

Roots and Routes



GRFDT

Global Research Forum on
Diaspora and Transnationalism

Monthly Newsletter of the Global Research Forum on
Diaspora and Transnationalism

VOL.3, No. 4-5, April-May 2014



Roots and Routes disseminates the latest information
on research and policy developments in
Diaspora and transnationalism

www.grfdt.com

CONTENTS

03 GRFDT Activities

GRFDT Seminar
Perspectives on Transmigrant Women in
Indian Diaspora
Prof. Shobhita Jain

05 Interview

The Indian community is in need of a credible team of leaders who can work effectively with other communities and in the best interest of the nation (Part-I)

Dr. Denison Jayasooria

11 Global Update

Editorial Information

©GRFDT. Roots and Routes is Printed,
designed & circulated by GRFDT

Editor: Sadananda Sahoo

Editorial Board: Jitendra D. Soni, Kshipra Uke, Monika Bisht, Panchanan Dalai, Ravinder Singh, Rakesh Ranjan, Saroj K. Mahananda, Smita Tiwari, Vinod Kr. Choudhary, Vinod Sartape.

Design and Production: Monika Bisht and Rakesh Ranjan

Email: editor@grfdt.com

Website: www.grfdt.org

Editor's Message



The transmigrants are the one of the growing global community today, mostly in last two decades. As a community they engage in processes of transnationalism that span economic, cultural, social, ethnic, and national borders. Their socio-cultural values and patterns of interactions are shaped by more than one social, economic, and political system. The subject has been one of the key research enquiries in much interdisciplinary studies today. The talk titled "Perspectives on Transmigrant Women in Indian Diaspora" by Prof. Shobhita Jain provides very useful insights in to the theme.

The issue contains other GRFDT activities such as the Brainstorming session where the participants delve upon the emerging challenges of institutional engagement in the frontline areas in migration, diaspora and transnationalism and how the institutions such as GRFDT play a major global role in providing research inputs to policy and academics.

The next feature of the Newsletter is an interview with Dr. Denison Jayasooria, Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnic Studies, Malaysia who shared issues related to Indian community in Malaysia and the challenges of leadership. He mentioned that the Indian community is in need of a credible team of leaders who can work effectively with other communities and in the best interest of the nation. This issue only contains part I of the interview. Other regular features such as news analysis and seminar and conferences are also part of the newsletter.

Sadananda Sahoo

GRFDT Seminar

Perspectives on Transmigrant Women in Indian Diaspora

In a seminar on "Perspectives on Transmigrant Women in Indian Diaspora", organised by GRFDT on 11 April 2014 at CSSS II, JNU, Prof. Shobhita Jain, Professor of Sociology and former Director of Social Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Open University talked about the situation of women in the Indian diaspora. She said while majority of the transmigrant women share space with men, their experiences are not necessarily similar to those of men and it would incorrect to view them as parts of commonly understood perspectives relating to male migrants from India. She observed that the processes of transmigrant women's settling down in foreign lands were and are quite exclusive to them. Under the circumstances, transmigrant women are found not to be mute spectators and passive victims but they often exercise their agency to build mechanisms of struggling and making their own history. Her take on the concept of women's agency as referring to the capacity of individuals to act independently and make free choices is that they have engaged creatively with new surroundings as homemakers and/ or workers, along with being wives/ daughters/ sisters/ single or married. This does not of course imply that they are entirely free from structural forms of dependence and exploitation. It is always a matter of relative independence. Her focus was on family relationships, involving both working and non-working women. In this context, I have attempted to examine how, after marriage, transmigrant women create and maintain family relationships at a distance in the sense of both time and space. She examines transnational family as a form of living arrangement, with



its characteristic transnational informal networks and 'circuits' of care and affection.

