



Insight

Patriotism vs Nationalism



Many people, in almost every country on the planet, have a tendency to think that nationalism and patriotism are one and the same thing. In reality, the two are not; in fact they are completely different in their real meaning.

Orwell defined patriotism as "devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force upon other people." I guess we cannot argue with that?

According to Orwell, nationalism is the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or an idea, and "placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests." In other words nationalism doesn't have to be based on a country. This same fanaticism can be applied to any "ism": Communism, Neo-Conservatism, Fundamentalism, you name it. Whether it's based on a country or an "ism," nationalism always has that combination of blind zeal and indifference to reality. ctd on p2

18th SLES AGM HELD IN RIYADH



Eighteen years of service in the Kingdom bears eloquent testimony to the yeomen services rendered by the Sri Lanka Expatriates Society in the capital, observed the newly elected President Andrew Sinnen at the 18th Annual General Meeting of the society, held at the Sri Lanka Embassy premises, on Friday Feb 19, 2010.

A new team of office-bearers were unanimously elected for the current year at the meeting held under the supervision of the Sri Lanka Embassy Commercial Secretary, Yasantha De Silva. A committee of 15 members were elected with Sinnen as the President, Manel Gamage - General Secretary and Asantha Fernando - General Treasurer. The new President was inducted by the outgoing President Nirone Fernando amidst unprecedented ovation from the audience.

Speaking further, the President said that his first task will be to launch a membership drive among the members of the community. He solicited the cooperation of all present members to chalk out a new plan for 2010 which will be implemented for the greater good of the community. The outgoing President requested the new committee to continue the good work of the society which had already benefited a large clientele of distressed workers. ctd on page 3



18th SLES AGM from p2

The society operates a Free Medical Clinic for those who are in need of medical attention and it has a Benevolent Fund to assist the workers who are distressed due to accidents or unexpected calamities.

It was decided to set up a 'Death Benevolent Fund' to help the next-of-kin of the members who pass away while working in the Kingdom. The house appointed a committee comprising all past presidents of the society to work out modalities of operations of this fund. Article 3 of the SLES constitution was amended to recognize Non-Sri Lankan spouses and children of the members and allow them to enjoy all facilities and privileges offered for Sri Lankan members.

Sri Lankan Ambassador Ahmed Afel Jawad, distributed recognition certificates to the members of the outgoing committee in appreciation of their services. SLES, which functions under the aegis of the Sri Lankan Embassy, is the first Sri Lankan society to be formed 18 years ago in the Kingdom when Cader Markar was the island's Ambassador in the capital. Subsequently similar bodies were formed in Jeddah, Dammam and Madinah.

62nd Independence



Sri Lankan missions in the Kingdom celebrated the country's 62nd independence day on Thursday, Feb 4, 2010.

The Sri Lankan Embassy in Riyadh hosted a breakfast morning for the local community after a flag hoisting ceremony was conducted by the Ambassador, Ahmed A. Jawad.

A choir from the Sri Lankan International School then recited the national anthem. This was followed by an observance of two-minutes silence to remember those who gave their lives for the nation. "This was done as a mark of respect to all those who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the nation," Ambassador Jawad said.

A similar program will also take place in Jeddah. Consul General Sabarullah Khan hoisted the flag in the morning while the local community also participated.



Kalu Ganga from p3

It had offered Saudi Riyal 99.9 million for the second stage of the Water Supply and Sewage project and gave SR 48.1 million for the Mahaweli Ganga Development Project System B in 1981. Sri Lanka obtained SR 85 million for the Mahaweli Ganga Development Project System B Left Bank in 1984. In 1985, under the Mahaweli Development Project, Sri Lanka built a model town in Polonnaruwa where a large market was named as 'Riyadh Market'.

SFD had also granted SR 40 million for the construction of Kinniya bridge and a road widening project.

GEM of a Country ctd from p2

The Arabian Nights regales readers with the description of "Sinbad the Sailor" discovering the rarest and most precious rainbow-hued priceless gemstones on the island of Sri Lanka, when he was washed ashore here.

It seems the ruby was admired locally, too, for Ibn Batuta, a traveler from Tangiers who visited the country, sometime between 1333-1341, and wrote: "All the women in the island of Ceylon have necklaces of rubies of different colors and wear them also on their arms and legs in place of bracelets and anklets. The Sultan's slave-girls make a network of rubies and wear it on their heads."

