

THE FIRST WORLD TAMILS ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

PROCEEDINGS COVERAGE - A REPORT

FORENOON OF 6th JAN 2009.

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

The invocation was rendered in a befitting manner becoming of an international gathering of over 300 delegates from several Diaspora Countries from around the world. It was a great occasion for conveying the genuine appeal of the Tamils' self-confidence in the economic front.

The welcome address was given by **Dr. VRS Sampath**, the Convener of the I World Tamils Economic Conference. He explained the importance of this meet in the present global context. He compared the progress made all over the world by the diaspora Tamils in different fields including commerce and industry. He stressed on the growing business opportunities, cultural exchanges and mutually beneficial exchanges that would go a long way in mutually benefitting all the Tamils, living all over the World. He welcomed all the representative from Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, USA, UK, South Africa and other countries. He introduced, *inter alia* all those who were responsible for the convening of this Conference, especially the guidance and support given by the Chancellor of VIT, Dr. Viswanathan. The significance of the large Malaysian contingent comprising of hundreds of representatives led by Datto Swami Vellu was highlighted by him.

It was followed by an address by the Chancellor of V I T, **Mr. G VISWANATHAN** of Vellore. He mentioned that the eight crore (80 million) Tamils spread all over the world need to get united to help grow the economy of our own country, wherever they are. Mutual connectivity is definitely a must. He referred to the recognition of the Tamil language as a classical language by the Government of India thanks to the initiatives of leaders of Tamil Nadu. He referred to the leadership provided by the Tamils in Higher education. He wanted the Tamils to meaningfully come together to progress together.

Dr. Avvai Natarajan then read out the complete text of the greetings message sent by Dr. Kalainjar Karunanidhi , the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. It is included *verbatim* in the Appendix to this Report.

This was followed by an interesting address by **Mr V G P Santhosham**, who emphasized the contribution of the Tamils to international trade and economic progress. He explained the details of the economic progress of the Tamil Nadu state in terms of its economic advantages. He also quoted from Bharathi the poet in order

to show the Tamils' inherent potential. He appealed to the educationists for the collaboration and preparation of an industrial Database / Directory.

This was followed by the honouring of the Chief guests in the traditional Tamil manner of offering gold-laced shawls .

Dr Mahalingam Sinnathambi of Australia Springfield Land Corporation, addressed the gathering in a very cordial, personal, and friendly manner .He also emphasized the role and importance of Mahatma Gandhi, saying that with self belief and self esteem, we can together change the Tamils' World economy.

Representing the Australian Government, one of the M Ps from there, **Mr. Bernie Ripoll** appreciated the enormous work done by the Tamils in Australia. Doctors of Indian origin have contributed significantly to Australian health and life. He appreciated the contribution made by the Tamils all over the Australian territories in different fields including trade and commercial /financial enterprises.

Dr. A R Lakshmanan, a former Supreme Court Judge, appealed to all the overseas Tamils to come together and contribute to the economic growth of their motherland.

Mr. K V Thangabalu addressed the gathering in an eloquent manner exhorting the conference to propagate the progress of the Tamils' economy all over the world. He appreciated the great contribution of the Tamils to their respective lands of their work/residence all over the world. He referred to the significant contribution made by Thiruvalluvar's *Tirukkural*. He offered his Party's Tamil trade interests and the Central Government's efforts in supporting business investments.

The Malaysian leader **Datto Swamyvellu**, who made an eloquent presentation, supported by a colourful handout, appealed for more investments of Tamil industries in Malaysia. He readily offered access to all the available infrastructures in Malaysia.

The inaugural address was delivered by Honourable Minister for Finance and the present General Secretary of the ruling party in Tamil Nadu State, a leading Tamil Scholar, **Prof. K.ANBHAZHGAN**, who spoke with considerable linguistic and literary authority : “ *neengaL engirunthaalum vaazhka* “ is the policy of our Government's attitude, he said. He referred to Aringar Anna's advice to the Malaysians that the Tamils should conduct themselves as the noblest citizens of the country wherever they are settled. Hitherto all our international conferences were linguistic, but this Meet is very different from all of them. It examines the various approaches to economic progress and trade. The self-confidence should be born from the society and its thrust to promote social helpfulness. He referred to the ancientness of the Tamils trade. “ Agriculture is the first invention of trade - *Uzhavukkum thozhilukkum vanthanai ceiyvome* “ (Bhrarathiyaar). The speech was well interspersed with Tamil literary quotes, as is bound to be from a scholar of eighty odd years. His statement that “ Naangal thamizhaal vaazhkirome, niingal ungaludaiya naattilay thamizhai vaazha vaththukkundu irukkireergal.” (“We in this land make a living out of Tamil whereas you make Tamil come alive in yours”)

