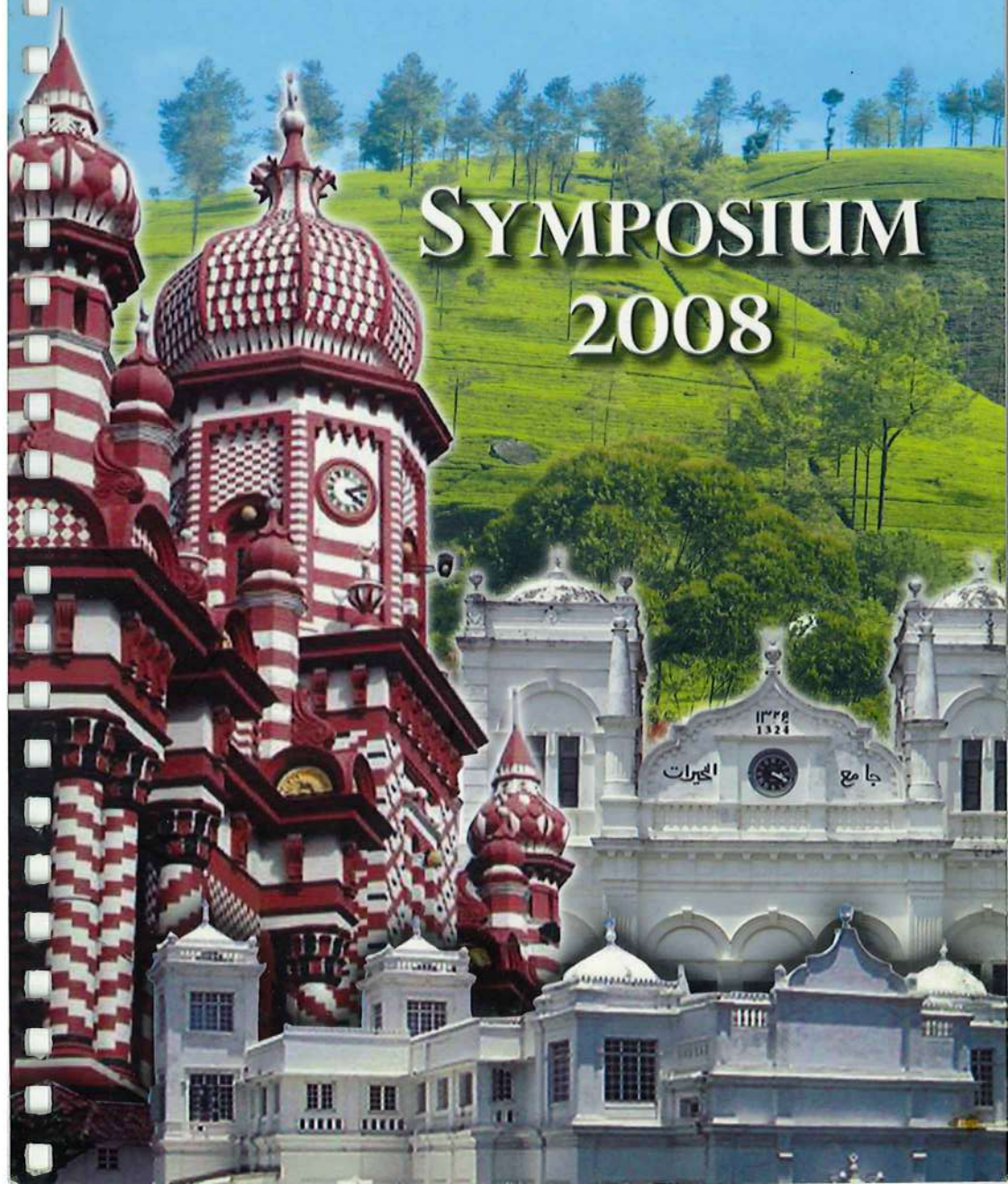
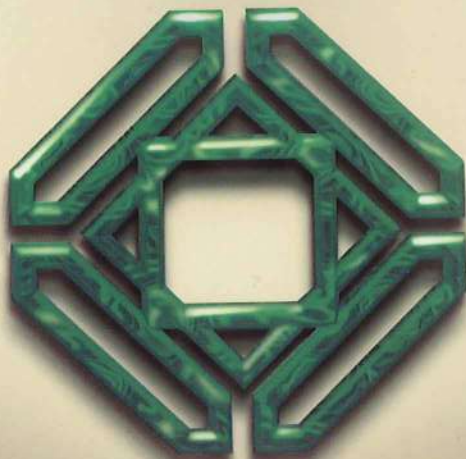


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MESSAGE FROM H.E. THE AMBASSADOR

I have great pleasure in conveying this message on the occasion of the Symposium organized by the Sri Lanka Majlis - Qatar.

From the inception, the Sri Lanka Majlis has involved in many social activities in Qatar as well as back in their homeland. I had the privilege of participating in the Eid programme held in September this year. I congratulate the Majlis most sincerely for the good work that they are doing and continuing to do so.

The symposium is an occasion where members look back their achievements with satisfaction and plan for the future with better prospects. It will further strengthen the closeness and togetherness of the membership and their families.

I wish to extend my felicitations and good wishes for a successful symposium.

V. Padukkage
Ambassador of Sri Lanka

December 2008

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In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful

All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Universe. May Peace and Blessings be upon His Final Prophet and Messenger.

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmathullahi Wabarakathuhul

Alhamdhulillah! It is a great honour and privilege to be involved in preparing the souvenir and be a part in organizing the prestigious event, the Annual Symposium 2008, and to have brought all the members, sponsors and well-wishers of the Sri Lankan Majlis - Qatar to witness this most remarkable Annual feature. This gives an opportunity to look back on achievements & accomplishments of the past and to discuss future projects that would meet our goals.

To live up to the expectations of legacy left by my illustrious predecessors always looked like a great challenge in front of me. Alhamdulillah, so far everything worked out well due to the dedication, hard work and unity of the Executive Committee (EXCOM), the extended hands of the members and the sponsors & well-wishers who whole heartedly supported us in all our projects and events, in making them meaningful and memorable. As an organization dedicated to serve the community, SLMQ has so far climbed greater heights by conducting many beneficial projects and events, both here in Qatar and back home in Sri Lanka.