Instead of looking for typologies, Her focus was on transnational and boundary-challenging processes that take place as consequences of the movement in people, goods and ideas so evident in the experiences of transmigrant families, particularly in the context of the life cycle ritual of marriage. The micro-politics and social practices of transnationalism operate in such cases within the sphere of marriage, family and/ or household. The transnational family as a social form has its lived reality derived from material links of collective well-being among members living at a distance. In addition, it derives strength from a shared imaginary of 'belonging' which contains within it the past and future sustenance through references to marriages across particular time and space.

Moving on to some points of debate, She however pose questions: If we study transmigrants in Indian diaspora, where do we put the study of those migrants who return home? Should we be stickler to geographical boundaries in our studies of transmigrants? Yet another vexing issue is that of the study of the progeny of migrants of Indian origin.



GRFDT Brain Storming Session

GRFDT organized Brainstorming session on 24th May 2014 which has focussed on the following areas:

- Major themes were identified on which various steps to achieve it were
- Possible research collaboration among GRFDT members to achieve these research projects were also discussed.

Major Themes on which the GRFDT members need to work and collaborate are mentioned below:

- Size, 2. Duration, 3. Historical Linkages with India, 4. Economic activities/ livelihoods, 5. Political participation of diaspora, 6. Socio-Political adaptation/ assimilation, 7. Networks with home country, 8. Remittances, 9. Diaspora literature , 10. Diaspora movements, 11. Diaspora organizations, 11. Database on particular diaspora.

The sources which needs to be explored were also discussed:

- Internet sources, 2. Books/ Journals/Magazines, 3. Information sources, 4. Diasporic Organisations, 5. Through direct contacts

It was also mentioned that GRFDT members should produce article on above and related areas, they should contribute to website and network building with other diaspora groups.

- Some of the diaspora communities in India identified for study were: 1. African, 2. Chinese, 3. Tibetan, 4. Taiwanese, 5. Spanish, 6. American, 7. British, 8. French, 9. Bangladeshis, 10. Pakistanis, 11. Afghanistani, 12. Jewish, 13. Parsis etc. Mr. Rajeev agreed to work on Tibetan Diaspora and Dr. Sadananda Sahoo agreed to work on Spanish diaspora. The session ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. M. Mahalingam.

Call for papers

International Conference on Global Indian Diaspora: Continuities and Changes

6-7 November 2014

**CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF INDIAN DIASPORA
University of Hyderabad**

The processes of globalization have been undergoing change over time for centuries from silent trade and barter exchange, through international trade and multinational corporations, to a free flow of capital and culture beyond the boundaries of nation-states spanning the globe. The far reaching changes in technologies of transport and communication, that followed the microelectronic revolution, have already impacted immensely on the way people think, work and view the world.

India today is not just a place, space or bounded territory forming a nation-state as it were, but the one for nearly a century long experience of being in Britain, The Netherlands, Trinidad, Guyana, Surinam, Fiji, Malaysia, Uganda, South Africa, USA, Canada and several other nations. It is

what India has come to be, as it were dispersed. Under the present regime of globalization, India stretches to all corners of the globe where Indians remain Indians forming Global Indian Diaspora. The proposed International Conference on "Global Indian Diaspora" aims at examining the continuities and changes in the lives of Indians in the diaspora.

Besides discussing the conceptual issues in the study of Indian diaspora in the contemporary context, the conference shall address various themes such as: issues of identity; transnationalism; and new policy initiatives.

The last date for sending the abstract is 15th August 2014 and the full paper is 15 October 2014. Any communication regarding the Conference, including the title of the presentation, the abstract and the paper may be sent by email to: Dr. Ajaya K. Sahoo, Conference Coordinator. Emails: aksss@uohyd.ernet.in / ajayacsid@yahoo.com

We invite Students, Researchers and Faculty Members to submit a small write up of their achievements and awards to the editor. It will provide the scholars a platform to connect with peer groups working on themes related to Diaspora and Transnationalism. Information related to seminar/conferences/events can be sent to the Editor at: editor@grfdt.com

The Indian community is in need of a credible team of leaders who can work effectively with other communities and in the best interest of the nation: Dr. Denison Jayasooria (Part-I)

Academic writing on Malaysian Indians has focused on the poverty and marginalisation of the community. Very little is written as the contributions of Malaysian Indians in the field of education, medicine, law, sports, music, drama, trade unions, civil society and politics, says Datuk **Dr. Denison Jayasooria**, Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnic Studies in an interview with **Dr. M.Mahalingam** of GRFDT



Mahalingam. M.: Could you assess the popularity of HINDRAF in GE 12 and GE13?

