



# Insight

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## Going Green 2008



Devon Falls in Sri Lanka

Environmentalism is a broad philosophy, and, today it has become the topic of many a debate and discussion by significant people across the globe.

This year has been officially declared as the Green Year and the awareness of being eco friendly being the main theme. World leaders, at the recent G8 Summit, have agreed to set a global target of cutting carbon emissions by at least 50% by 2050, in an effort to tackle global warming.

In various ways, environmentalists and environmental groups seek to give nature's decorations a stronger voice in the struggle to make governments, industries and other institutions see the importance of ecology and to treat the natural world with greater respect. This trend is prevalent among the lodgings and hospitality industry where more hotels are going green and offering eco friendly options.

We are in an undeniable energy crisis and we belong to a fast moving electronic age. We still enjoy the delight of a host of beautiful flowers, a variety of birds, butterflies, bubbling water courses, and tastefully manicured gardens.

In the years to come it is believed that more food will be required to provide high-quality diets for an ever growing population. The market, not government, would better serve the environment, consumer and p/2

## ABOLITION of SPONSORSHIP Helpful to Expatriates A Viewpoint

While welcoming the proposed abolition of the sponsorship system in the Kingdom, it is in the best interest of all parties concerned to evaluate the outcome of the proposed new system which is in the making and might be enforced in the near future. This system will undoubtedly be very helpful to ensure that the rights of both the worker and the employee would be protected in relation to the terms and conditions laid out in the respective agreement which is signed by the employer and the employee.

Sponsorship in Saudi Arabia is based on a contractual agreement which legally binds the employer and the employee for a certain time period stipulated in the contract. During this period, the employee is bound by law to carry out duties entrusted to him by the sponsor and is deprived of the opportunity to take his/her own decisions. Moreover, even the passport of the employee is withheld from his/her possession and his/her life outside his/her workplace is completely controlled by the respective sponsor.

Whereas the relationship between the employer and employee becomes monotonous and due to adverse behavioral patterns, possible confrontations and frustrations could erupt from both sides. This would undoubtedly create a negative effect on the relationship between the two parties which would entice the employee to sometimes abscond and look for greener pastures outside the workplace. Expatriate worker arrives in the Kingdom his/her entire ownership remains in the hands of the sponsor. As said before the worker is bound by the rules and regulations set by the sponsor and is unable to act according to his/her own perceptions and likings. The sad part is that, many sponsors are ignorant of the fact that these migrant workers come from very poor backgrounds with the sole intention of keeping their families intact back in their home countries. The only solace some workers get out of their employment is the salary they earn which sustains his/her family back home. Most of the grievances are faced by workers who fall into the unskilled and semi-skilled categories where the sponsors can dictate terms and subject the worker to numerous complications.

There are many instances that have been reported where basic rights of the workers have been abused by the employer. For instance, many expatriate workers in the Kingdom are not paid their salaries on time, some domestic workers are transferred from one sponsor to another without the consent of the worker and are not repatriated even when their contract period is over, most workers are not given promised jobs and are underpaid violating the terms of the contract these are some of the few issues that migrant workers come to face when they come for employment in the Kingdom. Contrary to the above factors there are occasions that sponsors also face certain difficulties in relation to hideous acts committed by the employees. In these instances sponsors tend to lose a lot of money spent by them to sponsor their respective employees. If the current sponsorship system is abolished and new laws are passed by higher authorities in the Kingdom to implement a new system, it would bring in greater benefit to the Kingdom in terms of productivity and other related avenues of income bypassing other Gulf States in the region. ctd on page 4



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## Saudi -Sri Lanka Business Council in the offing

The Sri Lanka Embassy in Riyadh is in the process of formulating a Saudi Sri Lanka Business Council in collaboration with the Saudi Council of Chamber of Commerce in Riyadh.

The Embassy has submitted the necessary information on Sri Lanka – Saudi bilateral trade to the Secretary General of the Saudi Council of Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

The statistics provided indicate that the total trade turnover between the two countries in the year 2007 alone was US\$ 201.65 million as per the data published by the Sri Lanka Customs.

The aim of the proposed Business Council is to actively engage in,

- Exchanging of information on Trade & Investment with the appropriate bodies in Saudi Arabia
- Encouraging Saudi Investments and establishing Joint Ventures in Sri Lanka
- Organizing joint meetings with Saudi Organizations in Sri Lanka and in Saudi Arabia
- Serving as a representative of business sector interests in Sri Lanka in matters concerning business relationships with Saudi Arabia
- Promoting Saudi participation in international trade fairs in Sri Lanka & vice versa

Further developments will be published after approval is received from the Saudi Council of Chamber of Commerce and after the formation of the Saudi-Sri Lanka Business Council.

