



Insight



Safety First



The tragic and sad demise of five Sri Lankan expatriate workers, amongst many other nationalities, in a fatal bus-truck accident on the Dammam highway from Riyadh in June is a stark reminder to everyone on how severe the impact of neglecting safety can be in every aspect of our daily lives.

Driving safely, especially in inclement weather, should be foremost in the minds of anyone who takes the wheel and sets out on the many highways across the desert sands. The large number of tragic road accidents reported annually within the Kingdom is also a cause for much concern.

Consideration for others on the road should be the baseline for safe driving. Lack of safety, within the Kingdom, is also manifest in many other areas in our homes, places of work, schools, malls, and other areas. It is quite common to see electrical cables and plumbing laid out unsafely in many residential and business locations. Contractors and builders do not seem to consider safety as a critical need when designing and constructing.

Another area of great risk is the total neglect of safety in and around schools during the peak hours in the mornings and afternoons. Dropping and picking kids, both, by parents and drivers at the entrance of schools in most locations shows a very lackadaisical attitude towards safety by many drivers.

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Sri Lankan Ambassador Passes Away



Sri Lankan Ambassador in the Kingdom, Abdul Ageed Mohamed Marleen, 71, passed away in Yemen while attending a conference in Sana'a Tuesday June 23, 2009.

The envoy was attending the meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim - Association for Regional Cooperation at the Movenpick Hotel in Sana'a.

According to Manisha Gunasekera, who was attending the conference on behalf of the Sri Lanka Foreign Ministry, Marleen had not turned up for the meeting on Tuesday morning. "His prolonged absence for the day persuaded the concerned authorities to open his room with the help of the Sana'a police and found him dead on his bed."

Deputy Minister Hussein Bhaila who arrived in Sanaa this morning told Arab News that he officially identified the body at the morgue and arrangements were made by the foreign ministry to dispatch the remains to Colombo in deference to the wishes of the family members. According to Bhaila, the judicial medical officers in Sanaa have confirmed that Marleen had died in his sleep due to natural causes.

Sabarullah Khan, Deputy Chief of Mission in Riyadh, flew to Sanaa immediately to look after the interests of the deceased. Marleen's wife Fatima also left for Colombo on SriLankan Airlines to attend her husband's funeral. Marleen is survived by his wife, three daughters - Sheroon in Brisbane, Shezoon and Shemoon in London and son, Shahran in Sanfrancisco.

The remains of Marleen arrived in Colombo on Thursday evening by a flight via Dubai and the funeral took place on Friday morning.

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AYURVEDA 2009



"Ayurveda 2009", International Ayurveda Exhibition and Symposium, organized by the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) was held at the BMICH from 23-25 May, 2009 where a large number of Sri Lankan and International participants attended.

Exhibitors from eight countries, including Sri Lanka, India, Germany, UK, China, and Japan, ranging from the largest companies to the small-medium enterprises, totaling 130 participated.

This year, Ayurveda 2009 had several special exhibits which highlighted the marvels of indigenous medicines such as: Treatment for Poisonous snake bites and the display of poisonous reptiles. Many visitors were seen at the pavilion to meet traditional Ayurvedic Doctors; creating awareness on Medicinal Plants.

Fatal Road Accident Kills Five Lankans

Five Sri Lankans died in a major road accident on Thursday, which killed all 20 passengers on board including the Saudi driver and his assistant.

The accident took place about 30 km east of Riyadh when a Hofuf-bound SAPTCO bus collided with a truck entering from a shoulder lane during a blinding sandstorm. The victims were burned to death as the bus caught fire after crashing into the truck.

The crash was caused due to a heavy sandstorm that had reduced the visibility considerably. The incident took place at 8.30 p.m., an hour after the bus, carrying 20 passengers, (including the driver and his assistant) departed from the main bus terminal in Aziziyah.

The dead included the following Sri Lankans: Meera Lebbe Tayar of Nintavur, Subair Mafeez of Akkaraipattu, Abdul Gafoor of Sammanthurai, Mohamed Anis Mohamed Amza of Addalachenia, and Mendis Appuhamy-from Kandy

The first four of the five Sri Lankans who died in the accident were newly arrived construction workers. "They came to Riyadh and were proceeding to their workplace in Hofuf, some 300kms from Riyadh," Khan said. He said the mission has contacted their next of kin through the Foreign Ministry in Colombo to seek permission to bury them in the Kingdom.

Marleen

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Marleen was bestowed with the post of President's Counsel in 2001, an honor conferred on outstanding legal men.