I whole heartedly thank the past presidents of SLMQ for setting a high standard, the EXCOM for selflessly working as a team with dedication, the members and their families for participating & supporting in every opportunity. On behalf of the SLMQ EXCOM and the entire membership I express my gratitude & appreciations to our Patron, H.E. the Ambassador to Qatar Mr. V. Padukkage and the former ambassador His Excellency Mr. S.B. Atugoda for their support and guidance that was available at anytime.

On behalf of the entire membership of SLMQ, I express my gratitude & appreciation to Qtel for sponsoring the symposium and all well wishers & sponsors for your continuous support and help in serving the community in Qatar and back home in Sri Lanka.

I pray that Almighty Allah will accept our sincere efforts and guide us in the straight path.

Assalaamu Alaikkum.

Ameerudeen Moulana
President, Sri Lankan Majlis - Qatar (SLMQ)

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As one of Qatar's most prominent companies, Qtel sees that it has a responsibility to support all sections of the community, and it actively looks for opportunities that enable people to connect with one another. Our support for this year's Sri Lankan Majlis Qatar – which brings together so many from the thriving Sri Lankan community – is a prime example of that policy.

For this year's event, Qtel is providing both material and technological support, to enable smooth communication and ensure a connection with the home country of Sri Lanka.

As Qatar continues its rapid growth and development, we at Qtel continue to recognize our responsibility to our shareholders, our customers, our employees and our community in the State of Qatar. As the engine of communications growth and a crucial enabler of regional and international business, we know that the people of Qatar have a right to expect the highest standards from us not just in service delivery but also in the way we behave as corporate citizens.

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4. Improving health, education and well-being services in Qatar
5. Growing Qatar's profile around the world
6. Containing Qtel's impact on the environment

For the community of Qatar, Qtel continues to work towards providing access to affordable communications for all regardless of race, age, ethnicity, gender or income. We also look to provide the highest level of support for social and cultural events like the Sri Lankan Majlis Qatar.

We hope this year's event is a success and wish every participant good fortune and good health moving forward.

*“Wish the Sri Lankan Majlis
success in all its present and
future endeavours”*

SRI LANKAN MAJLIS - QATAR

From A Well-Wisher



In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious & The Most Merciful.

Assalamualaikum Warahmathullahi Wabarkathuhu

I am honoured and privileged in submitting this report outlining the achievement of SLMQ for the year 2008. By the grace of Allah, SLMQ has had yet another successful year, supporting worthy Projects in Sri Lanka and organizing many useful events in Qatar for the benefit of the SLMQ membership.

Projects in Sri Lanka

The scholarship that were given to the first batch of 25 needy Advanced Level students for the years 2006-2008 were continued for the remaining period in year 2008 until the A/L exams were written. Their progress was monitored by the SLMQ-Colombo and recipients were gathered from time to time to discuss their progress.

The scholarships that were given to the second batch of 25 needy Advanced Level students for the years 2007-2009 were continued for the second consecutive year.

SLMQ financed to furnish a vocational training centre for Muslim ladies in Warakapola. The Sri Lankan Muslim Ladies' Study Circle had started and are managing this vocational training centre.

The sponsorship for re-printing 100 sets of Iqraa books (Two books for recitals and one for Tajweed rules) for teaching Quran was provided by SLMQ, in collaboration with Al-Muslimath.

SLMQ sponsored Island wide intensive coaching seminar for Muslim students sitting for the 2008 GCE O/L exams. This project was implemented in collaboration with All-University Muslim Students' Association (AUMSA).

Activities in Qatar

The Eid Fiesta was conducted on the second day of Eid Al Adha. Many games and activities were organized for all our members and their families with excellent participation from everyone.

On the day of A'ashoora a Special General Meeting (SGM) was held and the members of the EXCO sponsored the Ifthaar to break the fast on that day. This function was held at the Jawhara compound Hall on the 18th of January 2008.



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The annual Independence Day competitions for all Sri Lankan children residing in Qatar were conducted in the month of February 2008. This event was conducted at the Embassy premises. This competitions were overwhelmingly successful due to a large number of participants. His Excellency Ambassador S.B. Atugoda was present to give away the prizes to the winners.

Religious lectures were conducted throughout the year. During the month of Ramadan, Thraweech prayers were organized for members at the Jawahara hall. An Islamic lecture program was conducted in association with Qatar Guest Centre in the month of Ramadan in the open tent for the entire Sri Lankan community. Well known Islamic scholars Dr.Philips & Shaikh Yousuf Mufti delivered the lectures.

The annual Quran class competitions were held for Quran class students and the children of SLMQ members in May 2008 at Grand Paradise Hotel with overwhelming success. In June 2008, SLMQ provided support to Sri Lankan workers whose accommodations & belongings were gutted by the fire in Doha.

The Annual SLMQ Ifthar function was held for the 7th consecutive year in the month of Ramadan at the Gulf Paradise Hotel. Sri Lankan scholar Shaikh Yousuf Mufti delivered the key note speech. The SLMQ sponsored & organized an Ifthar function at the Sri Lankan Embassy premises for all Sri Lankan bachelors in September 2008. The entire event was funded by well wishers of SLMQ.

SLMQ organized prayers on Eid ul-Fitr at the Sri Lankan Embassy premises. In October 2008, SLMQ felicitated the visiting delegation of Sri Lankan Quazis at the Jawhara Hall.

Alhamdulillah, with the participation of the members and their families, SLMQ was able to conduct all of its activities successfully.

The triumphant culmination of this year's events being your esteem presence this evening for the 7th Annual Symposium of SLMQ will help SLMQ in assisting the Sri Lankan community both here in Qatar and also back home in Sri Lanka in the future.

I would like to thank the members & their families, the sponsors and well wishers for supporting and helping us to successfully conduct all these events, activities and projects. May Almighty Allah (SWT) record our efforts in our books of good deeds.

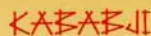
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Introduction to SLMQ

OUR MISSION

To bring all Sri Lankan Muslim families resident in Qatar under a single united group and conduct activities of educational, cultural, religious and charitable nature.

OUR OBJECTIVES

To develop cordial ties among families, communities and other associations.