The **vote of thanks** was very endearingly delivered by the Secretary of the Madras Developmental Society. He invited all other Tamils to come together in the Tamil business development all over the world, thanking everyone who participated in the inaugural function.

After a short tea break, **DR G. THIRUVASAGAM**, Bharathiyar University Vice-chancellor addressed the gathering on *TAMIL NADU – AN IDEAL DESTINATION FOR BUISINESS EXCELLENCE*.

Business opportunities for educationists from all over the world are desirable investments. This is the land of investments chosen by Ford, Hyundai, Dell, Motorola and Nokia for their long term investments and so “all of you who have come from abroad to this state and city should opt for sound investments”. He made a specific Power Point presentation highlighting:

Single Window entry destination is available.

Planned Investments are available.

Cordial Labour relations are the order of the day.

Statistics about the Manpower availability: 1,00,000 Engineering graduates, several lakhs Diploma Holders, and millions of graduates / auditors / plus two students.

Free Electricity,

Tax incentives and exemption from Stamp duty.

Dr. V JEBAMALAI, Pincipal Advisor to the Director General., UNIDO, Austria pointed out that “World trade is driven by research/applied research. Learning is continued and applied in continuous research. Functional literacy offers maximum flexibility in approach. The innovative middlemen in finance managements systems in America were responsible for the undoing and global crisis. Small incentives will be the most important encouragement to investors.”

Mr Ashok Parthiban, industrialist from Gautemala, made a humorous reference to business progress made in North America. He pointed out the limitations of the i-phones.

Thiru Aboo Bucker, chairman, President Hotels, proposed a vote of thanks appealing to the diaspora to bring in greater infrastructure facilities into India. He enumerated Banking facilities available in India and requested immediate investments in the power sector.

Prof. Nagaraj made a colourful power point presentation relating to human feelings of desire to human failings. His examples and illustrations were well appreciated by the audience. Linkages and internet connectivity are always possible in this State.

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INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCE .

Mr. M Roosewelt, former GM of Syndicate Bank, presided and introduced the topic of infrastructure development and finance in business and promotions of commerce.

Dr. Ponnavaikko, Vice-chancellor of Bharadhidasan University, Tiruchirapally, pointed out that Tamils abroad have retained much of the culture. He criticized the quality of programmes on Tamil Nadu TV. Citing several examples of word formation he said, arisi got transformed to rice in due course, and seaside pandal became pandaal. Along with Tamil merchandise, Tamil vocabulary also were exported.

During his address **Dr. NAGANATHAN**, Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission pointed out that, the NRI residents have contributed a gross amount of 2760 million dollars towards Tsunami disaster management. He invited investments in infrastructure for 'our' State. He reasoned out why the Tamils should invest in Tamil Nadu.

Mr.Sam Kannappan, (Houston) & **Mr.Ram Kannappan**, (Harris County,Texas), listed several funding processes adopted in the USA, like pay as you go, General Obligation Bonds, Certificate of Obligation, Texas Senate Bill, Texas recreation and Parks account programme, Texas House Bill, Community Development Funds, TEA -21 CMAQ, Recreational Trails Programmes, Private and Corporate Donations, Fees for little eats (maintenance of parks), Teas State Dept. of transport arrangement, Texas State Infrastructure Bank (SIB), Loans given for maintenance of transport facilities, and Commercial Paper Notes

Mr. Bala S Balaendra of Urban Sydney Council, Australia said that, "Starting as an accountant in Thailand, and then in Taiwan, I moved to Singapore and then migrated to Australia. The lending institutions have been responsible for the world economy and the meltdown could have been totally avoided. The World Tamil Commercial Bank may be of good use in future.