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insightnewsletter@gmail.com

Printed at Al Raja Press, Riyadh
+966-1-453-8811 (Tel), 470-1167 (Fax)
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In nationalism, thoughts “always turn on victories, defeats, triumphs and humiliations. Nationalism is power-hunger tempered by self-deception.”

And this self-deception leads to disastrous miscalculations based on wishful thinking rather than facts.

“Orwell says:

“Political and military commentators, like astrologers, can survive almost any mistake, because their more devoted followers do not look to them for an appraisal of the facts but for the stimulation of nationalistic loyalties.”

“All nationalists have the power of not seeing resemblances between similar sets of facts.

Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage — torture, the use of hostages, forced labor, deportations, imprisonment without trial, forgery, assassination, the bombing of civilians — which does not change its moral color when committed by ‘our’ side....

The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.”

The need of the hour is a sense of Patriotism for one’s own homeland where each and every one of us has the courage to lift up ourselves and contribute in whatever way possible for its development and progress, across all strata of society and life.

May Our Nation Bloom Forever!

Gem of a Country

Nafha Mushtaq – Arab News Feb 4 2010



Known as the “Jewel Box of the Indian Ocean,” Sri Lanka, like possibly no other region on Earth, has yielded precious stones and fine gems in a great profusion of gem species and varieties. It has a sparkling reputation since nowhere else do so many minerals of gem variety exist and concentrated in so compact an area of such abundance as in this island.

Lady Diana’s engagement ring, the rubies in the queen of England’s crown and the marine blue gem from the ill-fated necklace, “Heart of the Ocean”, featured in the blockbuster movie “Titanic”, all come from this resplendent island.

“One of the world’s most beautiful and exotic islands, Sri Lanka, (formerly Ceylon) lies just below the southern tip of India. This pear-shaped bit of tropical paradise, about the size of Sicily, is a tourist’s delight offering British tea-houses, rubber plantations, and gem mines,” Peter Bancroft, who was the author of “The World’s Finest Minerals and Crystal”, wrote about the isle and its gems.

According to the writer, the island was known in the ancient world as “Taprobane” (copper colored in Greek). Native Veddahs, bathing in smooth flowing streams, noticed colored pebbles scattered in sandy bottoms. It was not until 500 BC that conquering Buddhists from northern India also discovered gems in the rivers and began to set rough stones into crude jewelry.

They bartered stones with traders from abroad and eventually the treasures found their way to the marketplaces of Asia and Europe. Ancient Greek and Chinese historians referred to the beautiful gems of Ceylon, and King Solomon reportedly wooed the queen of Sheba with Ceylonese precious stones.

Geologically, gemstones originated within a broad belt known as the Highland Series, which runs through the center of Sri Lanka. The edges of the belt form a trough bordered by chains of mountains and peaks. The trough, made up of highly crystalline Precambrian metamorphosed rock, featured components of schists, quartzite, marbles, and sometimes pegmatite deposits. Rock erosion resulted in the formation of extensive gem-laden placer deposits along streambeds in lower valleys.

Marco Polo wrote of his visit in 1292: “I want you to understand that the island of Ceylon is, for its size, the finest island in the world, and from its streams comes rubies, sapphires, topazes, amethyst and garnet.” Little has changed since Marco Polo’s time except that Sri Lanka faces overpopulation and a faltering economy.

Gems are found mainly in Ratnapura (City of Gems), Pelmadulla, Rakwana, Eheliyagoda of the Sabaragamuwa Province, Deniyaya, Morawaka, Ridiyagama of The Southern Province, Elahera of the Central Province and Okkanpitiya of the Uva Province. Approximately 5000 gem pits are scattered throughout the above. In 600 BC, the Etruscans incorporated rubies obtained from the island in their jewelry. Two centuries or so later, the Romans began to do likewise. Since that time, fine rubies from Sri Lanka have found their way to all corners of the Earth and enhanced the art of adornment. Many ancient travelers and traders made Sri Lanka one of their destinations for valuable treasures of gems.

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Saudi Arabia Gives Rs 5,332M For Kalu Ganga Project



Saudi Arabia will fund Saudi Riyal 172 million (Rs. 5,332 million) for the construction of a dam in Sri Lanka, which will be the highest grant offered to the island since 1981.