Educational and Religious Activities

- Skill development programs
- Seminars & Workshops
- Competitions for children and adults
- Quran & Islam Teachings
- Haj & Umrah pilgrimages

Charitable Activities

- Scholarships for needy students
- Janaza assistance
- Assistance to needy families
- Charity bazaars

Social and Welfare Activities

- Sports events
- Eid celebrations
- Family gatherings/picnics
- Job Bank

Membership

All Sri Lankan Muslims families resident in Qatar are eligible to apply for membership by filling an application form available with Executive Committee members. For further information, please contact info@srilankanmajlis.org



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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 2008



Standing from left: Mohamed Najad, Mohamed Zulfikar Jiffry, Mohamed Rizly, Rizvi Mohamed, Nakeeb Issadeen
Seated from left: Arshad Ahamed (General Secretary), Mohamed Fahmy (VP Projects), Ameerudeen Moulana (President),
His Excellency V. Padukkage (Patron), Imthias Shamsudeen (VP PR), Abdul Wahab (Treasurer)
Absent Mohamed Shiraz, Aslam Kareem



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??? – 1815 King of Kandy



Portuguese Flag
1505 – 1658



Dutch
1656 – 1815



British Empire, the Union Jack
1815 – 1948



1948 – 1951

Barely nineteen days prior to the dawn of Independence Day, the first Prime Minister Mr. D. S. Senanayake's cabinet yet not taken a decision with regard to hoisting the National Flag on the first independence celebrations of February 4, 1948.

Mudaliyar A. L. Sinnelebbe, the Member of Parliament for Batticaloa moved a motion in parliament stating that, "This house is of the opinion that the Royal Standard of King Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe depicting a yellow lion passant holding a sword in its right paw on a red background, which was removed to England after the convention of 1815, be once again adopted as the official flag of free Lanka."



1951-1972

On March 6 1948, the Prime Minister appointed a seven member National flag Committee headed by the leader of the House Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike to advise him on the question of the National flag of Ceylon. After several sittings spread over two years, the committee gave its final recommendations on February 13, 1950.

Two vertical stripes of equal size in saffron and green represent the minority communities; the Muslims and the Tamils.



1972 –

In 1972, another change to our Sri Lankan flag during the Prime Minister Srimavo Bandaranaike's period. Four Bo leaves in gold have replaced the pinnacles at the four corners of the crimson background.

Symbolism

The National Flag of Sri Lanka represents the country and its heritage as rallying device that integrates the minorities with the majority race. Symbols in the flag have been given distinctive meanings.

Symbol	
The Lion	The Sinhalese Ethnicity
The vertical orange stripe	The Tamil Ethnicity
The vertical green stripe	The Muslim (Moor) Ethnicity
The yellow border around the flag	People from other cultures living in Sri Lanka
The crimson background	Other religions and ethnic groups Portuguese / Dutch Burghers. Also refers to rich colonial heritage and background of the country
The sword in the right hand of the Lion	The sovereignty of the Nation
The handle of the sword	The elements of water, fire, air and the earth
The tail of the Lion	The noble eightfold path of Buddhism
The curly hair on the Lion's head	Religious observance, wisdom and meditation
The beard of the Lion	Purity of words
The nose of the Lion	Intelligence
The two front paws of the Lion	Purity in handling wealth