Marleen went to Sanaa on Sunday June 21 and I met him on Saturday with a Saudi businessman who wanted to visit Sri Lanka with his family on a holiday. I was really amazed at the manner he treated the Saudi gentleman showing our traditional Sri Lankan hospitality. He saw that the entry visa was issued in 10 minutes while we were having discussions. He offered us tea and he presented the visitor with gift packets of tea and requested him to come again to the mission after completing his requirements.

Marleen possessed sterling qualities of an Ambassador, he was kind, gentle, sincere devoted to his profession and understood the qualities of the common man. Although his death had caused a great vacuum in the annals of the Sri Lanka living in the Kingdom, Ambassador Marleen will be remembered for ever for the yeoman services he rendered to the community here. I salute him for the sentiments he had towards the community and efforts he made to project Sri Lanka as a country full of potentials. Thank You Sri for all what u did to us and we will always remembers you in our prayers.

M C Rasooldeen, Senior Journalist, Riyadh

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Most drivers prefer to sit behind the wheel with the engine running while the children get off or on to the vehicle. On many occasions these vehicles are also parked in the middle of the street, and even facing the wrong side for convenience of the driver. How many times have you witnessed a little child disembarking from a vehicle on the wrong side of the vehicle with the great possibility of being knocked down by a passing motorist?

School and other administrative authorities must be held responsible for the management of traffic outside their premises during the peak hours. Many institutions in western nations employ their own academic staff, including the Principal, to take up traffic duties, based on a predefined roster, outside their premises twice a day. School buses are allocated special parking places where they are mandated to keep their vehicles and stand at the entrance of the bus while the children get in or out.

A common spectacle seen very often is the little child walking all alone behind the vehicle to collect his/her school bag from the boot of the vehicle which the driver has very conveniently opened using the automatic switch under his comfortable air conditioned seat inside the vehicle.

Parking outside schools, malls and even residences can also be rather haphazard and cause immense inconvenience to many. Double parking is a very common sight along the streets of many Middle Eastern nations. Parking correctly is also another area where many drivers falter. Most times it is his own convenience that comes into play.

Safety, is the responsibility of parents, adults, and responsible administrators. Those who drive vehicles have the great responsibility of ensuring the safety of themselves and their passengers. When a passenger embarks a vehicle he puts all his trust and faith in the driver who is supposed to take him to his desired destination safely and on time. Proper education and use of safety belts and other measures is a vital component of any responsible parent and adult.

Good driving ethics combined with a civic sense of concern for others and a natural desire for safety is a vital need amongst the people of all societies. Let us educate ourselves, our families, colleagues and friends to be more considerate to others and ensure that they always have safety first in mind wherever they may venture.

MARLEEN THE MARVEL



The Sri Lankan community, members of the diplomatic corps and well-wishers of Sri Lanka deeply mourn the death of our beloved Ambassador, Abdul Ageed Mohamed Marleen, 73, who passed away peacefully while attending a conference in Sanaa Tuesday .

His sudden demise sent shock waves to Sri Lankans living both in Saudi Arabia as well as those in the motherland. As a mark of respect, the Sri Lankan community members in Riyadh and Jeddah held condolence meetings at the Sri Lankan embassy in Riyadh as well as in the consulate in Jeddah.

As a journalist, I had the opportunity of associating with him closely ever since he took up his assignment in Riyadh in March last year. He had a close rapport with the members of the Sri Lankan community irrespective of race or religion. He found his time to listen to the weary tales of a distressed housemaid and also made it a point to meet members of the Royal family and senior government officials to project the image of Sri Lanka in this part of the world. His effective influence helped resolved several differences among the members of the various ethnic communities.

Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama stated, "The late Ambassador served Sri Lanka with great distinction as our envoy in Saudi Arabia and was a highly respected and a much loved personality, both among his colleagues in the diplomatic fraternity in Riyadh, as well as the 550,000 strong Sri Lankan expatriate community in the Kingdom.

Among his initiatives to promote Sri Lanka's image in the Kingdom was the launch of a highly informative and colorful monthly by the Embassy, dubbed "Insight", in June last year, with the help and support of the Sri Lankan community. He made significant endeavors to build bridges between the two countries and the peoples. Only last month,

Ambassador Marleen founded the Sri Lanka- Saudi Arabia Friendship Society. He gave a new look to the embassy premises, the outer area of the mission was beautifully landscaped with the help of Lankan philanthropists and made a special sitting area for the visitors with facilities to avail themselves for a cup of typical Sri Lankan tea. He also installed a wide screen television to highlight the tourist destinations through a documentary 'Faces and Places', filmed in Sri Lanka recently on his own initiative.