## National Policy for Migrant Workers



A national Labour Migration Policy for safe and skilled migration for over a million Sri Lankan workers will be implemented.

The Secretary, Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare Ministry Sunil S. Sirisena said that the National Labour migration policy will focus on three key areas Governance and management of labour migration, rights and welfare of migrant workers and their families in Sri Lanka.

The policy will be guided by the International Labour Organisations (ILO) Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration which elaborates on non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights based approach to labour migration, he said.

A three-member steering committee in this regard headed by a Sri Lankan ILO Consultant, Dr. A. Piyasiri was appointed by the Minister of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare Keheliya Rambukwella.



Victoria Dam

## Abolition of Sponsorship fm p1

At the same time if one is to consider the drawbacks of the current system it is worthwhile to note some loopholes which cause immense harm to the relationship of the employer and employee. In the current system if a certain entity intends on resolving an issue regarding a labour dispute it becomes a strenuous exercise due to lack of details available and long procedures involved in the process.

Unlike the current system if companies are set up and given legal rights to recruit people many plus point such as a database having full details of the parties involved, the availability of information in relation to the contract and the legal rights of the parties concerned, and most importantly the laws which define the mode of reprimand meted out for any violation of the contract from both sides would enable a smooth functioning of the system in the long run. It also should be kept in mind by the relevant authorities to make sure that facilities such as health insurance, job security, service benefits, etc, also should be continued on the same basis as it has been done in the past as it would ensure that expatriate workers would stick with the kingdom rather than favoring any other country in the Gulf.

By: **D.W. Tennekoon**  
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PAGE 4

**Green 2008** . . .ctd from page 1  
future generations. The world continues to seek higher and more sustainable farm yields resulting in embracing cutting edge technologies.

Global warming (the green house effect) was a necessity to protect the earth from another ice age. But the increase in polluting gases such as carbon dioxide has caused further warming which is hazardous to the environment. It is a thick sheet of smoke smothering and choking life and the environment

However, interestingly human activity responsible for decreasing the rates of ozone depletion contradicts itself if global warming becomes established. The passage of time has proven how nature has its own way of balancing and rectifying its cycles and resources. We are living witnesses of how air is purified through photosynthesis and water through the water cycle.

### Saudi TV Crew off to Sri Lanka



TV crew- Sri Lankan Airlines Manager, Fawzan Fareid, third right, presents the complimentary air tickets to Faisal Shadid Alotaibi, TV Director, third left, at a function held at the Sri Lanka Mission in Riyadh. In the center is Sri Lankan ambassador, Abdul Ageed Mohamed Marleen.

RIYADH- A four member TV crew from the Kingdom left for Colombo to film a documentary - 'Faces and Places' - to be telecast on the Saudi TV Channel One during the holy month of Ramadan.

Besides meeting the concerned Ministers, the team will visit the tourist resorts of the island that would attract the locals who travel on family holidays during their vacation. In addition to the places where early Arabs had visited, the crew will also visit the Sigiriya, Rock Fortress - UNESCO's heritage site, hill capital of Kandy, Nuwara Eliya - popularly known as 'Little England' for its Victorian style architecture of its buildings and landscape, and the Dutch Fortress in Galle, 120 kms from the island's capital.

"We have arranged this tour on a request made by Media Insight, a

private company which works for the Saudi Television to prepare documentaries to project countries that would attract Saudi tourists", Abdul Ageed Mohamed Marleen, Sri Lankan Ambassador, said. The embassy has arranged the tour in cooperation with the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau and Sri Lankan Airlines.

The media group comprises Faisal Shadid Alotaibi, TV Director and leader of the Group, Mubarak Alotaibi, Producer, Assaleh Taha Mosa, Cameraman, and Khaleddiya Al Dagestani, Interpreter.

Faisal Alotaibi said the purpose is to take Sri Lanka to every Saudi home through the local television channels to show them the country's natural beauty, culture, heritage and the contributions made to the island by Arabs who visited the country during early period. "Some of the beautiful Mosques in Sri Lanka were built by Arabs who visited the isle as traders", he said, adding that Abrar Mosque in the coastal town of Beruwala is the island's first Mosque which was built by Arab traders. "The famous Arab traveler, Ibn Batuta had written a lot about this fair isle", he stressed. The program, he said will be telecast in three episodes of 20 minutes each on a weekly basis on Saudi TV.

### Ban on Super Luxury White Goods

Colombo – Beginning August 2008, items such as televisions, refrigerators, washing machines and four burner cookers will not be available at the duty free shops at the BIA in Colombo. A new circular issued by the Customs Department requires that these items be removed from the Duty Free Baggage Allowance list for expatriates returning home.