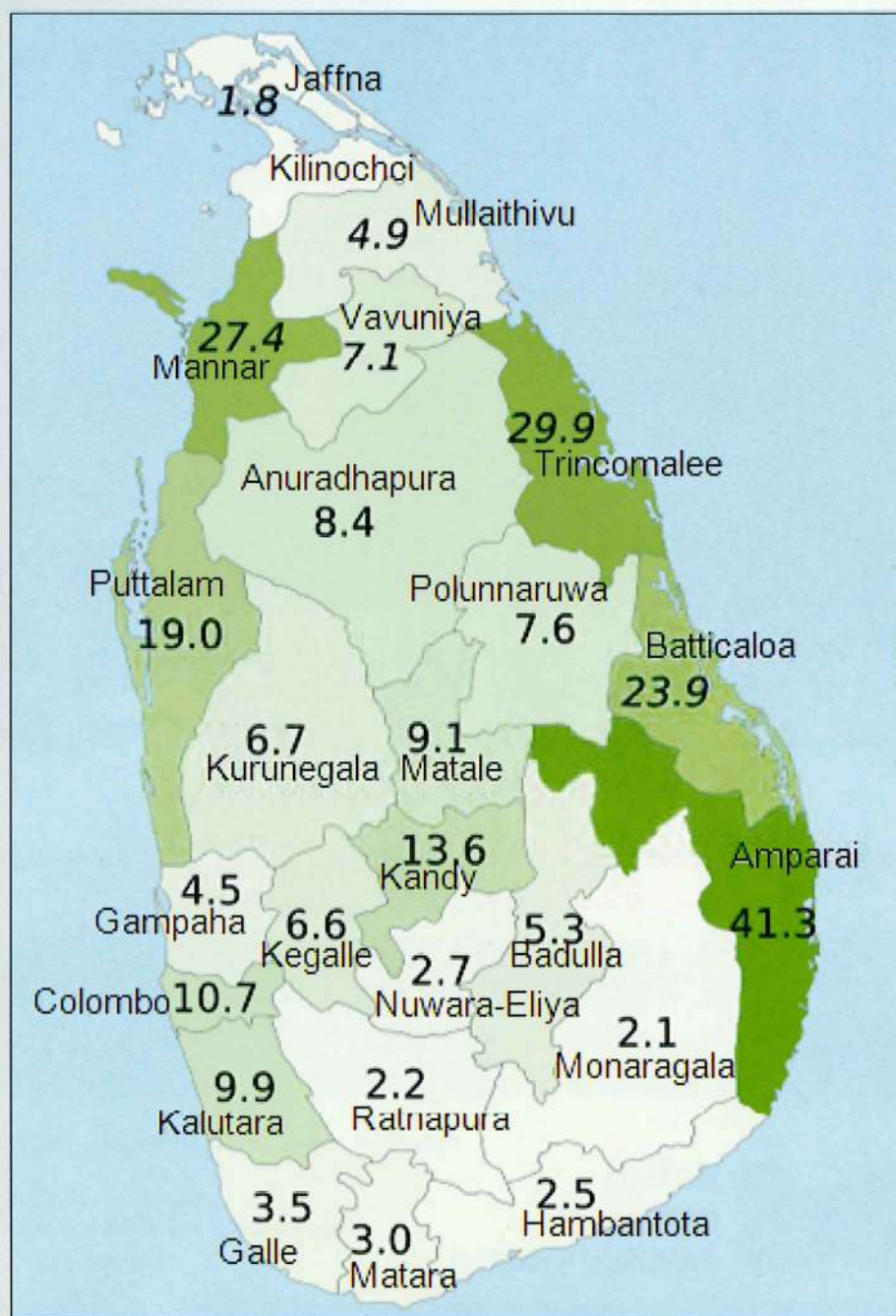
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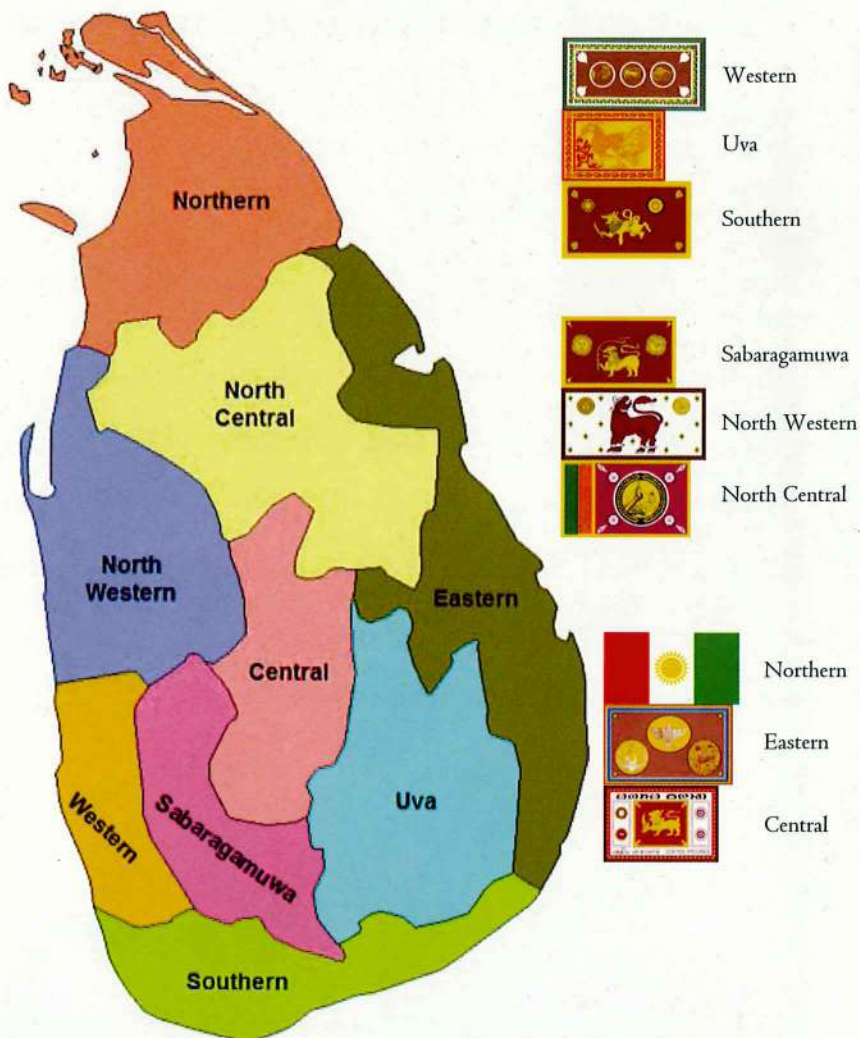
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'The Muslims and Sri Lanka' by Kamalika Pieris

The Tamil Politicians of Sri Lanka, throughout history, have attempted to categorize the Sri Lankan Muslims as belonging to the Tamil race. This has been mainly for selfish reasons in a bid to eliminate the minority Muslim community from having its own unique identity. The Government of Sri Lanka, however, treats the Muslims as of Arab origin and as a distinct ethnic group from the Tamils.

Fr. S.G. Perera in his book -History of Ceylon for Schools- Vol. I. The Portuguese and Dutch Periods, (1505-1796), Colombo (1955), The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd., p 16, writes The first mention of Arabs in Ceylon appears to be in the Mahavansa (Ancient Sri Lankan history) account of the reign of the King Pandukabhaya, where it is stated that this king set apart land for the Yonas (Muslims) at Anuradhapura

With the decline of the Roman Empire in the 3rd century A.D., Roman trade also died out and the Arabs and Persians filled up the vacuum; engaging in a rapidly growing inter-coastal trade. After the conquest of Persia (Iran), Syria and Egypt, the Arabs controlled all the important ports and trading stations between East and West. It is estimated that the Arabs had settled in Sri Lanka and Sumatra by the 1st century A.D. K.M. De Silvas, Historical Survey, Sri Lanka - A Survey, London (1977), C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., p 50, states by about the 8th century A.D., the Arabs had formed colonies at the important ports of India, Ceylon and the East Indies. The presence of the Arabs at the ports of Ceylon is attested to by at least three inscriptions discovered at Colombo, Trincomalee and the island of Puliantivu (Present Batticaloa)

The manner in which Islam developed in Sri Lanka is very closely similar to that on the Malabar coast of India. Tradition has recorded that Arabs who had settled down on the Malabar Coast used to travel from the port of Cranganore to Sri Lanka on pilgrimage to pay homage to what they believed to be the foot-print of Adam on the top of a mountain, which, until today, is called Adams Peak.

Ibn Batuta, the famous 14th century Arab traveler, has recorded many facets about early Arab influence in Sri Lanka in his travelogues. Before the end of the 7th century, a colony of Muslim merchants had established themselves in Ceylon. Fascinated by the scenic splendour and captivated by the traditions associated with Adams Peak, Muslim merchants arrived in large numbers and some of them decided to settle in the island encouraged by the cordial treatment they received by the local rulers. Most of them lived along the coastal areas in peace and prosperity, maintaining contacts, both cultural and commercial, with Baghdad and other Islamic cities.

Continued ...