Denison Jayasooria: The events surrounding Malaysian society and the Indian community were very heated especially in 2006 & 2007 with a number of unresolved issues such as death in custody, issues pertaining to conversion of Hindus to Islam and child custody, snatching of dead bodies of converts to Islam who had not informed their families of their conversion and demolition of Hindu temples.

In addition there were a number of other grievances pertaining to Indian investment through Maika Holding, lack of opportunities in higher education and scholarships, opportunities and promotions in the civil service, urban poverty issues, and lack of access to business loans. There was also intense political fighting within the Indian community. The vernacular Tamil print media played a key role in fuelling these divisions and personality conflicts.

The grass root movement of grievance become well organised and Uthayakumar and his team played a key role in mobilising this discontent and converting it into a political force. The political parties in opposition greatly benefited through this during the 2008 General elections. HINDRAF was popular and many mainstream politicians were caught off guard on the scale of uprising as a voice for the down-trodden and voiceless.

Uthayakumar like the Tamil movies was someone who dared to stand up against the mighty arm of the state and political powers. However it was Prof. Ramasamy who over the years, had built up a sound intellectual argument of the UMNO hegemony and protected the MIC leaders and supporters as agents. Uthayakumar popularised this notion and challenged the system through court cases as well as street protests through a strong Indian and Hindu counter action to this dominance.

This uprising for political change was in the context of the rise of the opposition leaders like Anwar Ibrahim together with PKR, PAS and DAP providing a new political discourse for justice and fairness for all. It was essentially a call to be free from UMNO and UMNO supporting political parties.

However with the arrests and the post 2008 general elections note the divisions that emerge within the HINDRAF movement and their split. Some say they had infiltrated, others say HINDRAF did not have the institutional builders to transform the movement from a protest movement into a long term political and social-economic advocacy movement. Yet others say that some leaders were bought over.

=====
Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria is the Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnic Studies, UKIM, Malaysia. Published in the Star on May 13, 2013 on page 34

* The views expressed here are of Dr. Denison Jayasooria's.

What we note is that the movement splitting up with some leaders joining the opposition political parties and into smaller groups like Makkal Sakthi while emerging and throwing allegiance with PM Najib, the large scale mobilization in late 2007 saw the movement making a major impact in the 2008 general elections with major MIC leaders like Dato Seri Samyvelu, Datuk Palanivel and Dato Sothinathan losing their parliamentary seats in 2008.

However by the 2013 general election, Waythamoorthy who led the protest from the UK and ran an effective global campaign, pledged support to the Barisan Nasional. Many saw this as betrayal of the original struggle of HINDRAF.

However, Waythamoorthy's team in HINDRAF felt it was time to work with a political power and leadership. After talks with both Opposition and the Barisan Nasional, Waythamoorthy was convinced that BN would be the party to work with and an MOU was signed just days before the 2013 General Elections.

The cards had turned and the overall popularity of HINDRAF was reduced. However discontent was still expressed through civil society and opposition based political parties especially the DAP and PKR remained popular.

Mahalingam M.: HINDRAF chairman Waythamoorthy had resigned his deputy ministership from the Prime Minister's department. Was it a hasty decision to resign or must he have held on to the position for a little while further?

Denison Jayasooria: I must say that I was really surprised that Waythamoorthy lent support to the BN prior to 2013 General elections, the reason being the principles of the HINDRAF struggle and demands as per the 2007 HINDRAF document was based on a human rights framework for equality. Furthermore the nature of HINDRAF analysis and the earlier blame put on UMNO and the Malay community as their oppressors was another reason.