Mr. Rajarathnam (I T O, Retd) Tax Consultant, said that linguistic chauvinism is no excuse for compartmental loyalties. Investment opportunities are plenty at present in Tamil Nadu State. Malaysians, Singaporeans and Mauritians have many benefits. available in their websites. Make abundant use of the opportunities available.

Dr.P.Jegadeesan gave a presidential address stressing on the enormous growth of rural sector into an urban sector . He also spoke about the growth of girls and their education.

Hon'ble Minister for electricity, **Mr. Arcott Veeraaswamy** said that

1. Town and Panchayat development has been remarkably steady.
2. Tamil Nadu state and its people have improved their economic lot considerably, resulting in a phenomenal demand for energy through electricity .
3. 7500 MWatt electricity is available for agricultural sector
4. Production of electricity is the major constraint so far in T N
5. There are one lakh villages where electricity has not been given so far
6. Dr Kalainjar has enabled greater facilities for coal movements: coal/other

sources and export facilities have to be further expanded . There are seven new harbours being constructed to import 25,000 mega watt electricity.

7. There is an urgent need for greater electricity production .

8. 27 new M O Us have been drawn up by Sri Ramasundaram, our “experienced active Secretary “ in charge of energy production ,who may be contacted through e-mail

9. Contact T I D C O

10. Development of Agricultural production.

11. Rural development has been taken care of

11. 2crore rural women are taken care of through Women’s Development Societies (Self Development Societies are at work within the Panchayats) .

For all these factual reasons there is no doubt that Tamil Nadu is a stable and developing State for safeguarding of social equality and ensuring social justice

Mr AA Jinnah, a member of Parliament made an impassioned speech about the good work done during the period of Kalainjar’s regime.

Mr. PWC DAVIDAR, IAS, Secretary to govt., IT Technology, gave an assurance of internet technology. He briefly enthused everyone to get in touch with the official machinery through the website.

Mr. Ramasundaram, IAS enumerated the details of the advantages of TIDCO in Hosur and other places. A new variety of Tajmahal rose has been introduced in the horticulture field. Good infrastructure improvements are being made. Power improvements are well under way. Replying to a specific query from Datto Swamyvelloo, he said that Ascendas is an international venture with Singapore collaboration. All collaborations are being fully exploited.

Prof. Kanakaraj, Chairman of Jaya Educatonal Trust invited all those interested in educational collaboration to join hands with Tamils in Chennai.

Mr. D. E. Ramakrishnan, industrial consultant, mentioned that new and innovative ideas for industrial collaboration are most cordially welcomed.

Mr.Karunakaran of Anand Theatre proposed a hearty vote of thanks.

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**“Our children should acquire proficiency in other languages”
was well emphasized throughout the Seminar.**

Honourable Minister **Vayalar Ravi**, holding the portfolio of Welfare of Indians abroad, came to the conference and made a fervent appeal to the Tamils abroad. Full of genuine humility, he mentioned that as soon as Mr. Thangabalu informed him about this conference, he immediately decided to come. He welcomed

people from all parts of the world. “Dattoo Swamivelloo is as much a Keralite as indeed he is a Tamil. Economics and investments know no bounds. Wherever I go and meet people of Indian communities, I feel very proud and happy to find Indians very happy at work. Linguistic inhibitions do not seem to come in between. Incidentally the films of Chevalier Shivaji Ganesan have popularized the Tamil language all over the world. I am happy to be in your midst. I love Tamil Nadu as much as any other part of the world. Please attend the Praveshi Mitra Conference during the next three days.”

Chancellor Viswanathan mentioned that through the arrival of Vayalar Ravi, Dravidian culture has been included in this conference. He recalled an incident in which he lost his passport and how he was able to speak to Vayalar Ravi on the long distance phone and within an hour a representative from the High Commission in Australia came to him and solved his problem

Education & Employment

Dr. K.Kantharaj, member of the Tamil Nadu State Scientific Council welcomed the gathering and asked for an examination of what is truly education. He mentioned that he has been appointed by the Government to bring out books in Tamil for the propagation of Tamil as a medium of instruction at all levels .

Prof.S Ramachandran, Vice Chancellor of University of Madras, pointed out that:

(1).The growth rate of education in free India after 1947 increased considerably.

Yet only 11 % of the younger generation goes to college for their higher studies.

(2) There is need for greater inputs from sectors other than public sector. Nearly 89 per cent of the needy students community have to be provided for, and

Diaspora Tamils should invest in promoting higher education.