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'The Muslims and Sri Lanka' by Kamalika Pieris

... Continued

According to Tikiri Abeyasinghe in his Portuguese Rule in Ceylon, 1594-1612, Colombo (1966), Lake House Investments Ltd., p 192, tradition has it that the first Mohammadans of Ceylon were a portion of those Arabs of the House of Hashim, who were driven from Arabia in the early part of the 8th. century by the tyranny of the Caliph, Abdel Malik bin Marwan, and who proceeding from the Euphrates southwards made settlements in the southern parts of the peninsula of India, on the island of Ceylon and Malacca. The division of them which came to Ceylon formed eight considerable settlements along the North-East, North and Western coast of that island; viz., one at Trincomalee, one at Jaffna, one at Colombo, one at barbareen, and one at Point de Galle.....

It is perhaps reasonable, therefore, to assume that the Arabs, professing the religion of Islam, arrived in Sri Lanka around the 7th /8th century A.D. even though there was a settled community of Arabs in Ceylon in pre-Islamic times. The circumstances that helped the growth of Muslim settlements were varied. Trade was thus wide open to the Muslims. The Sinhalese Kings considered the Muslim settlements favorably on account of the revenue that they brought them through their contacts overseas both in trade and in politics. The religious tolerance of the local population was also another vital factor in the development of Muslim settlements in Ceylon.

The Muslims relationship with the Sinhalese kings grew stronger and in the 14th century they even fought with them against the expanding Tamil kingdom and its maritime influence. By the beginning of the 16th century, the Muslims of Sri Lanka, the descendants of the original Arab traders, had settled down comfortably in the island. They were very successful in trade and commerce and integrated socially with the customs of the local people. They had become an inseparable, and even more, an indispensable part of the society. This period was one of ascendancy in peace and prosperity for the Sri Lankan Muslims.

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To mark the 60th Independence of Sri Lanka, SLMQ conducted competitions for all Sri Lankan children on the 01st of February 2008 at the Sri Lankan embassy premises. There were competitions on colouring, drawing, prepared speeches and essay writing for sub junior, junior, intermediate and senior age categories.

Sri Lankan students from Ideal Indian School, Shanthiniketan India School, Delhi Public School, Bright Future Pakistan School, The Cambridge School, Qatar International School, Doha College, the Gulf English School and Stafford (Sri Lankan) International School participated in all categories. The Sri Lankan Ambassador to Qatar, H.E. Mr. S.B. Attugoda graced the function as the Chief Guest and distributed certificates and gifts to winners and participants.

Competitions to mark the Independence day celebrations

Competition / Age Category	Place	Name	School
Colouring Sub Junior Category	1st	Haleema Shiraz	Delhi Public School
	2nd	Nicole De Silva	Stafford International School
	3rd	Fathima Nabeela Rizal	Stafford International School
Drawing Junior Category	1st	Saheen Ahmed	Bright Future Pakistan School
	2nd	Mohamed Azam	Stafford International School
	3rd	Piumi Puja Wanigaratne	Stafford International School
Prepared Speech Junior Category	1st	Haleema Shiraz	Delhi Public School
	2nd	Nicole De Silva	Stafford International School
	3rd	Kavindi Nayanthara Thilakarathne	Shantiniketan Indian School
Drawing Competition (Intermediate Category)	1st	Shimark Ghaffoor	Ideal Indian School
	2nd	Shujaudeen Moulana	Gulf English School
	3rd	Mahmood Fahmy	Ideal Indian School
Prepared Speech Intermediate Category	1st	Asma Fahmy	Ideal Indian School
	2nd	Naflah Mansoor	Stafford International School
	3rd	Deeshani Fernando	Doha College
Essay Writing Senior Category	1st	Nazha Yakoob	Gulf English School
	2nd	Adrina Surrthy Gnanachandran	Doha College
	3rd	Hana Shiraz	Qatar International School
Prepared Speech Senior Category	1st	Chandula Fernando	Doha College
	2nd	Zafar Mansoor	The Cambridge School
	3rd	Eman Thowfeek	Stafford International School



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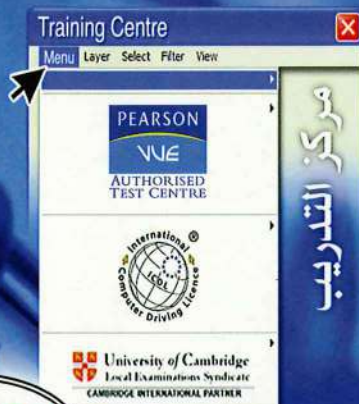
Recorded chronicle of Sri Lankan history

This article is part of a continuing series on the 'Mahavamsa,'

By Halaliye Karunathilake, Edited and translated by Kamala Silva, Illustrated by Saman Kalubowila Sundaytimes – 06 April 2008

- The elder prince got the maximum benefit. He learnt Buddhism in depth. Later in life, this prince Parakramabahu was bestowed the honorary title of 'Kalikala Sahitya Sarvagna Pandita.' King Vijayabahu III retired from kingship, by bestowing the reign to Parakramabahu. This prince was crowned as King Parakramabahu II. The younger prince Buvanekabahu was made the 'Yuvaraja.'
 - Prince Buvanekabahu made Kurunegala his seat of power. King Parakramabahu was crowned in 1236 AD. But there is a different theory in another source. According to this source, in the 10th year of King Parakramabahu's rule, King Vijayabahu III passed away and then a person named Vathimi had come to power.
 - It is said that he exercised the power of the ruler, by deceiving the people. No other source of this period makes any mention to this. However, the relationship that King Parakramabahu had with the Buddhist priests was a very intimate one. Therefore, the Buddhist monks would have extended all their support to him. This is regarded to be as a result of the efforts made by his father, King Vijayabahu III.
 - During the last days of King Vijayabahu's rule, he gave his sons, one good advice. It runs like this. "Do not try to conquer the Raja-rata and wage war against the Tamils, who are already there and the two brothers, are never to quarrel." Neither of the princes wished to obey the first part of the advice. King Parakramabahu II was determined to follow the path of the heroic kings like Dutugemunu, Dhatusena and Vijayabahu I.
 - It is said that the Tooth Relic performed a miracle on that day. To win the hearts of the chieftains who were against him, King Parakramabahu II adopted different strategies in administration. His brother's plans succeeded in winning over the Vanni chieftains. Therefore this king got the support of the majority of people, just as any great king did. This is mentioned with a lot of pride in our chronicles.
-
- The first king of Yapahuwa was King Buwanekabahu. He never defaulted in extending his patronage to the Buddhist priests. Like his father, this king too was religious. He was kind to his subjects. He received the love and respect of his people. The country too prospered during his regime. Those days, the sea trade route was managed by Arabian merchants. King Buwanekabahu maintained close relations with them.

