

Insight



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Climate Change And Health



We are all fully aware that our health is our wealth. Is Climate linked to our health and wealth too?

We are trapped in a world of environmental pollution be it land sea or air...

Climate and weather, as always, exert strong influences on our health. Today it is visible that Climate change and its variability is a significant and emerging threat to public health. The earth has its own way of rectifying its problems. Should we play a part in this to help maintain, and improve the situation?

This year's World Health Day, on 7th April 2008, drew international attention to the impact of climate change on human health. The UN in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has highlighted the importance of climate and health in strengthening public health services, causing a 'red alert' especially among vulnerable populations in the developing world.

Five major health consequences of climate change are malnutrition, death and disease from extreme weather events, disease from both scarcities of water and excess water, heat waves and infectious diseases.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirmed that there is overwhelming evidence that human activities are affecting the global climate, with serious implications for public health.
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SAARC to forge ahead with meaningful programs under SL chairmanship

A productive and fruitful 15th 'Heads of State' SAARC summit was concluded at the BMICH in Colombo recently with high priority and strong focus laid on taking collective action to confront Food and Energy Hikes in the region as well as the scourge of terrorism. SAARC has also plans to initiate cooperation with other regional bodies such as EU and GCC.

Australia and Myanmar joined SAARC as observers, besides the existing observers such as China, Iran, European Union, Japan, South Korea, USA and Mauritius. Afghanistan became a member last year and became a signatory to the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) during the summit.

The state leaders who were present, included, Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, Bangladesh Interim Government's Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmi Rhinley, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and the newly elected chairman, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The Colombo Declaration on the basis of 'Partnership for Growth for Our People' was also adopted. On reaching consensus on several issues by the Heads of State, Foreign Ministers of the respective countries also inked the Agreements on the; Charter of SAARC Development Fund (SDF), Agreement on the Establishment of South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO), SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Protocol on Accession of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). They also agreed to host the 16th Summit meeting of the SAARC Heads of State in the Maldives in 2009.

During the concluding session, the newly elected chair, President Mahinda Rajapaksa underscored the prime importance of economic and commercial cooperation in the region
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SAARC Outlining the global ramifications of reduced food availability in turn leading to high prices, and increasing energy costs, if not addressed to, he said, would reverse the progress and the development achieved by the respective governments.

He opined that in the field of Energy, we should strive to develop alternative and renewable sources of energy, and make the necessary reforms in increasing energy efficiency, transferring technology and in energy trading.

The Energy Ministers of the SAARC countries are due to meet in Colombo next year to pursue this matter further.

President Rajapaksa also underscored the importance of combating global terrorism, a menace particularly rampant in the region which if not eradicated, would affect the region's stability and security.

"It is in recognition of this reality, that we have ensured the signature at this summit of the Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters. We have condemned all forms of terrorist violence, and emphasized that our States should firmly cooperate, especially through the exchange of information on terrorism and organized crime", President Rajapaksa reiterated.

Two Lankan Pilots To take On EK A380



Two Sri Lankans will be given a unique opportunity to pilot Emirates' new Airbus A380. Captains Suren Ratwatte and Suhail Hashim, who joined Emirates in 1989, are among the first of the airline's pilots to fly the brand-new aircraft.

Captain Suren Ratwatte flew the prototype aircraft registered as F-WWDD out of Airbus Industries' home airfield in Toulouse France on June 18th, while his close friend, Captain Suhail Hashim flew the same aircraft the following day.

The two pilots were part of the first batch of Emirates crew to qualify to fly the huge aircraft, now being operated by Emirates between Dubai and New York. Suren and Suhail are, both, old boys of Royal College, Colombo.

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Climate Change

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Actions to strengthen the key features of health systems and to promote healthy development choices are of urgent need. The immediate requirement is to enhance the awareness of public health, as well as reduce vulnerability to future climate changes.

The agricultural world is vastly affected as it is extremely sensitive to climate disorder. The rising temperatures and more frequent droughts and floods are considered the worst enemy for the agricultural zone.. Countries that are densely populated are depending on rain-fed commodities, and farming. Unfortunately they are facing the greatest risk. Malnutrition is already taken an estimated 3.5 million lives each year.