I was invited to the MOU signing event in 2013 by the PM office and was present at the event. I also received, during the event, a copy of the MOU signed. HINDRAF made a major departure from its original struggle namely to approach the struggle from a human rights perspective. What was agreed upon was to addressing the socio-economic issues, needs and concerns pertaining to education, poverty etc. It was expressed that there is a long term struggle goal but there should be immediate steps for socio-economic solving of community need especially for those in poverty. So focus on long term later, short term is what is achievable now.

In one sense this is a realistic and pragmatic approach but a human rights struggle ensures balanced development including civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights. It must be an integrated and holistic approach and not a piece meal approach which would not solve long term historical disadvantage issues especially these of the displaced plantation workers who were part of the urban poor situation.

The difficulty for the HINDRAF movement is working from outside and working from within. Getting into the BN Federal government and be appointed by the PM into the Prime Minister's department is a major concession given by Prime Minister Najib. This was in the context of massive objections by the MIC leadership.

The ability to work within the civil service system is a different skill compared to advocacy and protest which is an approach of working from outside the system. This transition from being outside of government and target of arrest by the State and then to be appointed as a Deputy Minister with the trappings of government like Police protection, government car, driver, office at the Prime Minister building are major changes for a HINDRAF activist.

Waythamoorthy was morally and politically right in raising questions and objections in public over Police action or inaction by the civil service but his strategy and approach was wrong. He is now a Federal government official and a Senator and appointed by the PM within the Federal administration. Therefore the struggles are within and the approach should be persuasion and networking, monitoring and execution. He had the support of the PM and had a formal appointment. He should have given time to see change and established realistic goals towards this end.

What we heard was that Waythamoorthy resigned. Unfortunately, I don't think he really had an ally within the corridors

of power to assist and support him. I think he should have networked more closely with Dato IdrisJala and Dato Paul Low who like him were not from political parties. He could have adopted a different approach by letting the leadership on HINDRAF be assumed by another who then spoke up from outside government. He, then, as a member of the Najib administration should have met Ministers, heads of department and government and sought to win their hearts and minds in addressing Indian concerns in order to ensure effective implementation. One has to use the government agencies as one who was in the PM's department provided open doors to all Federal agencies.

Waythamoorthy had an advantage that others did not have. He had the support of the PM and his inclusive development agenda. He should have stuck to the MOU signed and called for the special commitment if there was a point of having no agreement between HINDRAF and the Federal government. Changes take time and there were so many things pilling up against Waythamoorthy from within and outside.

Personally, I think he should have held on and undertaken bargaining and negotiation. This requires certain new skills and I think many non HINDRAF professional could have assisted him. But I must say I also admire him for his courage in walking out. This is illustrative that he was not after position or power or wealth but aiming to make a difference. He tried but felt justified to leave. These actions have created a major credibility gap for the movement and for him. Only time will show how he progresses and also the fate of HINDRAF as a movement.

Mahalingam. M: Is HINDRAF still relevant to the poor Indians after its debacle with the government?

Denison Jayasooria: The issues that HINDRAF raised have not been fully resolved. A major section of the Indian community still feels a sense of psychological isolation as second class citizens. That race and religion should not count is still a major concern for a majority of Indians who feel that as Indians they are not being treated as full citizens. This is especially so for the bottom 40% of the Indian community who can be categorised as urban poor with many unresolved issues.

While the Government and PM Najib have done much since 2008 to address the historical grievances there are still many unresolved issues. Much has been done since 2008 but this is ongoing and we need better monitoring and measuring tools to evaluate success and failures so as to address the gaps.

Mahalingam. M: Has the HINDRAF movement fizzled out or still active as fragmented groups?

