



The Government wants to post Sinhalese administrative officers as Government Agents in the North. In the past Sinhalese have served as Government Agents in Mannar, Vavuniya, Jaffna and

but to study in the Tamil medium just as the Sinhalese children had to study in the Sinhala medium. Even the children of mixed parents had no choice. As a result of this policy the people in the North know only Tamil and neither

Today the ordinary Tamil people know only Tamil just as the ordinary Sinhalese know only Sinhalese. There are few Tamils who know English since those who knew English have migrated. The Sinhalese have been reluctant to

serve in the north we have to induce Sinhalese public officers to learn Tamil. Since Tamils are present not only in the north but even in the South and the Central Provinces we have to see that public employees at least those at the top are required to learn Tamil and be proficient in both languages to be promoted to such top grades. In Canada certain posts are designated as requiring bilingualism.

It is not enough as in the past when Sinhalese Government Agents in the North merely passed examinations in Tamil. Then the administration was conducted largely in English. It is not so today. Tamil would have to be used to keep minutes of meetings, documents and internal memoranda (which can be collectively characterized as the work "environment").

R. M. B. Senanayake

## Sinhalese Government Agents for the North: How feasible

Trincomalee. Some of them were quite popular too. But the ground realities have changed over the years since the switchover to Swabasha as the medium of instruction in education. Tamil children have no choice

Sinhalese or English. Similarly the people in the South know only Sinhala and little or no English. Dr Colvin R. De Silva said that two languages (in official administration) would lead to one nation and one language to two nations.

learn Tamil. So there are very few if any Sinhalese public servants who can work in Tamil. This is the reality. If we want Sinhalese public officers to serve in the North they would have to be proficient in Tamil. If we want to send Sinhalese to

## Polipto - Diesel from waste Polythene

Very soon we shall reach the fourth anniversary of the astonishing claim that fuel diesel can be feasibly produced from polythene and other polymer waste by a process developed by a Sri Lankan inventor. Extravagant claims were made for the benefits that will derive from this unique process. I have been nearly a lone crusader who cast doubts on this possibility. I have been quite frustrated that despite many requests addressed to several quarters, little useful information on this exceptional achievement have been forthcoming.

Friends have asked me the reasons for my persistence and pointless engagement in what may seem a relatively trivial matter. My tenacity is prompted by at least three factors. Firstly, the claim is bad science, which Sri Lanka can ill afford with its meagre resources and enviable reputation for producing competent professionals. Secondly, it represents irresponsible expenditure of public money. In my professional life, I have tried to ensure that

public money is applied with as much care and prudence as if it were my own. There can be no other way. Thirdly, I am saddened that an Institution like Moratuwa University, with a good record has got involved in such a dubious exercise. I have tried but failed to obtain such information as would enable me to be contentedly silent. It is now time to seek some direct answers and to name names for a failure to disclose what should properly be public knowledge. (1) How much of diesel has so far been produced and how much of raw material has been employed during the several years that a Pilot Plant has been in operation? (2) What has been the total expenditure incurred so far? Do we stand by the initial projections of unit cost, national savings, ratio of diesel to waste? (3) Why has such a revolutionary and valuable process not been patent-protected? (4) Are we contented about the manner in which the nature and integrity of the claimed "secret catalyst" is protected? (5) To what

extent have vehicles been actually run on the product? These are questions for which the answers should be with the Inventor, Chairman Polipto, Chairman CEA and Chemical Technology Department of Moratuwa University.

Except for the first named, I have sought and not obtained coherent and frank answers to any of the above. My concern stems from the ample literature that deals with polythene conversion to diesel-like products but nowhere is any claim made for the economic feasibility of such processes. The general concern has been to get rid (even at a cost) of an embarrassing and bulky nuisance. Such is not Sri Lanka's aim - as our waste generated is surely paltry by other standards.

Apart from an admitted expenditure of Rs 25 million for the pilot plant, there has been mention of much larger investment in efforts to secure an extent of land for a commercial production unit. If so, surely the

experience with the pilot project must unambiguously be shown to truly justify the added expense. Of this, there is no evidence.

The entity established for this project - Polipto - is said to have 60% state funding (plus 10% from Moratuwa, also possibly treasury sourced). Does not this warrant much more transparency? At the moment sadly, the whole project seems veiled in secrecy. Three letters to two Ministers, two to Chairman CEA and even one to HE the President have all gone unacknowledged.

Considering the silence of all except a few, with considerably greater knowledge of Chemistry, Engineering, Production Economics and Business than what I possess, I repeat my plea to be shown where my reasoning is defective. For, one should learn all the time!

Dr U. Pethiyagoda



Dr PG PUNCHIHEWA has made a most valuable suggestion in the Island issue of 2/12 that all Ediriweera Sarachchandra's works should be compiled and presented in one book.