The contrasting weather events such as Tsunami Hurricanes Floods etc. caused immediate deaths and injury. These occurrences caused diseases such as cholera. This can be particularly lethal when vital health infrastructure has been tampered and tattered.

According to WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan. areas with weak health infrastructure - mostly in developing countries will be the least able to cope without assistance.

Proper environmental management is the key to avoiding all preventable illnesses. Study states that most of the illnesses are directly caused by environmental factors that have a dominant influence in our health in many ways such as the exposure to physical, chemical, and biological risk factors, and through related changes in our behavior to those factors.

Nuwara Eliya - A Little Piece Of England

<http://www.nuwaraeliya.org/>
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Horton Plains at Sunset
Nuwara Eliya, meaning "City of Lights", is located in the heart of the Sri Lankan hill country. Home of the famous Ceylon

tea and its rolling cool mountains are carpeted by velvety green tea plantations, interspersed with gushing streams and tumbling waterfalls. The salubrious climate, misty glens, and typical English style cottage houses, makes the place look like a piece of English countryside

Located at a height of 1,990 meters (6,128 feet) above sea level, the temperatures range between 14C-21C during the months of Jan- Apr, 16C-18C between May and Aug and 15C- 18C during the Sept-Dec months.

The town was discovered by a hunting party led by Dr. John Davy in 1818 and was established as a summer retreat in 1828 by Sir Edward Barnes, the then British Governor of Ceylon. It has been visited by Samuel Baker, the famous explorer, traveller and writer, who has mentioned it in his writings. It is overlooked by Mt. Pidurutalagala, the highest mountain in Sri Lanka, towering 2,524 meters (8,281 feet) above sea level.

Bouquets From Media Ombudsman



Presidential Advisor & Media Ombudsman, A H M Azwer described "Insight" as an informative and inspiring monthly, which would, not only promote bilateral relations but also lift Sri Lanka's image in the Middle East. "I am delighted to note that the Sri Lankan Ambassador, A.A.M. Marleen has harnessed the talents of Sri Lankan professionals living in the Kingdom to publish this newsletter," Azwer said, adding that such a publication will go a long way in stabilizing our position in the Arab world. He also commended the Honorary Members of the Editorial Board who have come out with an attractive design and a content of wide ranging news and views on Sri Lanka.

Jeddah Consulate Moves To New Location



The Sri Lankan Consulate in Jeddah has moved from the Sharafiyah district to Al-Khalidiyah, opposite the Saudi Arabian Airlines offices at Al-Jabayla Street, near Al-Amoudi Mosque.

"We had a soft opening of the new premises in mid-June. and we are awaiting for a formal opening of the mission by our Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama soon after the holy month of Ramadan , Sri Lankan Consul General, Abdul Latiff Mohamed Lafeer told Insight.

"The new location is more spacious for rendering Consular Services and also for hosting community activities that are increasing," he said.

The location is convenient for the community as SAPTCO buses operate from downtown Jeddah to a point close to the new location," said the Consul General. He also said that in addition to the Professional Association of Sri Lankan Expatriates and Sri Lankan Expatriates Society, many other activities are being planned.

"We will be hosting various educational and IT programs that will benefit the community," he added.
The new telephone numbers of the mission are:
+966-2-606-5414, 606-5772,606-3442. Fax 606-4439

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Alston Koch Tourism Ambassador



Alston Koch receiving his appointment as Tourism Ambassador from Minister Moragoda. Also in the picture are K A D George Michael, Secy, Ministry of Tourism, Renton de Alwis, Chairman SL Tourism Promotion Bureau & Dileep Mudadeniya, MD SL Tourism Promotion Bureau

The well known musician, Alston Koch, has been appointed as an Ambassador for Tourism by the Minister for Tourism, Miliinda Moragoda.

With three Gold Records and 18 International Releases, including musical videos and the now famous "Murali Song", Alston migrated to Australia in 1969, after a vibrant and successful musical career in Sri Lanka for almost a decade before that.

The only Sri Lankan born musician to have an international hit overseas, Alston was in Sri Lanka to perform at the immensely successful, "Hikkaduwa Fest 08" and at the "SAARC Head of States Summit Media Event", hosted by Sri Lanka Tourism. He enthralled the South Asian Media and Sri Lankan audiences with the "Murali Song", with a backdrop of cricket, and also his other hit songs, "Disco Lady", "Try Again", and "Twenty Miles".