Denison Jayasooria: I am not hearing much as there are too many Indian based political parties and organisations. We are a very divided society and the trust factor is a major issue. As leaders rise and fall, the community is in need of a credible team of leaders who can work effectively with other communities and in the best interest of the nation.

I don't think like the 2007 and 2008 situation, people will look to HINDRAF for that leadership nor among many leaders in the ruling political parties at the Federal government. A number of Indian MPs in the opposition have been consistent in providing leadership since the 2008 general election Some have been re elected for a second term. They have been very vocal on Indian concerns both in Parliament and Malaysian society. However none among them have emerged as national or community leaders in the way the MIC leadership stood out in society as National Indian leaders. One reason for this among opposition MPs is that they come from multi-racial political parties like DAP and PKR and therefore have not emerged within their parties as Indian leaders.

Having said that, the Opposition Indian MPs are extremely popular in the country. There is therefore a current gap for community leaders who can work with various government agencies in resolving community concerns

Mahalingam. M: Could you comment on the recent Malaysian National development Plan? What does it have for Indians?

Denison Jayasooria: The Federal government is now formulating the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016 -2020) and has been calling for public input. The post 2013 government agenda is clear and it emphasis Inclusive Development for all. A

major step by the PM Najib is the establishment of special teams at his office which directly coordinates Indian concerns. Currently there are three teams. The first headed by Prof NS Rajendran (a professor of education) who is undertaking a review of the vernacular schools and charting out an action plan. The second is addressing issues pertaining to documentation of Indians (citizenship and birth certificates). This team is headed by a former human rights commissioner Dato Siva Subramaniam. This is a major complaint on securing the documentation needed to provide security for Malaysian Indians who do not have the documentation. The third is on access to business training and micro loans. This team is headed by Dr. AT Raja (a medical person turned business man) who heads this program using existing micro finance institutions set up by the federal government.

Prior to PM Najib there were no Indian focused implementation units and therefore these projects coming directly under the Prime Minister gave them a national focus. However, solving many of these concerns is time consuming. Since 2008, the Federal Government has set up institutional mechanisms for this. There are gaps and weaknesses but nonetheless there is some serious focus to ensure effective implementation

Mahalingam. M: Is there any change of perceptions by all racial civil society groups as well as by the government to view Indian problems as not the 'community problem' alone and which are actually 'national problem'?

Denison Jayasooria: As I mentioned earlier in the earlier period before GE 2008 Indian concerns were seen as community concern. In the post 2008 period, the Federal government established a Cabinet Committee on Indian concerns chaired by Dato Seri Najib when he was the Deputy Prime Minister and when he became Prime Minister he continued to chair it. This is really an inter ministerial committee and the Secretary to the Government and other senior civil servants from Ministries are a part of this.

The federal government also established similar provision for the natives of Sabah and Sarawak who also had similar grievances like the Malaysian Indians

While these are good, more work needs to be done to enhance these. There is a constant challenge from Indian based political parties within the government to portray themselves as community champions. This approach does greater injustice. Therefore, adopting a rights and needs based approach as justice and fairness for all will yield better results.

Mahalingam. M: Has the HINDRAF movement fizzled out or still active as fragmented groups?

Denison Jayasooria: I am not hearing much as there are too many Indian based political parties and organisations. We are a very divided society and the trust factor is a major issue. As leaders rise and fall, the community is in need of a credible team of leaders who can work effectively with other communities and in the best interest of the nation.

I don't think like the 2007 and 2008 situation, people will look to HINDRAF for that leadership nor among many leaders in the ruling political parties at the Federal government. A number of Indian MPs in the opposition have been consistent in providing leadership since the 2008 general election Some have been re elected for a second term. They have been very vocal on Indian concerns both in Parliament and Malaysian society. However none among them have emerged as national or community leaders in the way the MIC leadership stood out in society as National Indian leaders. One reason for this among opposition MPs is that they come from multi-racial political parties like DAP and PKR and therefore have not emerged within their parties as Indian leaders.

