of other field crops.

The JBIC study that was conducted from February 2007 to June 2007 assessed

- The achievements of the Mahaweli Programme
- Japan's contributions towards the achievements of objectives
- Institutional Restructuring of the Mahaweli Authority
- Farmers economic situation
- Employment in the Mahaweli Areas
- Contribution towards the country's economy and stability

It is hoped that the implementation of the Maduru Oya system B right bank project would greatly benefit the country's economy and specifically in the eastern province through the development of dairy farming and the introduction of value crops.

If and when the system B Zones 6, 7 & 8 are completed a total of more than 13,346 families would be settled in these areas.

## Only 6.8 % schools offer advance level science stream classes

Table 09 - Schools by AJL subjects streams and functional grade

Province	District	No. of Schools	1AB				Total	1C			Total
			Science only	Science & Art	Science, Art & Commerce	Science & Commerce		Art & Commerce	Art only	Commerce only	
Western	Colombo	145	0	1	66	0	67	64	8	6	78
	Gampaha	150	0	0	53	1	54	63	29	4	96
	Kalutara	109	0	0	35	1	36	37	36	0	73
	<b>Total</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>247</b>
Central	Kandy	211	0	0	47	0	47	79	84	1	164
	Matale	81	1	0	15	0	16	21	43	1	65
	NuwaraEliya	101	1	0	25	0	26	30	45	0	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>304</b>	
Southern	Galle	134	0	0	45	0	45	50	39	0	89
	Matara	103	0	0	27	0	27	31	45	0	76
	Hambantota	90	0	1	19	0	20	23	47	0	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>235</b>	
Northern	Jaffna	86	0	0	39	0	39	21	26	0	47
	Kilinochchi	21	0	0	7	0	7	9	5	0	14
	Mannar	23	0	0	8	0	8	5	10	0	15
	Vavuniya	29	0	0	5	0	5	7	17	0	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>113</b>	
Eastern	Batticaloa	63	0	0	18	0	18	7	38	0	45
	Ampera	79	0	0	23	0	23	19	37	0	56
	Trincomalee	70	0	0	16	0	16	14	39	1	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>155</b>	
North Western	Kurunegala	241	0	0	49	0	49	65	127	0	192
	Puttiam	90	0	0	22	0	22	20	48	0	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>260</b>	
North Central	Anuradhapura	116	0	0	18	0	18	29	69	0	98
	Polonnaruwa	57	0	1	10	0	11	18	28	0	48
	<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>144</b>
Uva	Badulla	139	0	0	27	0	27	45	66	1	112
	Monaragala	58	0	1	12	0	13	18	27	0	45
	<b>Total</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>157</b>
Sabaragamuwa	Ratnapura	114	0	2	24	0	26	31	56	1	88
	Kegalle	130	0	0	21	0	21	45	64	0	109
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>197</b>	
<b>Sri Lanka</b>		<b>2,458</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>1,041</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1,812</b>

Source - School Census MOE