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Hon Dudley Senanayake's Speech at the formal opening of MICH Building in the Fort 30th May 1965

Muslim culture needs no introduction from anybody. Right through the long history, right through the pages of history, Muslim culture has left a deep impression throughout the world - Europe as well as Asia. Today too we know the tremendous impact Muslim culture and Muslim thought have on world affairs. In our country, we are well aware of the part played not only by Muslim culture and religion but by that community in the development of this country; particularly, the trading activities of Ceylon, and, therefore, we are beholden to that community for the tremendous service it has rendered this country. In fact, when we think of the long history for the fruition of this project - namely this building, I am rather amazed, because unity of purpose has been a distinguishing feature of the Muslim community of Ceylon. I think they set an example to the rest of us all. Unity, I suppose, follows from the fact of the stress they embark on any venture, the wholehearted support of the community is generally forthcoming and I have no doubt, are long, we will see the completion of this building.

In Ceylon, I am sorry to say, that the respect for the cultures and religions of the different communities that inhabit this land has not been too conspicuous in the recent years. Our parlous state today in very many activities in which we should have forged ahead in the recent years is entirely due to the lack of this understanding and harmony among the different communities and religions that call this country their home. I do hope that era is over and we realize that true democracy cannot exist in a country without the rights and the religions and the cultures of all who call this land their home, have their rightful and proper place. That is another fact of democracy that people seem to forget and I do hope that any endeavor to thrive and build up movements based on division and hatred will meet with the fate, the disastrous fate that such objectives rightly deserve. When we think of religions, surely we are not deluded when we realize that religion, whatever religion it may be, was never meant to divide, but unite mankind. What are the cardinal principles of all religions? I think, unity, mutual respect, brotherhood. They are, in one way or another, enshrined in the noble principles of all religions, but for some unaccountable reason religion that was meant to unite has been prostituted, I say, for the purpose of division.

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Muslim Members of the Legislative Councils of Ceylon – 1833-1931

Council Member Name	Start of Membership	End of Membership	Elected or Nominated
Hon. Muhammad Cassim Abdul Rahman	1833	1899	Nominated
Hon. Ahmadu Lebbe Muhammad Sheriff	1833	1900	Nominated
Hon. Wapchi Marikar Abdul Rahman	22-Sep-1900	1921	Nominated
Hon. Noordeen Hajjar Muhammad Abdul Cader	25-Sep-1915	1931	Elected
Hon. S.R. Muhammad Sultan	2-May-1924	1927	Nominated
Hon. M.T. Akbar	2-May-1924	1927	Nominated
Hon. Tuan Branudeen Jayah	1924	1927	Nominated
Sir Muhammad Macan-Markar	1924	1931	Elected

Muslim Members of the First State Council of Ceylon – 1931-1935

Council Member Name	Start of Membership	End of Membership	Elected or Nominated
Hon. Muhammad Khalid. Saldin	10-Mar-1931	1935	Nominated
Sir Muhammad Macan-Markar	1931	1924-1931	Elected

Muslim Members of the Second State Council of Ceylon – 1936 - 1947

Council Member Name	Start of Membership	End of Membership	Elected or Nominated
Dr. Muhammad Cassim Muhammad Kaleel	10-Mar-1931	1935	Nominated
Sir Razik Fareed Abdul Rahman	10-Apr-1936	1947	Nominated
Hon. Tuan Branudeen Jayah	1936	1947	Nominated



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Colombo (Western Province) Municipal Council 1881-1941

Council Member Name	Start of Membership	End of Membership	Elected or Nominated
Maas Sodma Jayah Akbar	1881	1889	Nominated
Muhammad Ismail Muhammad Haniffa	1884	1900	Elected
M.L.M. Zainudeen	1901	1904	Elected
Peston Jee Khan	1904	1909	Nominated
H.K. Khan	1904	1912	Nominated
Noordeen Hajjar Muhammad Abdul Cader	1908	1938	Elected
P.D. Khan	1912	1913	Elected
B.F. Khan	1921	1922	Nominated
Adamjee Lukmanjee	1922	1929	Nominated
Sir Razik Fareed Abdul Rahman	1932	1937	Elected
	1942	1946	Elected
M. Mamujee	1936	1941	Nominated
F.G. Hussain	1936	1941	Elected
N.M.M. Ishak	1936	1941	Elected

Kandy (Central Province) Municipal Council 1865-1940

Council Member Name	Start of Membership	End of Membership	Elected or Nominated
Siddi Lebbe Muhammad Cassim Marikar	1865	1882	Elected
P.T. Habibu Lebbe	1902	1906	Elected
Usoof Ismail	1923	1937	Nominated
M.A.S. Marikar	1937	1940	Elected

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Islamic religious teachings are held in the Quran and the Islamic social life is guided by the Islamic Sharia Law. The Arabs, once converted to Islam, went on an expansionist spree which eventually swallowed up Egypt, Syria, Persia, Iraq and finally, in 711 AD, Spain. Virtually all those countries had their own civilisations prior to Islamisation. Persia had developed the Persian script and had the Zoroastrian religion. But they all converted to Islam and accepted the Arabic language. By the end of the 8th century, the Islamic empire extended from Persia to Spain and included parts of Northern Africa as well. There were two political centres. Firstly, Damascus (660-750 AD) and thereafter Baghdad (750-1258 AD).

Between the 8th and 12th centuries, the Arabs developed a great Islamic civilisation, intellectually brilliant, wealthy and enterprising. This Islamic civilisation developed an urban civilisation well before Europe, which got there several centuries later. Cairo in Egypt, Damascus in Syria and Baghdad in Iraq were very advanced cities with paved streets, tiled floors, public baths, bookshops, libraries, and universities. There developed a distinct Islamic art and architecture, which is visible even today. There were great scholars, best known of whom is Avicenna, of Persian origin, (980-1037 AD). His medical writings were used in medical schools in France, Spain and Italy as late as 1650.

