

Courage to be Different



Elizabeth Smith, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association.



Pradeep Maharaja, Group Director.



Praful Patel, Minister for Civil Aviation, India.

The Maharaja Organisation is probably the single largest group of private sector companies in Sri Lanka. It is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional group whose activities span manufacturing, marketing, exports, communications, media, information technology, foods, packaging and more. It has undergone a growth that has stemmed largely from the group's underlying philosophy: "The Courage to be Different."

The chairman's message at the group's annual review 2005/2006 contains these comments: "The extraordinary philosophy of our group is winning. To win one must recognise one's own limitations and believe that these limitations can be overcome by using the rich human resource available around us. No matter what you wish to achieve it all starts with the right attitude. As I have said over and over again: you must maintain a winning attitude."

"Whatever profession you may be in or what activity one covers, it is ironic that if you choose a job that you love you will never have to work a day in your life as you will enjoy whatever you do. I am confident that those who have joined our group enjoy being here, not as a job alone but as an environment and culture where one can achieve one's goals."

"One must not forget that this business has been built on the sweat and toil of many, and most importantly many families depend on this group. It is this responsibility that we have to constantly bear and build on forever."

"Elizabeth Smith, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Broadcasting

Association, also gave an address. She told the audience of her admiration for the activities of the group. "As the pace of change accelerates, the winners are those who adapt and the losers are those who cannot keep up.

This group is all about winning, so this is a very good event to have. Much of this success is to be attributed to the television and radio activities within the group."

Smith spoke on the media activities of the group. "The success of MTV and MBC is not just a financial one, it has also to do with content and with values. They report the news in a cost-effective way, investing in new technology and new ways of working which means this quality is sustainable over the long term. This is all achieved despite a background of considerable political turmoil and difficulty."

Smith also spoke of how more amateur photographers and journalists are playing a role in news reporting. "I think we need to embrace the amateurs with their biogs and videophone pictures and we need to bring them into the world of professional broadcasting and open it up in ways so far undreamt of."

Smith ended her address by highlighting the importance of having guidelines for both broadcasters and regulators "Agreed guidelines can be of great help to broadcasters. They can be adopted when times require, and broadcasters can find out that they are behaving in accordance with the guidelines to which the politicians agreed earlier. Some governments will nevertheless trample all over them, nevertheless agreed guidelines make it harder for governments to behave unreasonably."

Praful Patel, Minister for Civil Aviation, India, spoke on the development of relations between Sri Lanka and India both economically and diplomatically and how they could benefit each other. "We in India and Sri Lanka has a lot of natural resources. We have talent and skills at all levels for the asking, but we have not really been able to exploit it to the fullest for the benefit of companies, countries, and society in general.

"Gone are those days in India and Sri Lanka where we only need to be associated with foreign companies to make a mark for ourselves. That transformation is here. There was a time when you would say a billion dollars was alien to an Indian company. Today Indian companies make billion of dollar plus profits, and turnovers are similar to many companies around the world. We in India and across the world have shown that we are capable of doing amazing things; so have people from Sri

Lanka and our entire SAARC region.”

Commenting on the opportunity of trading within our own geographical region, Patel said: “We must do business amongst our own community. For example looking at the SAARC region, we represent more than a fifth of humanity and with such a big internal market we really don’t need to be looking elsewhere.”

Patel told the audience of his hopes for the future. “I am happy that we are a young society and we are looking for a brighter future and that is possible with the hard work and dedication demonstrated in today’s Maharaja group. I also sincerely believe an better economic relationship between our two countries will change the way we look and think about each other.



Elizabeth Smith with an interested guest and Mano Wikramanayake, Group Director.



Executive of the year, Ashok Parwani with R Maharaja.



Elizabeth Smith; R Maharaja; Praful Patel, Minister for Civil Aviation, India.



Praful Patel, Minister for Civil Aviation, India; Mrs Rajomahendran; Nirupama Rao, Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka.



S. Kapukotuwa Group Director; Sri Lal Ahangama, Group Finance Director; Pradeep Maharaja, Group Director.