Having said that, the Opposition Indian MPs are extremely popular in the country. There is therefore a current gap for community leaders who can work with various government agencies in resolving community concerns

Mahalingam. M: What are the functions of Cabinet committee on Indian Affairs headed by the Prime Minister Najib? What are the achievements so far?

Denison Jayasooria: Cabinet committees chaired by the PM or DPM is an inter-ministerial meeting. Indian community concerns cannot be resolved by one ministry as there are overlapping concerns such as education, health, welfare, housing, employment and business development. Ensuring, there is access and inclusive agenda is imperative. At the Cabinet committee, there can be stock taking, noting the gaps and addressing the concerns in order to ensure effective solutions.

As indicated earlier in matters pertaining to Tamil school education, documentation, micro loans, skills training for underachieving youths much progress has been made. Better coordination as well as publicity and engagement with the general public is essential. This might be lacking.

The Federal government is now formulating the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016 -2020) and has b

Mahalingam. M: Is there any change of perceptions by all racial civil society groups as well as by the government to view Indian problems as not the 'community problem' alone and which are actually 'national problem'?

Denison Jayasooria: As I mentioned earlier in the earlier period before GE 2008 Indian concerns were seen as community concern. In the post 2008 period, the Federal government established a Cabinet Committee on Indian concerns chaired by Dato Seri Najib when he was the Deputy Prime Minister and when he became Prime Minister he continued to chair it. This is really an inter ministerial committee and the Secretary to the Government and other senior civil servants from Ministries are a part of this.

The federal government also established similar provision for the natives of Sabah and Sarawak who also had similar grievances like the Malaysian Indians

While these are good, more work needs to be done to enhance these. There is a constant challenge from Indian based political parties within the government to portray themselves as community champions. This approach does greater injustice. Therefore, adopting a rights and needs based approach as justice and fairness for all will yield better results.

Mahalingam. M: What are the functions of Cabinet committee on Indian Affairs headed by the Prime Minister Najib? What are the achievements so far?

Denison Jayasooria: Cabinet committees chaired by the PM or DPM is an inter-ministerial meeting. Indian community concerns cannot be resolved by one ministry as there are overlapping concerns such as education, health, welfare, housing, employment and business development. Ensuring, there is access and inclusive agenda is imperative. At the Cabinet committee, there can be stock taking, noting the gaps and addressing the concerns in order to ensure effective solutions.

As indicated earlier in matters pertaining to Tamil school education, documentation, micro loans, skills training for underachieving youths much progress has been made. Better coordination as well as publicity and engagement with the general public is essential. This might be lacking.

Mahalingam. M: You served as the Secretary for the Special Implementation Taskforce on the Indian Community (SITF) in the Prime Minister's Department (August 2010 - April 2011). What were the strategies and approaches that you suggested, and that were implemented for resolving the plight of the Indians? Why did you resign?

Denison Jayasooria: I was part of the team that wrote the Tenth Malaysia Plan proposals. The policy inputs done since 1999 to 2010 are well documented in one of my books.

One of our major criticisms of the Ninth Plan was the weak monitoring and implementation. Therefore one major

recommendation was to establish SITF. I was asked if I would take up the new position at the PM Department for this. I was in the University and therefore requested for leave to play this new role and I was granted it.

I initially thought the work would be more policy research and monitoring but within the first 10 months or so found it to be too much of operational work. I therefore requested permission from the PM to return to the University and assist SITF only in policy research and monitoring implementation through impact assessment. However since leaving I have not been formally asked to do this, while I have been undertaking other research projects for the Federal government.

SITF role is essential but since my resignation no new person has been appointed to coordinate it while there are specific heads in the three units. Therefore the policy, monitoring and planning roles are weakened and it has now ended up as an operational task.

Some of the political leaders within SITF do not value policy research and seem comfortable with operational and short term reports which in the long run might not comprehensively address the Indian community grievances.