(3) 1% of the employees’ income is given over to the Government for proper training investments which is a legal requirement. Similar projects are available in Singapore and other leading countries.

Datto Dr. KVS SUBRAMANIAM, Hon’ble Minister for Human Resources Development in Malaysia said, “For the past eight months I have been the Minister in charge of education. Malaysia was invaded by Intel, Motorola, Toshiba and many other affluent MNCs who enabled large investments. In recent times Vietnam and Cambodia have competed in producing viable manpower for such industries. So we have to understand that business is not a permanent industry unless our educational thrust is suitably transformed. Lifelong education is a must for every one. Individual effort is a must. Investing in higher education and continuous training culture is a better approach to automation and self-propelled targets of higher production. Investment in education sector never goes waste. This is a global approach towards excellence. This is international thinking which will eliminate limits of education and training. In Malaysia, Malay, English and Tamil languages are given importance, 28 % of Chinese language helps progress. Creative thinking is more readily available in

western education. Therefore, there is need for creating freedom of thinking as a basis for approaching global trade. Problem solving skills need be included too. Tamils are inclined to be competent mathematically. An international Techno-Resources centre should be created and fundamental skills developed.”

Dr. AMRAJENDRAN of University of Mississippi, Oxford, recalled the ancient progress of Americans, and spoke about undergraduate studies and postgraduate studies, an Accreditation Board for universities in America, (IITs in India have been recently accredited to grant that assessment), professional and ethical responsibilities, and global engineering responsibilities. He said that job is different from career, and lifelong learning helps a career. Science and technology based online education are a must. He suggested some probable new areas for development in the next few years: energy, environment, bio and nanotechnology; autonomous systems; complex Network Sciences, Intelligence Systems, disruptive technology and PC Technology. Sensors and devices need to be explored and put in place, autonomous systems like robotics and man/ machine technologies need to be developed, technicians need to set up such mechanisms and carry out repairs, computer aided designs and abilities to contrast need to be encouraged, human brain vs computer sense-thinking should be the order of the day.

REVEREND. Fr. KASHMIR RAJ of Loyola College said that the basic question was, “What is the purpose of education?” This needs definition in precise terms. Education is knowledge plus skills. We have been educating people with yesterday’s knowledge and to meet outdated needs and not for future needs. The thinking process needs to be cultivated. There is a paucity of sufficient creative teachers. How can we create a new set of committed team of teachers all over the world? Fr. Kashmir Ra,j founder of LIBA, stressed the need for qualitative educational standards.

PROF. M.THAVAMANI, Principal of Ethiraj College, Chennai, said that this college, started in 1948 by Lawyer Ethiraj Mudaliyar soon moved away from the centralised curriculum. College development was concentrated on women’s needs. It has developed into a model college of skills and “we have produced people like Poetess Kani Mozhi., Mrs.Jeyanthi Natarajan MP and many Service personnel.” Soft skills and innovative practices are very well developed. Good teachers are very much lacking in this system. He made an appeal to develop a good system of retraining our teachers into a system of more effective teacher training through a global website.

MR.S.T.RAJAN, IT specialist from Sydney, dealt on “IT training and Employment opportunities” and expressed the need to develop most of the linguistic skills, which have to be job related. This requires analysis of several generations and occupational levels cutting across all kinds of sections.

Mr.PAUL CHELLAKUMAR, Campus Abroad, Chennai, spoke briefly about the immovable property of higher education. Lack of communication skills and their paraskills have affected progress internationally. The Conference should adopt suitable strategies for promoting welfare of well qualified students with good financial support. He mentioned that such soft skills developmental approach needs be developed urgently.

Mr.ARUNACHALAM proposed a cordial vote of thanks.

AFTERNOON OF 7th JAN 2009.

VALEDICTORY FUNCTION

The valedictory function of the I World Tamils Economic Forum was held at The Taj Coromandel Hotel with the same fanfare and glory as the Inaugural session, held the previous day. Dr A.C.Muthiah, an eminent industrialist of great repute in the national and international corporate scene, was the President of the session, and Hon'ble Chief Justice Dr.A.R.Lakshmanan was the Chief Speaker. The stage was taken by distinguished guests such as Chancellor Dr. Viswanathan , Dato Swamyvellu and others.