Sarachchandra was a great sage, philosopher, poet, litterateur and dramatist. Perhaps he can be regarded as one of the most important and influential men in twentieth century Sri Lanka. I

was fortunate to have been associated closely with him in the landmark theatre, Maname (1956). That play heralded modern Sinhala drama in our country. I was the first to step into the spot at the opening of the curtain and sing the narration as its Pothegeura. None of our great team mates thought that night that we were collectively making history. What an incredible response Maname received!

## Complete works of Sarachchandra

Sinhabahu with its considerable classical appeal to heart and mind followed later in the year 1961. God! What a play that is! What a confluence of lyricism, music, human feeling, and action brought out to perfection by an equally immaculate cast. Numerous other plays followed from the pen of the great man. They, too, were exceptional but got shelved by the banyan tree of Maname and Sinhabahu. Besides the ones mentioned by PG there were Pematho Jayathi Soko, Bava Kadathurawa, Mahasara, Elova Gihin Melova Awa, Rattaran, and a host of other prolific

productions.

As PG stated, these works constitute total literature and total drama - full of thematic relevance for all time. Their universality in terms of time and space and their aesthetic appeal qualifies them to be classified as some of the greatest works of the Sinhala people. Indeed as world heritage.

Hence government should focus attention on PG's proposal and have

these creations compiled in one great oeuvre. I would suggest that some scholars be put on the task of collecting commentaries published about these works for inclusion and adding their own with notations. This is the best way to preserve Sarachchandra for posterity - just as Shakespeare has been preserved to enrich humanity.

Furthermore the government should consider naming the upcoming Performance Centre after Ediriweera Sarachchandra.

Shyamon Jayasinghe Melbourne

## More on Southern Expressway

Recently, so much had been written by readers to The Island about the Southern Highway. Some have expressed their reluctance to use the highway as they say it is so dangerous. There were comments on the animal proof fence to prevent stray dogs and cattle venturing to the highway and causing accidents. Some reported dead dogs, bottles, juice cans, leftover food etc by the side of the road. Then the media claimed the number of accidents on the first day of opening the highway.

Both New Zealand and Australia are famous for sheep, cattle, horses, farm dogs, kangaroos and so on. But there are no fences along express ways except those put up by farmers. Then highways run through bushland and desert areas and nothing prevents animals walking on to the road. There are road signs warning drivers of wandering animals. Often there are dead sheep and kangaroos run over by vehicles. We have also



heard of planes striking birds and diverting from intended destinations.

A couple of years ago, I was driving from Melbourne to Sydney alone. Driving within speed limits through the expressway I saw at a distance, a kangaroo chasing another, on my lane. I slowed down putting the hazard lights on and then stopped as there was no

sign of them crossing over. Then the next thing I saw was the huge kangaroo leaping on to the bonnet of the car and through the windscreen fell on to the front seat. Out of fear, I ducked under the dash-board and got out quickly. Passers-by offered help and we were all surprised to see the kangaroo sitting 'happily' in the front seat. We tried to coax him out by offering food but he seemed safe from the 'bully' who was chasing. Finally the fire-brigade got him out. Fortunately, nobody was in the front seat!

A passer-by had sent a photo of the kangaroo sitting in the front seat of the car to the papers and it was published with a warning to drivers. So whether in Sri Lanka or for that matter anywhere in the world there is always risk of driving on highways. And with all the drawbacks they have become a part of life!

P. A. Samaraweera Australia

By SHOBHA SHUKLA

(CNS): As we once again commemorated World AIDS Day on 1st December 2011, it is time to share the joys and sorrows of people living with HIV (PLHIV) with a positive attitude. It is also high time that instead of targeting the affected population, we sensitize the so called unaffected populations (those who are not living with the disease and do not belong to high risk groups), so that they become more aware of this once dreaded disease and stop treating those living with it as untouchables. Of course a lot of water has flown since the first case of HIV was detected in India in 1986, and the tag of 'killer' attached to the disease has been replaced by 'chronic'. We now talk of people living with HIV and not people suffering from HIV.

In the darkness of ignorance that still engulfs the horizon of HIV/AIDS, there are some shining stars which rekindle our belief in the indomitable human spirit. Asha Ramaiah is one such woman, who was diagnosed of her positive status in 1995. I first met her in August 2011, and was immediately attracted by her pearly white smile, little realizing the ocean of tears it must have waded before settling on her face. Hers is a story that is an inspiration, not just for PLHIV, but more for those who are not positive (in their attitude, and/or in their HIV status).