Director General of the Customs Department, Sarath Jayathilake cited, said that through an information census they have discovered that most of the items brought into the country have made their way to the market en masse, and the high consumption of electricity is also a cause for more concern.

"Television sets with 32 inches and more screen width, refrigerators with over 500 litres of storage, fully automatic washing machines, deep freezers, air conditioners and four burner cookers are among those items", he said.

"It's highly unlikely an ordinary household will make use of these items. We have decided to remove them from the duty free shops and they will not be available as duty free items in the future."

"We have questioned groups of people who are involved in the act of buying and selling on behalf of the visitors and have found that over the last six months only 10 or 15 of the 500 litre refrigerators were sold and 32 inch television sets were rarely bought.

### Department of Customs Circular ALL UPB BOND-OPERATORS

#### Restrictions on items allowable under passenger baggage allowance

This is to inform you that the following items will not be granted under passenger baggage allowance effective August 1, 2008.

1. Air Conditioners of all types
2. Refrigerators of two or more doors and with capacity over 500 litres
3. Dish Washers of all types
4. Deep Freezers of all types
5. Four Brner Cookers with Ovens
6. Fully automatic Washing Machines
7. Televisions. CRT exceeding 29" LCD exceeding 32"

### Jeddah School Board of Management Committee

The newly elected Board of Management of the Sri Lankan International School in Jeddah has appointed a three member Advisory Committee to offer advice and guidance to the members of the Board.

The members of the Advisory Committee include **Subbiah Maheson, Shahul Hameed Salih and Azmy Anverdeen.**

The school has a student population of 324 on roll of which the majority are Sri Lankans.

### Minneriya Wild Life Park



Wild Elephants grazing

### Third UL Flight from Dammam

RIYADH- SriLankan Airlines has introduced a third flight out of Dammam beginning July 21 bringing the total flights to the Kingdom to seven, operating from Riyadh, Dammam and Jeddah .

With this initiative, SriLankan will have 37 weekly connections to nine cities in the Middle East – Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Doha, Muscat, Dammam, Riyadh, Jeddah and Kuwait. Additional flights are to three cities – Doha which increases from the present four flights up to six; Bahrain which goes from five to seven ; and Dammam which will have three flights, up from the present two .

"The additional flight to Dammam also increase SriLankan Airlines frequencies into the Kingdom to seven weekly services and gives residents more convenient connections to ten destination in India, the Maldives, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and other popular Asian destinations," SriLankan Airlines Country Manager, Riza Yusoo said,

"Residents in the East of the Kingdom have the added benefit of seven flights out of Bahrain in addition to the flights out of Dammam."

### Information Centre soon at the Mission

Arrangements are being made to open an Information cum Display Centre at the Sri Lankan Embassy premises in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, shortly, to provide information on tourism and investment opportunities in Sri Lanka. This Centre will also display traditional as well as non-traditional export items to create an awareness of Sri Lankan produce amongst Saudi citizens.

The Information and Display Centre will provide a grand opportunity to Saudis and Expatriates to see a true image of Sri Lanka, its people and produce. It will also provide an opportunity for Sri Lankan manufacturers and exporters to present their goods to the Saudi market.

The Embassy has also taken steps to expedite Consular services through the Information Centre. Passport renewals, alterations issuance of visas and temporary passports will be carried out on-the-spot, so that customers will not have to wait for long hours or make several visits to obtain their requirements.

### SL Professionals Network launched

JEDDAH: The Network of Sri Lankan Professionals was launched in Jeddah recently, with the island state's Consul General Abdul Latiff Mohamed Lafeer urging them to enhance their professional skills and help in further building the country's image .

"You professionals can contribute a lot in forging national unity and nation building efforts at a time when there are glaring signs of the island's ethnic war settling," the Consul General said in his keynote address at the function held at the country's new Consulate General.

As many as 550,000 Sri Lankan expatriates work and reside in Saudi Arabia, 150,000 of them in Western Province alone. They are part of over one million islanders residing across the world whose remittances exceeded \$2.5 billion last year, he said. "Our target is to increase this to \$3 billion in the coming years," he added.

"It is encouraging that the number of professionals coming to the Kingdom is steadily increasing. They work in various sectors including banking, tourism, corporate sector, schools and other educational institutions," the Consul General said .

Describing the network as the first of its kind, he said that the professional body could also enhance bilateral relations by organizing promotions on tourism, trade, investment, and cultural exchanges.

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### Royal College Riyadh Group

The Royal College Riyadh Group (RCRG) invites all old boys of Royal College living and working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to register their names with the Secretary. Please send an email to:- [rctgsa@gmail.com](mailto:rctgsa@gmail.com)  
Website: <http://www.rctgsa.org>

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