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Sri Lankan Embassy in Riyadh has opened a condolence book for well-wishers and friends to sign. Sri Lankan Expatriates Society (SLES), in Riyadh in cooperation with its mission, held a condolence meeting on Friday at 6.30 p.m at the Embassy premises , while the Consulate in Jeddah also conducted a similar meeting at the Jeddah mission on Saturday . Consul General Abdul Latif Mohammed Lafeer said the death was an irreparable loss to the Sri Lankan community.

Sri Lankan International School Principal in Jeddah Fareeda Wahab, described the death as a shocking news to the community. "He was a perfect gentleman who was dedicated his work and treated all alike irrespective of the status of the expatriates," she said , adding that the community will miss him a lot. The school will hold a special assembly to convey the condolence to the bereaved family.

The island's Foreign Minister, Rohitha Bogollagama, said he was deeply saddened to learn of the sudden and untimely demise of Marleen, while attending the Ministerial Meeting of the IOR-ARC in the Yemeni capital Sana'a.

"The late Ambassador served Sri Lanka with great distinction as the envoy in Saudi Arabia and was a highly respected and a much loved personality, both among his colleagues in the diplomatic fraternity in Riyadh, as well as the 550,000 strong Sri Lankan expatriate community in the Kingdom.

"Among his initiatives to promote Sri Lanka's image in the Kingdom was the launch of a highly informative and colorful monthly newsletter by the Embassy, "Insight", in June last year, with the help and support of the Sri Lankan community. Since his appointment as the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in March 2008, he made significant endeavors to build bridges between the two countries and the peoples. In May 2009, Ambassador Marleen founded and inaugurated the Sri Lanka- Saudi Arabia Friendship Society in Riyadh."

Marleen, was an eminent Colombo-based lawyer, who has been in active practice for over 40 long years. He was bestowed with the post of President's Counsel in 2001. Since 1991 he has been the president of the Moors Islamic Cultural Home (MICH) and Secretary General of the Cairo-based Afro-Asian Solidarity Association. He has also officiated as the chairman of Board of Management of Zahira College in Colombo, which is the premier Islamic educational institution in the country's capital.

CONDOLENCE MEETING



The funeral of Sri Lankan Ambassador Abdul Ageed Mohamed Marleen took place in the midst of a large gathering at the Jawatte Burial Grounds in Colombo on Friday, June 26, 2009.

Ambassador Marleen, 73, passed away in a hotel in Yemen while attending a conference in Sanaa. His body was brought to Colombo on Thursday midnight where the island's Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama received the body and handed it to one of the daughters of the deceased. Petroleum Minister Abdul Hameed Mohamed Fowzie, Western Province Governor Alavi Mowlana, President's Advisor Abdul Hameed Mohamed Azwer were also present at the airport.



A large number of the island's expatriates gathered at the Sri Lanka Embassy premises at a condolence meeting arranged by the Sri Lankan Expatriates Society (SLES) in Riyadh in association with the country's mission. People from all ethnic communities were present to pray for their envoy who rendered yeoman services to the community during his short stay in the Kingdom.

In his speech, Sabarullah Khan, Charge d' Affairs of the mission said, "during a short span of 15 months, Marleen had done a great deal to lift the image of Sri Lanka in this part of the world. His scholarly approach, humility and pleasant manners made his career successful as a diplomat,"

SLES President Nirone Dissanayake recalled Marleen was not only an intellectual but also he was a father-figure who proudly claimed that his

CONDOLENCE...

mission was to look after 550,000 children in the Kingdom. Representatives from all faiths expressed their condolences, while Moulavi Mohamed Uwise spoke on the significance of birth and death. He stressed that all beings are born to die and Islam expects everyone to follow its principles during one's temporary stay in this world.



During a condolence meeting in Jeddah yesterday, Sri Lanka Consul General Abdul Latiff Mohamed Lafeer said Marleen was responsible for translating the Holy Quran into Sinhalese, the official language of the country." He was a noble gentleman who spent the better part of his life for the sake of the Sri Lankans living in and out of the Kingdom," he stressed.



The Editorial Board of Insight wish to convey our sincere condolences to the family of His Excellency, A A M Marleen, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Saudi Arabia, who passed away in Yemen. We are most appreciative for the great efforts he took to make this newsletter what it has become today. May Allah Grant him Jannah!