In her own words, as told to CNS:

"I was an introvert as a child, and never dared to protest against anybody or anything that I did not want to do. I obeyed my parents without asking any questions, who did not even take my consent when they married me off as soon as I turned 18. And I am sure even if they would have asked me I would not have voiced my opinion. I realized the need to stand up and voice my opinion much later. Within six months of my marriage, my husband took very ill and was diagnosed with AIDS. When the doctors wanted me to undergo a blood test, I did not understand why. Even when they told me that I was HIV positive, I hardly understood what it really meant. My father-in-law started beating me and blaming me for his son's illness. Soon after, my husband expired and my parents brought me back. But they too started isolating me as they were afraid that my two younger sisters would not get married if someone knew about my HIV status. At 19, I was too young to understand the challenges that awaited me. I enrolled

myself for social work training and then came to know about how HIV infection affects the immune system. I was scared for the first time. But, after the initial shock, I stood up to face life once again, thanks to the strength of my womanhood. In 1998 my doctor directed me to Samraksha, an NGO doing pioneering work in the HIV and AIDS sector.

While working with Samraksha I was exposed to a world which I had never ever imagined. Samraksha facilitated a capacity building process for me by giving an exposure through various conferences and training programmes on HIV/AIDS, and gave me the

## Celebrating life in a positive way

opportunity to complete my diploma in Counselling from Christian Counselling Centre, Vellore. I could now organize support group meetings and worked with other PLHIVs as a counsellor. I not only listened to their anxieties and concerns, but also explored with them how to progress towards living positively in a satisfactory manner. I also met Elango and entered into matrimony once again in the year 2000 - this time with my own choice and with my eyes wide open to the reality that he was also a person living with HIV. I also became one of the founder members of KNP+, a network of people living with HIV in

Karnataka. These two events changed my life, both at the personal and professional level. There was no looking back now. I was extremely happy when my son Yatish Darshan was born in November 2001, but the happiest day came 18 months later when the doctors declared him HIV negative.

Today, when I look back, I feel, I have come a long way. I am here because of my own strong will to survive and overcome, and also because of the support and encouragement of my organization, my parents, friends and other PLHIVs. Without their support, the road was dark and thorny. And it is this great sense



A man lays in bed at the Hillcrest Aids Center Trust care center situated at Hillcrest on the outskirts of the city of Durban, South Africa, Thursday, Dec. 1, 2011. A film opening on World AIDS Day Thursday that mixes live action and animation is taking viewers inside a soccer player's body, showing how he becomes infected with HIV and spreads the virus. The cast and characters are Kenyan, Nigerian and South African, which producers hope will help the movie travel across the continent hardest hit by the disease. (AP)

of togetherness and hope which I enjoy with my husband and my son by my side. This hope is my way of celebrating my life. As person living with HIV for the last 16 years, I am not taken antiretroviral (ART) drugs, but simply following the doctor's advice and taking proper treatment for opportunistic infections. A word of advice for all women - A good education and financial stability are very important along with guarding our reproductive health."

This is what our former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam had to say about Asha in 2006: "Friends, the message we get from the experience of Smt Asha is

that as human beings we may get into a problem. But we should not get defeated. We should find out ways of converting this very problem to our advantage and succeed. The courage we see how the lady defeated the disease and most importantly she withstood the onslaught of alienation from her parents, husband and the society. This I call as indomitable spirit of a HIV affected person. Many Asha Ramaiahs are needed to make the people suffering from HIV/AIDS, leprosy, polio, cancer and TB feel comfortable and lead a normal productive life in our society."

Asha is not alone in her journey. There are others also who have faced similar predicaments. Manoj, of Gorakhpur, and a member of UP Network of people living with HIV (UPNP+), too faced a lot of stigma and ostracism from his family members and even from healthcare providers when he was first diagnosed with the disease. His elder brother's family treated him as a social outcast. But a simple yet meaningful intervention of his family doctor changed everything. When Manoj bared his heart to him, the doctor made it a point to visit his house daily after lunch and lie down on Manoj's bed, and eat the eatables taken from his hands. In this way he convinced the family that AIDS did not spread through touch or eating out of the same plate. The family took Manoj back in their fold, who has since married a widow living with HIV. He feels that apart from proper medical treatment, it is the love and support of the near ones which acts as an elixir of life to PLHIV. He is very grateful to his mentor Mr Naresh Yadav, chair of International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC) India who, according to him, is doing yeoman's service by reaching out to the unreached PLHIV and encouraging them to lead a normal life.

The coming days may be hard for the PLHIV community with financial grants drying up, threatening the free availability of anti retroviral drugs. While donors need to relook into this matter and production of generic drugs needs to be safeguarded in all free trade agreements, the least we can do is to lend a helping hand here and a soothing word there to bring about social inclusiveness and mitigate the woes of those living with HIV/AIDS. God forbid, it could be anyone of us tomorrow who might contract it through no fault of theirs. Let us do unto others as we would want them to do to us.