While PM Najib is providing the institutional infrastructure and resources there seems to be a lack of coordination and focus of the Indian politicians within the Federal government. They seem focused on short term gains especially utilising the resources to enhance their popularity and political positions.

Lots of financial resources have been handed over to voluntary organisations (religious, business and social) for the upliftment of the community. There is no comprehensive analysis of this and its impact upon the community. A professional audit, both financial and social impact, is urgently needed to turn these good efforts into political votes in the next general elections.

Mahalingam. M: What is the general representation of Indians in all the Malaysian political parties at present? It has been debated that more Indians are backing opposition parties? Do you agree with this statement?

Denison Jayasooria: In the 13th Malaysian Parliament, there are 13 elected MPs out of 222 which is 5.8 % of the 13, four or 30% are from the ruling Federal government from MIC and 9 or 70% from the opposition PKR (4) and DAP (5)

The Indians in BN especially have failed poorly in 2008 and 2013 as compared to the 2004 general elections where the BN won 10 out of the 12 seats won by Indians. The opposition only had 2 seats. Therefore there has been a major shift especially the opposition from 16% to 70% representation in the Parliament.

Yet both in terms of voters and seats, there has been a major shift in urban voter voting pattern among all the ethnic communities. Another factor is that a majority of the opposition Indian MPs are from civil society or have been part of advocacy or protest movements.

Mahalingam. M: What are the functions of Cabinet committee on Indian Affairs headed by the Prime Minister Najib? What are the achievements so far?

Denison Jayasooria: Cabinet committees chaired by the PM or DPM is an inter-ministerial meeting. Indian community concerns cannot be resolved by one ministry as there are overlapping concerns such as education, health, welfare, housing, employment and business development. Ensuring, there is access and inclusive agenda is imperative. At the Cabinet committee, there can be stock taking, noting the gaps and addressing the concerns in order to ensure effective solutions.

As indicated earlier in matters pertaining to Tamil school education, documentation, micro loans, skills training for underachieving youths much progress has been made. Better coordination as well as publicity and engagement with the general public is essential. This might be lacking.

Mahalingam. M: You served as the Secretary for the Special Implementation Taskforce on the Indian Community (SITF) in the Prime Minister's Department (August 2010 - April 2011). What were the strategies and approaches that you suggested, and that were implemented for resolving the plight of the Indians? Why did you resign?

Denison Jayasooria: I was part of the team that wrote the Tenth Malaysia Plan proposals. The policy inputs done since 1999 to 2010 are well documented in one of my books.

One of our major criticisms of the Ninth Plan was the weak monitoring and implementation. Therefore one major recommendation was to establish SITF. I was asked if I would take up the new position at the PM Department for this. I was in the University and therefore requested for leave to play this new role and I was granted it.

I initially thought the work would be more policy research and monitoring but within the first 10 months or so found it to be too much of operational work. I therefore requested permission from the PM to return to the University and assist SITF only in policy research and monitoring implementation through impact assessment. However since leaving I have not been formally asked to do this, while I have been undertaking other research projects for the Federal government.

SITF role is essential but since my resignation no new person has been appointed to coordinate it while there are specific heads in the three units. Therefore the policy, monitoring and planning roles are weakened and it has now ended up as an operational task.

Some of the political leaders within SITF do not value policy research and seem comfortable with operational and short term reports which in the long run might not comprehensively address the Indian community grievances.

While PM Najib is providing the institutional infrastructure and resources there seems to be a lack of coordination and focus of the Indian politicians within the Federal government. They seem focused on short term gains especially utilising the resources to enhance their popularity and political positions.

Lots of financial resources have been handed over to voluntary organisations (religious, business and social) for the upliftment of the community. There is no comprehensive analysis of this and its impact upon the community. A professional audit, both financial and social impact, is urgently needed to turn these good efforts into political votes in the next general elections.

Mahalingam. M: What is the general representation of Indians in all the Malaysian political parties at present? It has been debated that more Indians are backing opposition parties? Do you agree with this statement?