A four-member delegation headed by Agriculture Development and Agrarian Services Ministry Secretary A. Amarasekera arrived in Riyadh on Sunday to prepare the draft agreement which would include the technical details of the project. The agreement will be signed in Colombo. “This is the seventh financial facility offered by the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) for infrastructure development in the country,” SFD Project Director Abdullah Al Shedokhi said.

The project, he said, dubbed as Kaluganga Project is to be implemented by the Mahaweli Authority with co-funding by the Kuwait Fund and the Sri Lankan Government.

The \$ 113 million project will be shared by SFD-\$ 46 million, Kuwait Fund-\$ 37 million and Sri Lanka Government-\$ 30 million.

The water from Kaluganga will be diverted to areas in Morgahakande and to cultivable areas in the North-East. In 2008, SFD provided Saudi Riyal 75 million to construct the Epilepsy Hospital in Colombo and Rs 11 million to provide an extension to the Neuro-Trauma Centre at the Colombo General Hospital.

Earlier, Saudi Arabia provided a concessional loan of Saudi Riyal 45 million to construct the Neuro-Trauma Centre at the Colombo General Hospital in 2002 and the construction of the building was already completed.

The SFD has provided Sri Lanka with project loans on three previous occasions.

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Sri Lanka Railways



The Railway, then known as Ceylon Government Railways, was conceived in the 1850’s as an instrument to develop and unify the country. The 1st sod of the Sri Lanka Railways was cut by Sir Henry Ward, the Governor, in August 1858. The 1st Train ran on 27th December 1864, with the construction of the Main Line from Colombo to Ambepussa, 54 kilometers to the east.

This line was officially opened for traffic on 02nd October 1865. The Railway extended and developed it’s network and in 1927, a total route length of 1530 km was in operation.. The Main Line was extended in stages, with service to Kandy in 1867, to Nawalapitiya in 1874, to Nanu-Oya in 1885, to Bandarawela in 1894, and to Badulla in 1924. Other lines were completed in due course to link the other parts of the country, the Matale Line in 1880, the Coast Line in 1895, the Northern Line in 1905, the Mannar Line in 1914, the Kelani Valley Line in 1919, the Puttalam Line in 1926, and the Batticaloa and Trincomalee Lines in 1928.

The Railway was initially built to transport coffee and tea from the hill country to Colombo for export and was for many years, the main source of income. With population growth, however, passenger traffic increased and in the 1960’s overtook freight as the main source of business. The Railway is now primarily engaged in the transport of passengers, especially commuters to and from Colombo, offering a vital service and reducing road congestion.

The First Rolling Stock landed in Ceylon in 1864. These engines were 4-4-0 Type, two wheeled coupled with a tender, with a fuel capacity of 5 Tons and 15,200, Gallons of water.

The length was 49 ft. over buffers and 59 tons in weight. These engines were in use till 1926. Three and Four driving wheel locomotives, with Saturated Steam Super Heater boilers were introduced 1915. Garret Class double headed locomotive were introduced in 1928 to eliminate the need for a 2nd engine to haul trains over a gradient of 1 in 44 in the up-country areas. In 1954 Canadian Government gifted to Ceylon, the M2 Class General Motors Electric Locomotives of 1310 H.P. In the mid 1950s, a Hydraulic Power Coachers were perched for the faster and cleaner service for office workers. A land mark in the history of the railways was the complete dieselization of it’s motive power in 1969 by the introduction of 88 Diesel Hydraulic Locomotives.

The first consignment of coaches of 2-Wheeled, 2 Door, with 9’ 6” Wheel Base and 22’ 6” long, equipped with projecting sun-shades, bonnet type of ventilator glass drop light and double roof with coconut oil lamp started serving in this country and were in service for over nearly 20 years.

The railway good service was inaugurated with the type of wagons such as 4 wheeled wooden Covered Wagons.

On the inauguration of the First Railway to Ambepussa in 1864, there was no need for signaling. The trains were run at long intervals and on time table to make sure that the trains were the kept well apart.

Tablet Instrument was introduced as speeds and frequencies increased for safe operation on single lines. Lock and Block instruments were used for double line sections. The List and Mores System was one of the earliest forms of interlocking used at single line station. Color light Signaling and Centralized Traffic Control was started in 1959. The Railway Telecommunication system has been modernized by the introduction of VHF/UHF Radio Telecommunication facility between station and control offices.

In 1906, the Railway Operating Department was divided in to 3 divisions namely Colombo, Anuradhapura and Nawalapitiya.