Western Europe owes much of its knowledge of mathematics, medicine, astronomy and philosophy to Arabic writings. These writings preserved Greek thought as well. The Arabic writers also functioned as a conduit for the transmission of ideas from India and China. The Arabic scholars formulated the oldest known trigonometric tables, introduced Indian numerals, known Arabic numerals, and compiled astronomical tables. They established observatories to study the heavens. In the field of optics and physics, they explained phenomena such as refraction of light, and the principle of gravity. They made significant advances in chemistry. They discovered potash, alcohol, silver nitrate, nitric acid, sulphuric acid and mercury chloride. They originated processes such as distillation and sublimation.

Arabic scholars made significant advances in medicine. Many drugs now in use are of Arab origin. They established hospitals with a system of interneers. Discovered causes of certain diseases and developed correct diagnoses of them, proposed new concepts of hygiene, made use of anesthetics in surgery with newly innovated surgical tools and introduced the science of dissection in anatomy. They furthered the scientific breeding of horses and cattle, and improved upon the science of navigation. They also developed a high degree of perfection in art of textiles, ceramics and metallurgy. (Most of this information has been taken from references in Encyclopedia Britannica, 15 ed. 1995).

Christian scholars were greatly impressed by Arabic scholarship. There was considerable cultural interaction between the two groups, with much of it taking place in the Mediterranean shores, particularly Spain and Sicily. It is not generally known that Arabic culture influenced French culture as well. There are words of Arabic origin in the French language. More importantly, voluminous Latin translations were made in the 12th century, of major Arabic writings. These were studied successively at the major emerging intellectual centres of Europe, such as Italy, France and later England and Germany. It should also be noted that during this time, Arabic had become, not only a religious language, but also the main international language of the region (lingua franca). It was also the main language for scholarship.

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Muslim Refugees from Northern Sri Lanka by Dr. Shahul H. Hasbullah

Muslim minority of the Northern Province was singled out and was forcibly evicted from their homes by the LTTE. In the third week of October 1990 an estimated 75,000 Muslims who lived in the five districts of Northern Province, found their lives abruptly disrupted and lost all their material possessions. The emotional and moral support that they found within a secure social setting was completely dismantled as families, relatives and friends had to seek refuge in different places. The life in the refugee camps have demoralized men, women and children and affected them physically, physiologically, socially and educationally. The LTTE has now admitted responsibility for the expulsion and has issued an apology. Yet, the Muslim refugees continue to languish in refugee camps under abysmal conditions without any solution to their basic problems.

Problems Facing the Muslim Refugees

Around 18 percent of total Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were Muslims at the time the cease-fire agreement was signed in late 2001. Majority of the displaced were from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. The present day problems faced by the northern Muslim minority are a consequence of their

- (i) forcible expulsion 18 years ago that severed them from their socio-economic roots and denied them self-reliance; and
- (ii) their prolonged stay in refugee camps that offered virtually no economic opportunities and rendered them dependent on external assistance.

As a result, they were adversely affected in all aspects of their lives - physical, emotional, economical, social, and educational, etc. Muslim refugees have said on several occasions that they are prepared to forgive and forget the past. Their ultimate goal is to return to the North, which they still regard as their home, and to live in harmony with the Tamil majority in the North, as they did before. This was revealed in an opinion survey conducted by the author in late 1999 (The findings of this survey were presented in a research paper at the Jaffna University in 2002, titled "Return of long displaced communities to their home areas; is it viable?" Workshop Proceedings: Planning for Reconstruction and Redevelopment in Northern Sri Lanka, edited by Mikoko Terashima Vancouver: The Centre for Human Settlements, University of British Columbia, Vancouver (www.chs.ubc.ca)).

Part of their desire to return to the North is because the assets they were forced to leave behind there is the only basis for their economic sustenance. In addition, the historical and cultural attachments to the place where they were born and their forefathers thrived provide them with a sense of belonging and the only respectable identity they now possess.

Facilitating Smooth Return of Muslims to Northern Province

Many careful steps will have to be taken to facilitate the return of Muslims to the North. Some of them are the following:

Re-build Physical Environment

As most Muslim settlements in the north had been completely destroyed, the task of rebuilding the physical environment is virtually one of establishing a new settlement in the locations of old Muslim settlements. Participation of refugees themselves in the planning process is most essential. The international community should offer full support and repatriations in resettlement and rebuilding efforts in recognition of the fact that these refugees had experienced a forcible expulsion that has lasted 18 years.

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Muslim Refugees from Northern Sri Lanka by Dr. Shahul H. Hasbullah

Prepare the Refugees for Return

There also has to be thoughtful plans in preparing for the return of the refugees to their homes in the north. It is not an easy task. Refugees have been away from their homes for more than a decade. Nearly half the refugee population has had the formative years outside the Northern Province in the refugee camps. The old among them may be too physically and psychologically weak to face the new challenges in re-establishing their life in the north. Thus, the refugee rehabilitation program has to be comprehensive and multifaceted to facilitate the successful return of Muslim refugees.

A Program of Integration

Programs will have to be launched to facilitate communication between Tamils and refugee Muslims. While this may appear to be a challenge, even today some sectors in both communities retain at least some minimal contact. There is scope for constructive community reintegration efforts. But this requires proactive efforts by policy makers.

Return of Refugees in Stages

Wholesale return of refugees may create more problems than it solves. The trend of return of refugees to date suggests that the refugees themselves are adopting a cautious approach to their return home. Such a step-by-step return needs to be supported institutionally and otherwise. Refugees must be encouraged through the steps that are taken to improve the living environment as well as through peace and normally for a minority group to live in the Northern Province.

Compensating the Losses

At the same time, those who have opted not to return immediately must be given the choice of living in the south. At the same time, their assets and properties that were left behind in the north must be properly compensated.

Appointment of a Commission to Facilitate the Return of Muslims

The issues of return of Muslims to the north are distinct from other situations of return in the country. Therefore, it would be appropriate to appoint a commission to look into the complex issues of return and facilitate successful return. To be effective, such a commission should have constitutional binding powers to deal with legal and practical matters of choices regarding refugee return.

Issue of Return of Muslim Refugees is Bigger than the Refugee Problem

The expulsion of the Muslims demonstrates the vulnerability of numerically small communities in a situation of increasing ethnic tensions in Sri Lanka and merits discussion at the national level. Indeed, it is imperative that this discussion becomes part of the current peace talks. As mentioned earlier, food assistance from the government and World Food program is the main source of livelihood for many refugees.