A very keen environmentalist, Alston has ventured to compose and present a special song for Sri Lanka Tourism Earth Lung Project, establishing the nations effort at mitigating climate change. The song, titled, "A Land Like No Other", was first launched at the SAARCK Media Dinner Show.

"I am humbled, privileged, and honored, by this appointment and I will do everything I can to take the message of the beauty, warmth, and rich Sri Lankan heritage to the world", said Alston, on receiving the recognition.

The special Earth Lung Song, which was recorded earlier in Australia, will now be produced as a High Definition DVD with Sri Lankan visuals as a backdrop, for international release. For more information refer <http://www.alstonkoch.com>

Mandatory Insurance For Lankan Domestic Workers

RIYADH- Sri Lanka has called on Saudi insurance companies to submit quotations for its mandatory insurance scheme, which is to be implemented shortly for its domestic workers in the Kingdom

"We have already introduced the scheme in United Arab Emirates and Jordan. The Kingdom which has the largest concentration of housemaids in the region, will be the third country to launch this program", Kingsley Ranawake, Chairman of Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) stated.. He added that the decision to implement this scheme was sequel to official talks between Saudi Labor Minister Ghazi Al Gosaibi and Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Promotion and Labor Welfare Minister Keheliya Rambukwella, held in Riyadh in May this year.

On a suggestion made by the Sri Lankan Government, Ranawake said the Saudi Minister agreed for a comprehensive insurance cover for all housemaids during their contract period in the Kingdom. It was agreed by the Sri Lankan Government to appoint a Saudi Insurance Company and the Saudi sponsor to pay the premium on behalf of the employee.

The mandatory health insurance scheme of the Saudi Government does not include domestic aides working in the Kingdom.

"Such an arrangement will ease the problems of both the employee, employer and the two Governments in case of an eventuality such as repatriation of dead bodies, medical treatment and accidents and also to provide return air tickets in case the sponsor fails to pay for it.", the Chairman said. He added that the proposed scheme would also provide the needed security and encourage maids to come to the Kingdom for work.

More than 80 percent of the 550,000 Sri Lankan workers in the Kingdom are housemaids who remit a sizable sum to the national coffers of Sri Lanka. Remittances, from Lankan overseas workers is the second largest foreign exchange earner .

The Chairman pointed out that beginning January, Saudi Arabia readily agreed to offer the increased wage of SR 650 for the island's domestic aides who include housemaids and house drivers. He warned that recruiting agents who fail

to provide the maid's salaries as stipulated in the work contract, will be blacklisted forever .

To overcome the problem of non-payment or delayed payment of salaries to the housemaids, the Sri Lankan Government has plans to open a Non-Resident Foreign Currency (NRFC) Account in one of the banks on behalf of the maids and the sponsors will be requested to deposit the salary to a given account so that the authorities could keep track of the payments paid to the maids.

Al Futtaim Invests Rs 7 billion In AMW

When Associated Motorways PLC changed ownership in August - with Dubai-based Al Futtaim Engineering LLC buying a majority 71 percent stake in the company, there surely must have been a tinge of concern among some of its employees and senior management about the future.

What about heritage, family values and nostalgia - is there no place in business for these ideals? "There is no heritage or sentiment ... this is for the greater good of the company and the country at large in terms of investment," Ajita de Zoysa, Chairman of the Group, told reporters, the day the majority stake was sold by the De Zoysa family on the Colombo Stock Exchange.

De Zoysa will continue at the helm at the publicly-listed company for another two to three months after which his brother and group Deputy Chairman Tilak de Zoysa will take over. Speculation however is rife in the corporate sector that with Al-Futtaim securing a 71 percent stake for a near Rs 7 billion and already announcing a mandatory offer to buy the balance 29 percent, the Dubai based Group will make sweeping changes including putting its own people in key senior board positions.

The two stakes that made up the 71 percent came from Associated Electrical Company (AEC) and 20 percent from John Keells Holdings (JKH) which bought into the company in June 2006 to jointly get involved in property development.

The decision on the sale of the 59-year-old AMW didn't surprise many in the stock market or the business community as AEC has been scouting around for a buyer for the AMW stake for several months now. AMW has been steeped in tradition and history.

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