At the outset, the Organising Committee Chairman, **Dr.VRS Sampath** welcomed the gathering, especially the industrialist benefactor Dr. A C Muthiah and the Chief Speaker Dr AR Lakshmanan.

In his brilliantly conceived speech, **Dr A C MUTHIAH** quoted Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose, "Every Indian overseas is his or her country's ambassador. Being the second largest Diaspora community the world over, next only to the Chinese, Indians can and should contribute to the economic achievement of the world and India at large. The lessons of the Asian Financial Crisis of the mid 90s have rightly forewarned countries such as India and China taking undue risks in World Financial Ventures. He expressed confidence that India would soon overcome the major impact of the Global meltdown and pointed out that among consumers of 46 countries, Indian consumers were found to be about the most confident of the lot. (Survey of AC Nielsen in July 2007). With a working population between the age group 15 – 64 years, in India there is further growth expected from 62.9 percent of the population to 68.4 in 2026. He appealed to the Indian Diaspora to consider favourably tapping opportunities in the segments of IT, ITES, BPO, Engineering, and Manufacturing sectors. The Indian Diaspora should also consider favourably assisting the growth of agro-based Industries and food-processing units. Tamil Nadu's GDP is of the order of 12.1 % in 2007 – 2008 and the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) is estimated at Rs.275,000 Crores or about US \$ 60 Bn. for 2007 . His final words of offer of collaboration of the SICCI, a regional apex chamber of FICCI to support future such programmes echoed in effect the words of Swami Vivekananda, for inspiration:

“ Look back therefore, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind , and after that , look forward, march forward and make India brighter, greater and much higher than she ever was .”

This was followed by an erudite and thought-provoking presentation by Hon'ble Justice **A.R.LAKSHMANAN**, who stressed upon understanding the legal side of the relationships between investors and financiers and manufacturing /marketing Sectors. While the market is normally bullish and vibrant, it has of late suffered as a consequence of the impact of the Global Financial market meltdown, which has also left India partly affected. Fortunately, our legal system which is sound and fool-proof provides sufficient security from

mismanagement and exploitation. Yet there are several legal disputes which are clearly settled on the basis of the law of the country. Unfortunately some personal law issues relating to marriages between NRIs and Indian brides have landed the couple in litigations. In such extreme cases the mother country and our Government should be able to provide further safeguards and assistance in the form of protective rights, in favour of the individuals. Some such legal provisions are currently available and further improvements may be recommended by the stakeholders for consideration. His speech was most reassuring in tone and content and was very well received by the august audience, who gave the Speaker a thunderous applause .

As a climax to the two-day meet, the first ever World Tamils Economic Forum had great pleasure in honouring the following dignitaries for their Social, economic, intellectual and professional contribution to the society at large, there by bringing credit to India and Tamil Nadu in particular :

- 1.DattoSRI K.R. SOMASUNDARAM (Malaysia)“*THOZHIL MAAMANI*”**
- 2.Dr.MAHALINGAM SINNATHAMBY (Australia)“*THOZHIL MAAMANI*”**
- 3.Dr.P.VELUCHCHAMY (USA) “*THOZHIL MAAMANI*”**
- 4.THIRU PAUL PANDIAN (USA) “*THOZHIL MAAMANI*”**
- 5.Dr.VIJAY IYENGAR (Singapore) “*VANIGHA MAAMANI*”**
- 6.Dr.SAM KANNAPPAN (USA) “*THOZHIL MAAMANI*”**
- 7.Dr.V.JABAMAALAI (VIENNA) “*PORUZHAATHAARA MAAMANI*”**
- 8.THIRU. RAMA PRASAD (USA) “*THOZHIL MAAMANI*”**
- 9. Dr.P.SHANMUGHARAJ (UK) “*MARUTHTHUVA MAAMANI*”**

DR. AR. LAKSHMANAN honoured each one of them with a gold- laced shawl, a citation and a medallion befitting the occasion. He also bestowed an appreciative shawl to the organizer Dr V R S SAMPATH for his monumental efforts in organizing the first ever economic conference of this magnitude. The audience sealed their appreciation with a loud round of applause.

The solemn valedictory function came to a close with a hearty vote of thanks followed by the singing of our National Anthem.