The refugees are in no position to return because of the prevailing unlivable conditions. Nor could they continue to live in the refugee camps because of the unbearable hardships facing them. A sustainable solution to the issue not only has to make viable arrangements for resettlement and recovery from the impacts of displacement but also need to make sure that they will not be involuntarily displaced again. Such issues have to be discussed at the national level and at the peace talks.

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Muslim Refugees from Northern Sri Lanka by Dr. Shahul H. Hasbullah

Just Solutions for Muslims in the Peace Negotiations

For Sri Lanka to achieve a sustainable solution to the ethnic conflict, agenda of the peace negotiations must include the following provisions for meaningful protection and support: for expelled Muslims.

1. Rights and protection against future expulsions.
2. Provide constitutional guarantees for the political, economic and cultural rights of the Muslim minority in the Northern Province so that upon their return they can live with self-respect and dignity.
3. Provide compensation for all forcibly evicted Muslims to enable them to have a fresh start with their lives.
4. Provision of necessary support for resettlement to not only those who were expelled but also to their descendants.
5. Provision for the refugees to choose not to return immediately to their homes. Those who wish to exercise this choice must be given viable alternatives and compensation for their lost properties in the original places.

It should be noted that many of the above- measures were provided in most of the peace negotiations in other parts of world.

Interim Measures

The future may encourage Muslim individuals and families to return to their houses in the north without waiting for proper assurance from parties to the conflict. Therefore, the parties involved in the peace negotiations must guarantee above provisions to the displaced Muslims who have already begun their return. In this respect, the following measures are necessary during the transition involved with return:

1. The return must be in stages to give returnees adequate time to prepare themselves.
2. Programs should be implemented for integrating Tamils and Muslims.
3. Economic assistance to displaced people in Puttalam and other areas should continue until they reach a level of self-reliance.

The problems of the Muslim refugees go beyond managing their camps. Muslims of the Northern Province have been voicing this concern for a long time. The state and international community (NGOs) have ignored them and reduced their problems to an administrative one focusing on running the camps. Hence, failed to address the critical issues facing the refugees. They have attributed the reasons for their shortcomings to the purported laziness of refugees and their dependence on handouts. In addition, their refugee policies have further complicated the life and future prospects of these badly affected people. At the end, the Muslim refugees have become a forgotten issue of the ethnic conflict of the country.

... Continued

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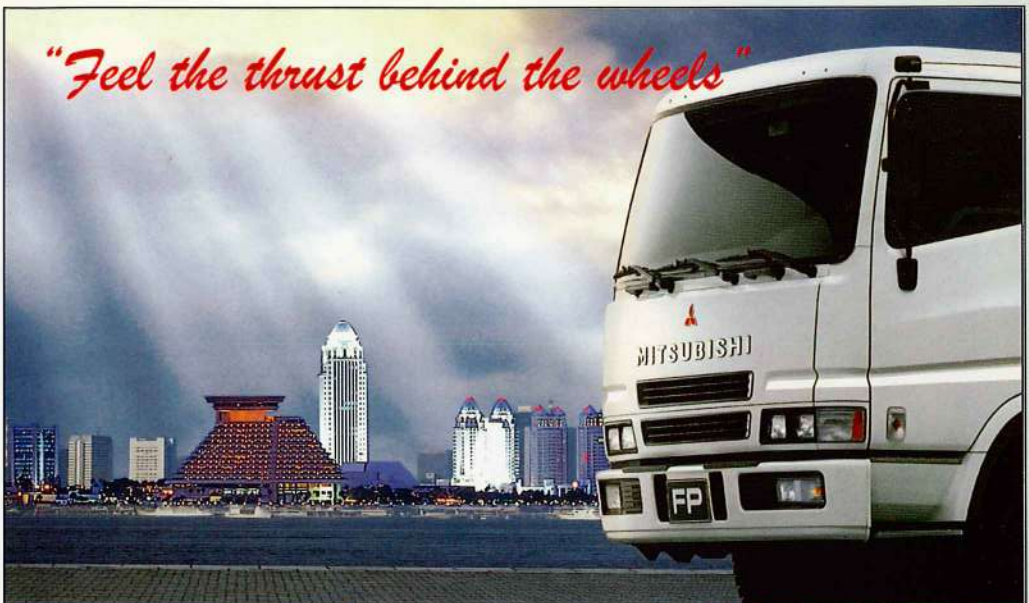


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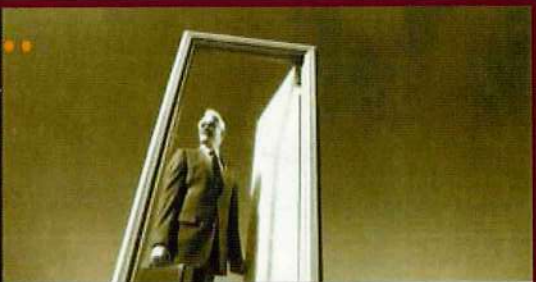


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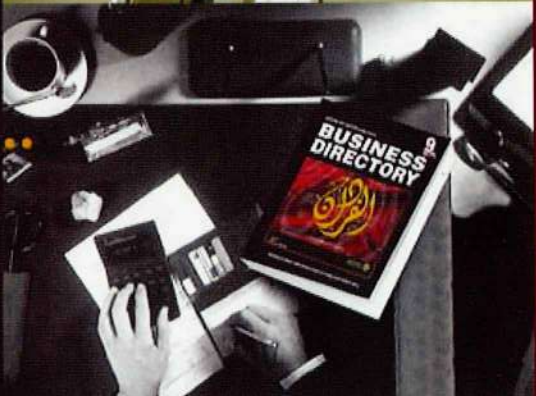
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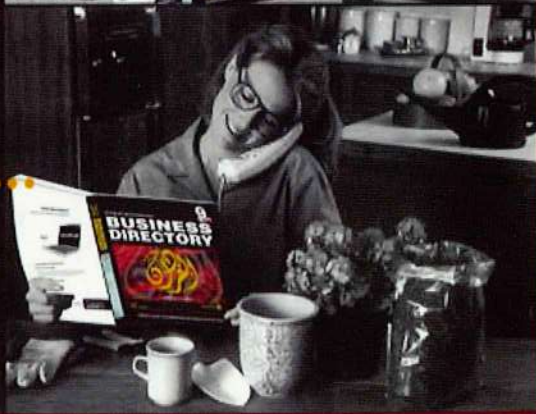
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