Denison Jayasooria: In the 13th Malaysian Parliament, there are 13 elected MPs out of 222 which is 5.8 % of the 13, four or 30% are from the ruling Federal government from MIC and 9 or 70% from the opposition PKR (4) and DAP (5)

The Indians in BN especially have failed poorly in 2008 and 2013 as compared to the 2004 general elections where the BN won 10 out of the 12 seats won by Indians. The opposition only had 2 seats. Therefore there has been a major shift especially the opposition from 16% to 70% representation in the Parliament.

Yet both in terms of voters and seats, there has been a major shift in urban voter voting pattern among all the ethnic communities. Another factor is that a majority of the opposition Indian MPs are from civil society or have been part of advocacy or protest movements.

(Continued in the next edition of *Roots and Routes*)

Migration for Inclusive Development

Migration has been one of the major concern across the globe, especially in EU and USA. There has been challenges to engage migrants productively for more inclusive development. In a recent event organised by Global Forum on Migration and Development, Cecilia Malmström, EU Home Affairs Commissioner talked about the Migration and its potential for bringing inclusive development. Malmström said that "to me, migration is the untapped engine for economic and social development. It is one of the most effective ways of alleviating poverty. It contributes to sustainable development and fits squarely into the scope of the next development agenda". She added that "the post-2015 development agenda MUST create the conditions for sustained, meaningful global partnerships on migration and human mobility. Our Forum should send that message loud and clear!"

In her talk she emphasised that the human mobility has the economic and financial side. "migrants from all over the globe have played a role in developing our economies. Migration has kept our workforce vibrant and dynamic", she said. Malmström further talked about the issue of cutting costs of mobility in particular on visa "today, too many potential students, researchers and visitors, from both the developed and the developing world, are discouraged from seizing opportunities abroad because of administrative hurdles and the costs of obtaining a visa". Such hurdles have no place in the 21st century's organisation of human mobility, she said.

She also shown concern about the costs related to remittances. "In New York, we agreed that more needs to be done to make transfers cheaper, faster and safer at both ends of each transaction. Thanks to international efforts, the cost of making remittances has gone down, but here too we must do better". Fees for transfers, especially to Africa, are still too high — averaging around 12 per cent. There are reports that companies make millions of EURO profits on remittance transfers. Malmström call for cooperation among all the stake holders "so let's work together to bring down those charges. Let's promote significant changes — in banking regulations, in the practices of money transfer operators and in approaches to new technology". She also emphasised upon the "migrant rights". "There were calls for the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention. The Commission is urging EU Member States to ratify this instrument as soon as possible. Some have already done so, and let me use this occasion to encourage the others to follow suit. I do hope that all will have ratified this Convention by 2015".

She shown her satisfaction that the EU has made progress on protecting migrant rights and in particular of seasonal workers. Seasonal workers make an important contribution to the European economy. Yet, too often, they find themselves in vulnerable situations, exposed to exploitation.

GRFDT Member participates in the Public Policy Research Consultation on Contemporary Malaysian Indians

Dr. Mahalingam M who is now the president of Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism has been invited by the Institut Kajian Etnik (KITA), (Institute of Ethnic Studies) of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia) for the conference on 'Public Policy Research Consultation on Contemporary Malaysian Indians' from 22nd July to 25th July. He is presenting a paper ti-

tled 'Political Economy of Contemporary Malaysian Indians: Demands for Multi-ethnic economic Model?' His paper argues how neo-liberal economic thrust coupled with ethnicity based economic model have affected the Malaysian economy in general and the Malaysian Indian community in particular since independence. Dr. Mahalingam has done his doctoral thesis on the issues of Indians in Malaysia.

We invite Students, Researchers and Faculty Members to submit a small write up of their achievements and awards to the editor. It will provide the scholars a platform to connect with peer groups working on themes related to Diaspora and Transnationalism. Information related to seminar/conferences/events can be sent to the Editor at: editor@grfdt.com